

Forge Podcast with Dr Dave Landrum

Peter Wooding: [00:00:07] Welcome to the Forge leadership podcast and to our first episode of 2018. Happy New Year ! And we start the new year with a great interview. Simon Barrington is joined by Dr. Dave Landrum Director of Advocacy for the Evangelical Alliance as they speak about Christians making a difference as leaders in the public sphere.

Simon Barrington: [00:00:28] So today on the Forge leadership podcast I'm joined by Dr Dave Landrum. Dave has been director of advocacy of the Evangelical Alliance since 2011. He says he is passionate to see Christianity make an impact on society by being at the centre of political cultural and economic life. Dave welcome to the podcast.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:00:47] Hello Simon. Good to be here.

[00:00:50] Cool Dave tell us a little bit about your self and how you first recognised that maybe you were a leader or you had leadership skills and gifting.

[00:00:59] Well I I come to faith about 25 years ago now in a little Baptist church in North Liverpool called Bootle. From the point of meeting Jesus I went on a strange journey through academia in which God seemed to be equipping me and skilling me for his purposes in all sorts of different ways. Some of it I was aware of and some of it I was less aware of at the time. But what I found was that God has placed within many of us maybe all of us the capacity to lead by and by lead I mean change things move things see things realised but it's up to us to develop these capacities or anointings, however we want that frame that and sometimes he just takes us out of where we grew up from out of where, what we are comfortable with and stretches us to be able to do that. I mean my awareness of leadership, I'm in a leadership role now at the Alliance it was a slow organic kind of thing that developed over years and he's still doing it.

[00:02:12] Cool. What were some of your early experiences of leadership I know you worked for the Bible Society and worked in parliament. What were some of your earliest experiences.

[00:02:22] Well I already had experience of leading because I used to run a builders building company up in Liverpool and across in Germany as well and so a kind of bad experience in that realm. When I was at Bible Society, well I was in a higher education and was leading various projects there and teaching is a form of leadership I do think - not very well recognised or rewarded but it is a form of leadership so I was doing some teaching and lecturing. And then a Bible Society I assume Bible advocacy work in Parliament for about 10 years and that involve working with the MP's the peers and the Christian policy community and people in government etc etc.. And they are all leaders you know they are all types of leaders people who are capable of they are starter finishers, they are ideas people and you know MP's in particular are classic generalists they know a little bit about everything and can get things done which is a remarkable skill-set really. So I learnt a lot in there about leadership as well and the fact that Christianity is synonymous with leadership because our God is a leader himself.

Simon Barrington: [00:03:35] Wow. In your current role you're heavily involved in leadership and run something called the Public Leadership Programme. Tell us what's that all about.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:03:44] Well yep, the public leadership program is something that we started a few years ago and now in response to what we see as a strategic priority for the church going forward.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:03:56] You know we have been challenged as Christians about our role

and place in society and the legitimacy of that through the sacred secular divide and other arguments and the sort of onset of secularism in different ways.

[00:04:11] What we've realised is that if you know I run the public policy work at the Evangelical Alliance and we deal with a lot of stuff that's coming at us from parliaments and assemblies around the country and through the media and everything else and what we realised this if we didn't have leaders out there in society in all areas of society that firefighting that public policy fire fighting it would just continue you know ad infinitum. We would be on the back foot permanently. The way to really change a culture so that we're dealing with less of these public policy problems is to have leaders in that culture. People of God who were being salt and light and are intentional about leading the change. So the program - it's been described by our public policy co-ordinator as a 70 year program - but if you want to change culture you've got to think big picture and you've got to think trans-generationally in terms of the strategic focus you have. And I think we're doing that quite well.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:05:14] I think we're developing resources and networking people in the way that is seeking to deal with this strategic priority for the Church and is also of course a strategic priority of young people. Young people want to change the world. It's in young people to want to change the world. And I think it's beholden on the church to give them a biblical basis or a framework from which to do that and to do it well and to be really effective for God in that. We should be we throwing petrol on that not water. There are all sorts of other theologies out there that could divert them in all sorts of different ways so a biblically based, theologically rigorous theory of change is I think really important for young people at this time.

Simon Barrington: [00:06:03] And do you think Christians generally have shied away from engaging in leadership in the public sphere. And if so why and how can we change that situation.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:06:14] Well I think there are a number of reasons I think it has happened. Yes.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:06:18] I mean if I think if you look at the past the expectation that Christians would lead in public life in some way shape or form and where we are now then you could say that that's down to secularisation the process of secularisation in our society and I think that would be true to a large extent but there's also the fact that the church as much as anyone has bought into this idea of a sacred secular divide. The fact that you know the decisions that affect everybody's lives should be left to the atheists among us while us religious types should just meet at weekends in Gothic refrigerators. Average age deceased. And I just think the kingdom of God is a little more dynamic than that. Two other things I would add to the reason why we haven't been engaged in a leadership like we could be are complacency and a fear. I think complacency has to do with things like apathy and laziness. We just got to name this which is we've just not wanted this enough and fear - that's to do with comfort and status and to be a leader in public life in a counter-cultural way. It comes with a cost and not many people want to do that.

Simon Barrington: [00:07:32] And do you find that churches are generally getting this or is there a big mind shift yet to happen I think you know in my church for instance we do celebrate doctors and nurses and the NHS and people working in in different spheres but maybe that's not true right across the piece. What what do you find as you look around the country. What's the general atmosphere like.

[00:07:56] I think I think your church is probably unusual. I think most Churches still miss the point that God has within the body people who he has gifted and anointed for roles in life more generally beyond the church walls and that that is something worth recognising and celebrating and

supporting and I think many churches miss that. It's a mixed picture. From the churches that we engage with and we engage right across the whole spectrum through the alliance. There seems to be a growing recognition that people do have roles beyond the dog collar. If I can put it like that they do have value but I do think it's beholden on organisations like the Evangelical Alliance to keep message into the church there. The Kingdom of God extends through people who receive it and demonstrate it in every walk of life and you know we talk often with the Public Leadership program about developing a culture of public leadership in the UK church and what we mean by that is you know this is something that we just do automatically. Culture is normative it's what is ordinary and we want to see the church as a leader voice and young people young Christians in particular just assuming that they should lead will lead in some way shape or form whatever God is leading them. So that's the aim of that I think the Church are getting it but it's slow and we need to keep pressing on.

Simon Barrington: [00:09:25] And do you think we don't have a very well worked through theology a work. Is that part of the problem that actually we bemoan people who haven't got enough time in evenings to go to church meetings and run volunteer programs zone. It's almost like you know work is the distraction that's paying the bills rather than godly calling of high status that we want to celebrate. Is that part of a problem.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:09:52] I think it is part of the problem and you know I'm particularly taken with some of the fantastic resources London Institute for Contemporary Christianity have produced on workplace ministry and understanding that the workplace is a missional sphere as much as anything else they've got some fantastic resources in this. But I mean just to be clear we don't restrict public leadership to the sphere of work. People can be public leaders in communities as students as children. It doesn't have a boundary of just work but work is a very important part of what leadership is. And it's funny again because you think about the Protestant work ethic we get something of the value of work clearly because I do think that's a reality in the church. We just don't seem to make be able to transfer that into a theological acceptance as it where that God wants to transform the whole of life in every possible way to conform to his pattern for our relational priorities.

Simon Barrington: [00:10:58] Now culture is often defined by symbols or words that we use. What are some of the symbols that maybe need to change in our church services or some other words that we use the need to change in the language that we're using.

[00:11:13] That's a good question. I guess different churches use different symbols and different words. I think there's something to be done around the word mission and how we understand mission. Now primarily and we would fully support this as the Evangelical Alliance we're here to introduce people to Jesus. That's are USP that's our raison d'être that's the one thing we can do in the world that no one else can do. But alongside that and related to that we're called to be salt and light in society for His glory for our healing. We're called to receive and demonstrate the kingdom of God like a trailer for a film. And I guess if we can develop a language that shows that 24/7 we are Christians and not just on Sundays. If we keep hammering away at that one I know Derek Tidball did some great work on that many years ago and Os Guinness has written on this as well. If we can keep hammering away at that the fact that we are a Christian 24/7 365 and that matters to God that we're a Christian wherever we are wherever he's taken us and our lives are not our own and he can take us where he wants to take us. That would be wonderful. I mean it does happen in various places but I think it needs to happen more extensively.

Simon Barrington: [00:12:41] What can church leaders who are listening to this do in their churches to start changing that culture. What what what can they practically do. How can they practically help change that culture.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:12:56] Practically they can engage with our wonderful public leadership resources at the Evangelical Alliance and invite us to come and speak up about this stuff and invite you to come and speak about leadership and start engaging in the conversation around leadership. You know one of the Scriptures we use in relation to our Public leadership work is 1 Corinthians 1:26 which is "Brothers and sisters not many of you were influential not many of you were of noble birth when you were first called but God took the foolish things of this world.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:13:29] We've got this example in the early Church of God raising up people to positions of influence to shape and change things for God's glory and it right there in the early church. If Church leaders can recapture that recapture it that would be absolutely wonderful and celebrate it celebrate people who are leading and are making a difference intentionally. And this is the this is another thing there was a book published a few years ago by James Hunter-Davis called "to change the world" where he talks about Christians being a faithful presence out in the workplace. Well I'm sorry but I think the kingdom of God is far more dynamic than that. I think we're more than a faithful presence I think we should be a subversive presence in many ways and counter-cultural. And that requires intentionality and I think that's a key word.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:14:20] If pastors and leaders could start talking about being intentionally leaders in our society in our spheres in wherever God has placed us that changes everything. Were not there as passengers we're there as drivers. I think that's a key message here. [15.3]

Simon Barrington: [00:14:36] And is there more the church leaders can do in their churches to support people in positions of leadership. I think sometimes. You know when I've been in leadership in a charity or businesses its kind of felt like well we will support you if you step into a role that's in leadership within our church but we're really not sure where to go in terms of supporting you in your leadership in outside of that.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:15:05] I think the first thing is to listen to these leaders, listen to their experiences and try and understand the world that they're in and what they're trying to do support them support them with biblical resources. Look for the resources there are lots of books out there now on leadership and the sorts of theological framing of leadership and pray for them. I mean obviously people need prayer. You can't get enough prayer in positions of leadership because the higher you go the more pressure you take on the more prayer you need. And celebrate them. I think there's something about recognising the fact that people are leading within a congregation within the Body of Christ that then pulls everybody else into that leadership into that life and gives them a stake in praying for them and supporting them and understanding them as well.

Simon Barrington: [00:15:58] Fantastic now stories change things don't they for people when they hear stories of people leading well in the public sphere. What kind of stories have you come across as you've been doing this work that will inspire people about what what what's able to be achieved and the change that's happening as Christians step out to make a difference in the public sphere.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:16:19] Gosh we've got we've got we've been collecting stories and it's funny you know because God has got people as public leaders everywhere all over the country. A lot of what we're doing through our program is just pointing to and saying that's public leadership. It's a good thing. It's a God thing. Tell us your story. So we've got stories sort of got people on our courses at the moment that are like a young woman who is studying Global Public Health Nutrition. We've got a young man who's started his own local radio show and a local campaign. I've got a friend of mine who's a pastor in Liverpool whose involved in comedy and you know he's got a great story. He was watching various people in his city who would be setting themselves up as spokespeople for the church and you know he said I've never hear of these people and I don't know

where they're from. Why aren't they talking to real church leaders and real Christians in the city. And he said that they're all there because of a little bit of self promotion so I had a conversation that went about why he should consider a little bit of self-promotion himself. He did. He got involved in a local radio sponsored event. They then did a full front page cover story on him in the Liverpool Echo and then he's now on a regular weekly radio program in Liverpool. And when things happen and they want a church leader to comment on it they go to him now because he was intentional about it.

[00:17:53] I mean other people I could talk about we try and get a spread shot across society. So the people can see themselves in all these different roles. We've got David Smart who's the Chief Superintendent at the Metropolitan Police prevent program he basically is the national coordinator for the Prevent program to sort of deal with the counter-terrorism strategy in the UK. He's a Christian he's a born again Christian an amazing man of God and is seeking to bring the goodness of God into that work in every way he can. Another one is a woman who's called Claire Page who's a stay at home Mum who was involved in the London Chamber of Commerce left to raise their children but then you know leaders don't ever retire. She just moved into a different mode leadership. She started blog site called Mothers at home matter, she started a charity in Africa raising funds for solar power and she's a campaigner for mothers and she does that from home while being a mother. She's a public leader. So you know the context shouldn't determine our leadership. Our leadership should be determined by what God has put in us and what God is calling us to do.

Simon Barrington: [00:19:04] And you said earlier that your public policy coordinator said it's a 70 year program so generationally what are you trying to do to change the stories we're telling and what do you see happening amongst Millennials and Gen X and Gen Y in terms of their approach to public leadership and how can we change that.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:19:25] I mean one of the most encouraging things we find is when we talk to young people they get this stuff they really do and they are looking for help and they're looking for connections, they're looking for mentoring support and resources. I think it's really really encouraging at this moment in time. I mean where we're trying to help people in terms of basic things like developing a biblical world view, you know developing communication and language skills to communicate a biblical world view in a secular setting and often a hostile or apathetic secular setting. These are apologetics really for giving confidence to operate as a leader in public life. So has that answered your question.

Simon Barrington: [00:20:09] You know I really does and it's encouraging to hear that there is a change happening down the generations because I think lots of Christians would look you know maybe what happened to Tim Farron last year they would look at Christians being prevented from wearing crosses around their necks in the workplace. They look at an increasing level of secularism that is marginalising Christians and they would say it's getting harder and harder isn't it Dave you know how can you help us in this situation and what would you say to people who who are more fearful for now because of those situations.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:20:45] Well it's funny that you mentioned Tim Farron because I'm often to see his Theos lecture tonight and I've tried to help him write this Theos lecture. Hopefully it'll go well I'm sure it will. You know he's a good example of what can happen if you try to acquiesce too much to the secular hegemony that's out there. The secular dominance that's out there. You've got to be careful to be distinctively Christian in a plural public square. I think what secularism teaches is if anything is that it's a totalising creed and if you give it an inch it will take a mile. So the first thing I would say is to just stand on the Word of God in terms of how you practically engage with this. Trust God to give you what you need. The second thing is courage. I don't think being a leader in public life you can bypass this fear around comfort and status is what restricts the influence of

Christians more than anything I believe in public life. So we need to get courage and we need to encourage each other. I think that's really important. And then there's the life of the mind developing a biblical worldview developing knowledge and understanding of secularism a knowledge and understanding of things like human rights and civil liberties is actually also quite important as well. Just understanding the nature of these things because they frame the whole public world that we live in and also accepting and not hiding from the challenges that we have. We need to develop apologetics and confidence in addressing sexuality issues identity issues. We need to address these things head on. We don't need to do it an aggressive and nasty way but if we learn anything from the last 10 years and the situation we're in now with our public policy challenges. If you don't talk about these things other people will talk about them for you so there's a real challenge for all public leaders to stand on the Bible in relation to these issues and speak with confidence.

Simon Barrington: [00:22:48] Fantastic. Now you've recently produced a great resource for churches called Change the world. What is that all about and what's it aimed at doing and how can people get hold of it.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:23:02] It's just got this small aim the small objective of changing the world. And you know we like to start low and see where we go from there. It's basically a four week small group course that any church can do. It's at a very basic level. This is more it's not so much about training and skilling up people as public leaders - we have lots of those courses coming online early next year. This course is about just raising awareness in the church that leading in public life might actually be a good thing and even if people don't feel called to be a public leader themselves it would be really good if they recognised acknowledged and supported people who are public leaders or who are potential public leaders. So it covers things like you know God's creation mandate; what is authority in public life; how has God called us to lead in his image. Things like that on a week to week basis. It's really interesting and the contributions within it. There's a set of videos within it as well are just fantastic - the people are fantastic who've contributed. So we do hope that the church in the UK will make good use of that and there'll be lots more resources coming online next year too.

Simon Barrington: [00:24:18] OK. And where can people get hold of those resources if they are interested in following through.

Dr Dave Landrum: [00:24:23] Well if they go to our website which is www.thepublicleader.com they can find it on there.

Simon Barrington: [00:24:31] OK and I've had a look at that and it says public leadership - be a voice for good and there's a load of resources there in terms of workshops and book reviews and the course and information about how you can get involved in being a leader in public life.

Simon Barrington: [00:24:51] Dave thank you so much for joining us on the podcast today that's fascinating and love the work that you guys are doing to support people who are working out their calling in whatever place that God has placed them the way you're building confidence and encouraging them so appreciate everything you guys are doing. Thanks for joining us on the podcast today.

Peter Wooding: [00:25:10] Thank you Simon.

[00:25:12] Thanks for listening today. Do get in touch and let us know what you think by emailing hello@forge-leadership.com or visiting our website www.forge-leadership.com .