

Forge Podcast with Krish Kandiah

Peter Wooding: [00:00:08] Welcome to the Forge Leadership podcast. Krish Kandiah is our guest today and he talks to Simon Barrington about how the Bible has shaped his leadership, how his experience of fostering led to the creation of a national movement and how challenging it is to stay real and authentic.

Simon Barrington: [00:00:26] Welcome to the Forge Leadership podcast this week I'm joined by Krish Kandiah. Krish is an author, broadcaster and conference speaker. He's founded the charity Home for Good and we're going to talk to him a little bit about that in a little while but he's also a global ambassador for Tearfund. He has written many books many maybe you've read some maybe you've listened to him speaking but we're delighted he can join us today on the Forge Leadership podcast. So Krish welcome.

Krish Kandiah: [00:00:54] It is great to be here.

Simon Barrington: [00:00:56] Hey Krish tell me about your leadership journey deep into your memory and how did it all start for you where did you first realize that you might be a leader and that you have the gifting of a leader and how did that grow over time.

Krish Kandiah: [00:01:12] I think as I look back a key influence on me were mentors who really picked me up, took me under their wing and kind of pushed me out to get me an attempt to try and lead. And it probably started as early as secondary school when there was a Christian Union being formed at our school. There were some brilliant schools workers coming in a couple of times a week and I'd just come to faith through a mate sharing his faith in a chemistry lesson amidst all the bunsen burners and conical flasks there was a mate standing up and telling me that Jesus was the thing that changed his life and I needed to know God personally. And it was those schools workers that really thought you know let's see what happens if we encourage Krish to start sharing his testimony. They would meet with me once a week, there was a guy called Darrell and there was a Bible Study around his house each week. We'd talk about mates who were asking big questions about life and he was prompting me on how I might respond. But he let me into more than just the Bible, he let me into his life and just how he relates to his wife and how he raised his kids and just modelled something of the grace of God that really stuck with me. And then I started to seek out those kind of mentors as I moved on to university and joined a local church really quickly and I could just see in some of the leaders of that Church just brilliant Godly character. And so I just went up to them and said is there any chance. You know I'm new to University, I love Jesus but I don't want to lose my faith here, I want to stand for Jesus, would you help me. Two elders, one each week would meet me and do Bible Study, prayer, talk about mission and how I might be able to live for Jesus whilst at University. Right through my life there's been those kind of men and women that have invested into my life.

Simon Barrington: [00:03:01] That's fantastic. I speak to many people who want to find mentors but actually find it really difficult to do that. How have you gone about that. How have you made that happen and what kind of advice would you have for people who are looking to grow their leadership skills and think I could really do with some mentors. How would you advise them to go about it?

Krish Kandiah: [00:03:22] I think you do have to be proactive. I feel you can't just kind of sit there and wait for someone to approach you. You've got to go and ask and I've never been turned down and you know people are kind of excited. I've think some mentors are nervous to offer because they don't want to impose, but if someone comes up and says "could you" and don't ask for too much. I just said would you be willing to meet with me. I didn't say how often and I have a range-finding

meeting to see if there's some chemistry. See if what you thought you understood about the person you are asking to mentor you to see if it's going to work out. And then just let it kind of grow naturally I suppose. For some people they are mentors to me and I see them really regularly. Other people tend to be more in crisis moments. I've got a big decision to make or something I'm wrestling with but we've established trust over the years. I can phone them up and say look can we make some time can I just talk these things. I could really use another mind and heart and work these things through. And I think the other thing for me is there are they talk about three different types of mentors don't they in the Bible. Whether you've got a Paul figure - someone whose further on in their faith and I've definitely had those role models in my life. They sometimes talk about a Barnabas figure, someone whose alongside you who is a peer. Not necessarily in a different situation but actually being in a similar life stage to you and then they talk about Timothy's so actually rather than just being a consumer of input from mentors are their other younger Christians you could be influencing and blessing. So I've tried in my life to have a bit of a balance between those three types of mentoring relationships.

Simon Barrington: [00:04:58] Fantastic. And how would you describe your core values that you bring to leading. What are the kind of things that really shape who you are as a leader and how you lead as well.

Krish Kandiah: [00:05:12] Yes that's a tough question. I know what I aspire to whether I accomplish it or not is different. I really want to be a person of integrity. I want what I say and what I do to match up as much as possible. It's very hard to ask people to do things that you're not willing to do yourself. So the call as a preacher and a Bible teacher and communicator I don't feel it's fair to ask people to go beyond what I'm willing to do myself so that sets a standard then doesn't it. If Scripture is informing me about justice I've got to call me and my family to live it out before I call others to do so. So that's quite high value to me.

Simon Barrington: [00:05:56] Yeah. And what what what kind of checks and balances have you got in place on the integrity piece. Because that seems to be a struggle for lots of leaders actually. You know we want to live lives of integrity. We want the promises that we make to actually be delivered. We want the things that we say we're going to do to be done but sometimes we need people to say hard things into our lives don't we when they don't quite match up. with their claim.

[00:06:25] Yeah, definitely. So I think what those mentors still play a role in my life. You know people that I was in touch with as an 18 year old university student are still in my life I see them, speak to them. So that kind of longevity of relationship gives people a lot of poeple permission to speak stuff into my life and to be honest my wife is a really helpful reality check in that you know we'll prep stuff together, we write all our books together and again she can call us out and say well, you know I know we said that in the book, you know, we need to make sure we living this and what does that look like and that's really helpful. And then the local church. I'm really involved in my local church and I've been in the same Church for the last 10 years. We moved to the town because there was a church plant happening that we could participate in. I've been in the leadership of that church not as the senior Pastor but as part of the leadership team And so again it grounds you. People know who they see you day to day. And so this is I think sometimes particularly for platform preachers our relationship with the church is often complicated or non-existent. And for me there's a really high value that the local church really matters.

Simon Barrington: [00:07:37] Yeah and that's kind of a really a health check isn't it for anybody who has a platform isn't it. Were are you grounded, who are the significant long term relationships who are speaking into your life and how they shaping you. Krish, that't fantastic. Now you are a Bible teacher, How has Scripture shaped your view on leadership and the kind of leader you should be.

Krish Kandiah: [00:07:59] Oh scripture, because I believe God speaks so clearly through the Bible and in one sense he mediates every other form of his communication through scripture. So if I feel I've got a prophetic word or a leading from God, I'm always going to run that through the filter of scripture to see whether it's just my imagination or just my ambition speaking and so scripture performs the baseline or the middle C or you know the kind of tuning fork that assesses everything I'm trying to do. And if you look back at the writing that we've done over the years it is always based on in some form or another the exposition of Scripture and allowing large chunks of the Biblical narrative to set the tone. And to me that's a real journey. I was teaching at College at Oxford University, Wycliffe Hall and my main thrust in life was evangelism and Apologetics. It was through the study of scripture, through the role modelling of godly mentors that this whole area of vulnerable children came on my radar. How had I missed it. Why hadn't I seen it. There was a sense of an Aha moment when that whole facet of God's concern for the vulnerable really came alive for me and it changed the direction of my life, my family make up, my ministry, my writing, my speaking and so I would say Scripture has really been the backbone of that major shift in our lives and our leadership.

Simon Barrington: [00:09:27] And what does that practically look like for you in the way that you engage in scripture on a daily, weekly, monthly basis as as you're allowing yourself to be a Bible centered leader. People will be really interest in how that shapes out in practice.

Krish Kandiah: [00:09:45] We've got to read it that's definitely a given. A lot of people say they don't like to read separately to what they're preparing to speak on and I actually don't hold to that. And I think that you know as God is challenging me in Scripture then I've got something to say. And so the Scriptures challenged me, I've wrestled with it and tried to think through and understand it myself and therefore I'm ready to share. So for example when we wrote Paradoxology - why Christianity was never meant to be simple - that book is basically all the parts of the Bible that I most struggled to understand. So the book is therapy. It's me going - Help God - I don't get it. And so I felt if these were the things I was wrestling with and God was really challenging me that gives me something to say. The same with God is Stranger - I just became - partly through the whole refugee crisis - more aware of God's concern for the outsider for the foreigners, the aliens, the strangers to us. So it was through exploring that as the book forms and then that becomes the basis of my preaching. And so you know if every Sunday I'm discovering new things either through hearing God's word preached or by preaching it there' something live about engaging with Scripture and teaching it to other people and not jsut fluffy stories and allowing Scripture to form the basis of what you're saying. I think it was actually J.B.Phillips the Bible translator/commentator. He said that it had been the scariest thing he'd ever done trying to translate the Bible into modern day English. He said it's like trying to rewire a house while the electricity is still on - and that's how preaching feels when you're really submitting what you are saying to what Scripture has to say you find, sometimes in your own sermons, you're being convicted along with the rest of the audience. And so that's that's that's how Scripture continually forms me.

Simon Barrington: [00:11:52] Fantastic. Now you mentioned about a heart for the vulnerable and the least in society that has shaped your work over the last decade or so. Tell us about how Home for Goods came about and also the way that you lead that movement.

Krish Kandiah: [00:12:11] So Home For Good really started in my heart mind when we first welcomed a vulnerable child into our family. We became approved to be foster parents and then we got a call from social services, saying there was a little baby that needs picking up from Hospital and just been born. The Mother wasn't able to care for the baby so we went to the hospital and I felt it was very significant that the first thing we did was to put this baby in a Moses basket. And I though hang on, Moses, you know the first foster child in the Bible, the first adopted children in the

Bible I thought, Wow, this is in the heart of God. Then when we brought the baby home our neighbour had she said I know you we're going to have a child fostered at some point or another so I've been making this quilt for her or him whoever it's going to be and here it is. And she said look this child's had the most difficult start in life and I want to give her something unique that nobody else would have. And it was really touching. And then people from our Church started to come round and say that although we do usually do this for people that haven't had their own children, but we've done a meal rota for you so every day someones going to bring you a meal because it's going to pretty challenging having your own kids and this new child in your life and so we wanted to stand with you. And it just became viral within our church. Other people start to become interested in either in standing alongside us or fostering or adopting for themselves. And so we became more drawn into that world and realised the huge numbers at that time it was around 5000 children in the UK were waiting for adoption and we needed another nine thousand foster families. And I was working for the Evangelical Alliance at that time and had good relationships with Care for the Family and the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service. When I looked at their databases combined we had a reach of about 15,000 churches. So we thought, hang on, thgis is really doable. You know if we just had one family per Church who could foster or adopt and the rest of the church wraparound them like out Church had wrapped around us and we could meet the entire need and we thought you know this this is fantastic. And I think for us the three levels that it changed for us one was this is all about kids. This is not about finding children for families. You know there are organizations that do that. If it's infertility and you want a child. That's a really painful thing and the Church doesn't deal with it well but you often want a baby to replace the child you were unable to have. But most of the children waiting are a lot older. You know they're five, six seven and they may have a brother or sister or they might have special needs. So we're saying this is it that's about finding children for families. It's about finding families for children. It's a lot of people who already have kids could step up and that would transform these children's lives. The second thing is we think this begins to help the church transform its worship and when the Bible often states in the Churches worship the key thing that God is loking for isn't actually brilliant singing although I love to sing. It isn't even amazing Bible teaching although I love teaching the Bible. It's actually, how have you cared for the widow and the orphan. That's James 1:27, thats Isaiah 1, that's Isaiah 58 and a whole range of other Bible verses. That God's estimation of our worship is how we show care for those that most in need. So we think that's important but I think finally, the thing that will really change if we manage to really respond as a national Church to this is the national perception of Christianity. A lot of people are very nervous to come out as Christian because they assume that people hearing them will think they're a bigot, or a racist, or a hypocrite or a homophone and you know people have very negative perception of the Church. Sometimes the church is its own worst enemy. Some of the things we go off on are those kind of issues. Actually I think if we're able to demonstrate practically the grace and radical hospitality of God, I think that's a turning point for how the church is perceived and therefore had a gospel is received in our nation and so I'm really excited doubt it and that's how we know started the movement.

Simon Barrington: [00:16:26] And where are you at now, how has the movement grown. How many churches is it in. What do you see happening amongst the church. Do you see that that change that you were excited about and had a vision about is actually you know taking shape.

Krish Kandiah: [00:16:44] I'm so excited. I mean almost every week I get an email from someone saying you know we heard about the message that Home for Good is calling the nation to. And we've responded - we just adopted two children. We're foster parents. We've turned our home into a refugee welcome centre or we're looking after 4 Eritrean young women that have just arrived in the UK and have been discovered to have been trafficked. We're hearing incredible stories. We're hearing about people that are willing to take sibling groups of four so a family that has four children has taken another four children so that brothers and sisters don't have to be separated. These stories are amazing and as a movement. Home for Good the organisation has a grown from me and a mate

who quit our jobs at the EA and I think we're up to 22 staff now. Not everybody is full time. Most of the people who work for us have a personal engagement with this. They are either adopted or have fostered or adopted other children. There is this sense that this seems to be a really important issue that God's got his finger on at the moment for our nation. If you've been following the news recently the number of abuse scandals it seems to be appearing not just here in the UK but around the world. And there's a lot of outrage out there, but I'm saying okay children have faced abuse and violence. The other day there was a story of 13 children that had been abused by their parents and locked up in a garage. It is terrible but who is going to step up and over these children new homes. Outrage is great, but let's turn that into actions so we're really finding great response.

Simon Barrington: [00:18:26] I see that happening in my own church as well with families stepping up to adopt or foster who wouldn't have otherwise thought of doing that because of the kind of messages that you and others are talking about in calling the church to action which is fantastic and Krish you know we're friends on Facebook and Instagram and things and I often see pictures of you outside Parliament or in front of Number 10 and going in or at the BBC speaking on Pause for thought. Do you feel that that message is getting into the public square that the church is taking a level of responsibility to look after the vulnerable. And what kind of voice has that giving you into public policy and what are you encouraged about in that space.

Krish Kandiah: [00:19:15] No it has been an incredible privilege to be able to go to government and say that the church is here to help you do what you know you need to do. You know when a child comes into care they are a child of the state. The state is their corporate parent and the state is struggling to find the right people or enough of the right kind of people to be foster parents or adoptive parents. So it's super exciting to be able to say on behalf of hundreds maybe thousands of Christian's that are starting to do this. On behalf of churches are not just preaching the great message but actually demonstrating practical support for foster carers and their children and we're here to help and it's such a lovely way to come to them. Sometimes we have to come with a strong voice particularly around the refugee crisis where I really think that as a nation I think we dropped the ball, partly because of the whole Brexit conversation. But in the end our overall attitude is actually we're trying to help the government do what it has a legal responsibility to do and that what we are here to do. To seek the welfare of the city, seek the welfare of the nation as Jeremiah would put it. So I think that's been really exciting. I think in terms of how things are going we're really excited if we look back and see where we started from, just a crazy idea around the kitchen table to where we are now it's super exciting but as we look forward there is still a long way to go. I sometimes reflect you know I do work for Tearfund and I'm really happy to be an ambassador for the work they're doing overseas. And the amount of energy, effort and money that has to be spent to try to get people to write a postcard to their MP about climate change or tax or whatever it's really hard to get them to do that or to ask people to give £10 a month it's really hard but you know what I'm asking people to open their homes, to welcome a vulnerable child into their lives, love them as their own. 24/7. Forever. That's a really high ask so it is get to be a slow burn. It's going to take people a while to get to their minds and their hearts into this. There is normally a lag. It is not at the end of the service come forward if you want to adopt a child I've got three here waiting. It doesn't quite work like that it's often a seed that gets sown and it takes people a while to get to get their heads around it and you know I've got to have patience that, that can happen. I mean that was my story it took me a while to get my head around it.

Krish Kandiah: [00:21:37] Yeah. All these things take time don't they. When you go in and talk to government is the church well received. Are Christians well received. Is the message that the church is acting well received or are there some real challenges or is there in still in terms of how Christians are perceived within government.

Krish Kandiah: [00:21:56] I think it is mixed. I think negatively I think we are somewhat

unknown is only being interested in certain hot button issues and that's the only time people will contact their MP. Normally with a kind of nagging postcard or a letter. Even Christian MP's feel that sometimes, that there not getting, that people don't understand the challenges they face. They're not support for the kind of boring day to day challenging stuff that they have to do. And so there is that side to it. But I think they recognise that when the refugee crisis hit and we out to our database that the government's said we were going to take 20000 refugees over five years and the majority of them are going to be unaccompanied refugee children that's what we were told. 1000's of people came forward to say let's we want to help. And when we're going to them to say that there is an appetite in the church and actually on that campaign outside of the church too. They're excited you know so we get a call when some disaster happens and say can you help. And we say, yes we can. So they recognise that church is one of the only mobilising social institutions that really exists out there, of course other faith groups as well but still the church is the biggest and they can recognise that and it's about how do we help this attitude to be normal throughout the year and also for the government to realise that we're not just there for emergencies but we've got other roles to play as well. So I think it's mixed and I hope I can be a bit of an ambassador for the church and what we can do when it's great and I hope I can be a little bit of an ambassador for politics because for a lot of Christians they're very nervous about political engagement and I think it's really important part of our role as Christian citizens.

Simon Barrington: [00:23:40] And what would you say to people who are listening to this and thinking about how can I get involved in Home for Good. How can I get involved in politics. How can I get involved in standing up in the public square. How can I stand up for biblical values in a pluralistic and post-modern society. I'm afraid, I'm nervous, I'm fearful. Encourage me Krish how do I do that.

Krish Kandiah: [00:24:06] Ah, great question. Well I would love for people to get in touch with me personally. I'm always keen to connect. As you know I'm pretty active on social media so if people have questions just do drop me a line and we have a helpful that's always ready for people to phone up. There's a friendly Christian person on the other end of that line really keen to talk to you. So I'll give you the number is 0300 0010995 and we've actually got political advocacy team here now and so if people are particularly moved about the plight of vulnerable children and how they might lend their voice or lend their skill then get in touch and we'll be back to you very soon. There's some really big things going through government at the moment. It would be really great for more Christians to speak about and maybe that could be an entry point. We're really keen that we start somewhere that doesn't sound like the only things that the Church is interste in so why not come alongside us as we speak up on behalf of vulnerable children. So that's a really cross party thing you know we don't belong to any political party as an organisation we're keen to challenge, we're keen to encourage all political parties to take responsibility for vulnerable kids. So why not join our our way of speaking out. We really want to get that tone right. You're so right we've got to understand this particular moment. We're not living in Jerusalem. The Old Testament / New Testament. We can't call the nation to obey Biblical principles that they don't believe in agree with, we have got to persuade people that this is for the common good. Some of the Christian things that we are for standing up for. And we can't expect society, a secular society in one sense to abide by Christian values but we can speak up for them and show their value, their worth in that pluralistic society. And getting that tone right between challenge and encouragement is something we working hard on. Again if people have got expertise they would love to lend us we'd love to hear about it.

Simon Barrington: [00:26:06] I know you guys are doing fantastic work and I really applaud that and really encouraged by what you're sharing with us about Home for Good. Krish, through your leadership journey you don't found an organisation or be a global ambassador or engage in politics without making some mistakes along the way and learning things along the way. What are the things they didn't teach you in Bible college or didn't teach you in university about leadership that

you learned along the way that you'd like to pass on to people who are thinking you know I'd like to have a go at this stuff I'd like to get engaged. I want to be a leader, I believe God's gifting me in that way. What would you pass on to them.

Simon Barrington: [00:26:54] It's

Krish Kandiah: [00:26:54] It's a great question Simon there are too many things I guess but a couple that might be helpful. One is to ask more questions don't just accept things on face value ask questions. I know for us before we started Home for Good we really spent a lot of time in research to find out what was already going on out there. We didn't want to replicate the wheel. There's enough things that need fixing in the world without there being two or three or four Christian charities all doing the same thing. So we we're really looking for a USP. What is it that we alone could bring. And as far as we could see there was no-one championing this cause around fostering and adoption within the church and wider community. So that took a lot of time and we were ready to kind of hand it on to say well we'll get behind someone else's vision if they share it already. So we really weren't looking to start a new entity. In my estimation there probably too many entities out there at the moment and there should be more collaboration and joining up and synergy and so before you start thing then ask a lot of options. I think there have been times in my life I've been kind of dazzled by power or status and again my wife's been really great at helping me see through that. I think looking back there are times I should have listened to my wife before taking on certain role. You know we we should listen to our spouses. They know us really well. We've committed to join our lives together with them. You know I suppose those are some of my regrets that I didn't heed the wisdom of my dearest, closest friend at some key points of my life. Say that God in His grace is so amazing that he can take even looking back what seemd like not really very good decisions and turn them the good. And that's the incredible redemptive power of our God. But you know things could have been different if I'd listened.

Simon Barrington: [00:29:00] Krish thanks for being so honest with us. Thanks for sharing your heart with us today for leadership and for the way that you lead the way that you give the church a voice for the most vulnerable in society into wider society as well. Appreciate everything you're doing. Are there are a few things that people could pray for you for us we come to a close.

Krish Kandiah: [00:29:24] We really appreciate your prayers so many opportunities in front of us. This whole area of looked after children in care is massive with a huge number of issues. You know for example there are too many orphanages in the world. There need to be children not living in institutions but in families. And the biggest supporters we can find of orphanages around the world are well-meaning loving Christians. Often in places like the UK, the US and Australia. And I'm really convicted about that but is that something I need to champion and fight or is that someone elses fight. So hearing from God, you know what the scope of this particular calling is really value that. As someone who's trying to lead an organization that will out live him you know how do I lead Home for Good in a way that I don't actually become the inhibitor for it that's something I'm figure out. We've got a fantastic team and most of the good work that is done by people that not everybody knows the names of you know. People like Phil Green the CEO, an absolutely brilliant guy and I feel my role is is to release that potential and to encourage it on and use the opportunities that God has given me to speak as well. Again getting that balance right is something that we're wrestling with. So those would be the two big ones.

Simon Barrington: [00:30:52] Krish Kandiah thank you so much for joining us on the podcast today. We'll continue to pray for you and just encourage people who've been challenged by what Krish said to get in touch with the Home for Good team. If you're challenged about adoption or fostering or speaking out for Biblical values in society then Krish is your man to get in touch with and the Home for Good. Krish Kandiah thanks so much.

Krish Kandiah: [00:31:16] My pleasure.

Peter Wooding: [00:31:17] If you enjoyed today's interview you can hear both Simon and Krish live at week three of the Keswick Convention this year which runs from the 28th of July to the 3rd of August. Thanks so much for listening to the Forge Leadership podcast. For great content every week please subscribe at www.forge-leadership-podcast.com .