



**DYNAMIC GOSPEL
NEW EUROPE**

CONVERSATION
AND GATHERING

March 2021 Conversation

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Welcome

The last year has been an extraordinary time for all of us. Many of us are weary from all the challenges that adapting to Covid has posed for life and ministry. So we decided that this month's Lausanne Europe Conversation should speak to our hearts as much as to our heads. There is an inspiring article on Resilience by the Spanish author and psychiatrist Pablo Martinez. And to accompany that, there is another podcast that looks at how resilience relates to discipleship.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email us at conversation@lausanneeurope.org

And if you are just starting your Impact Group, or are confused about what they are about, then check out the introduction pages to the [Conversation](#) and [Impact Groups](#) to find out more.

Instructions

1. Introductions and Prayer

Begin with prayer but if there is someone new to the group, make sure everyone introduces themselves.

2. Resilience: Hope and Patience Embrace Each Other

Resilience, patience, contentment, and hope. Pablo Martinez explores the dimensions of each of these important words and then expounds further as he deals with the questions and answers that emerged from his presentation. Before you have your Impact Group, make sure you have read the article.

Pablo Martinez's article considers how we can move from what is our instinctive response to adversity as human beings (resistance/resilience) to the more distinctive responses of patience, contentment, and hope. Use the following questions to process the article in your Impact Group:

1. What has helped you to be resilient over this past year?
2. How have you developed patience, contentment, and hope in these difficult times?
3. We have all faced challenges over this time, but more than that, we have suffered loss – the end of lives, dreams, or events that should have taken place. Have you taken time to mourn these? If so, how have you mourned without ending up in bitterness?
4. How would you answer the question that was put to Pablo: “How do you build a faith that overcomes obstacles and solidly believes in the midst of great difficulties?”
5. Were there any other insights from the article or the Q and A that particularly impacted you?

3. Discipleship Podcast

We would also like you to listen to another Podcast in preparation for this month's Impact Group. Jay Eastman and Kristian Lande talk with Slovenian youth leader Zala Cempre about the challenges of making disciples during a pandemic but also how the church has pulled together in new ways too.

We hope you enjoyed listening to the podcast, both the word of encouragement from Jay Eastman and the interview with Zala Cempre. We would now like you to discuss the podcast in your Impact Group. Here are some questions to get you started.

1. In these times that require resilience, where have you seen God's faithfulness?
2. How have you seen the Church remain connected and prosper in her mission over the past year? In what ways might she do better?
3. Have you struggled to lead yourself and others in disciple-making over this time? Have you been tempted to give up and, if so, what did you do?

4. Prayer

Always make sure that you leave enough time to pray together every time you meet. Here are the prayer points for this month's Conversation:

1. Take a moment to find comfort in the promise that God knows every detail of our lives and we can trust that He walks with us; He strengthens us and encourages us on this journey of discipleship, even in the face of difficulties (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).
2. Pray for guidance and strength for those of us whose hearts are growing weary or getting discouraged by the current circumstances.
3. Pray for God to grow our character in patience, contentment, and hope, as we develop our resilience in being disciples and in making disciples (Romans 5:4-5).

5. Make Your Contribution to the Conversation

We really want to hear back from your Impact Group after each session. Please find a few minutes to summarise what you hear from God, the highlights of the discussion, and any questions that were raised, in the comments box immediately below. See you next month.

[GO TO THE CONVERSATION](#)

Resilience:

Hope and Patience Embrace Each Other

By Pablo Martinez

[*Go to the article online*](#)

“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield it’s valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.” (James. 5:7-8)

Resignation seems to be the word that best sums up the present moment (according to sociologists). After a period of struggle and resistance has come a period of weariness and resignation. People feel disoriented, frightened, and anxious about the future.

Why? What is going wrong? Resistance (resilience) alone is not enough. It must be accompanied by patience and

hope. The three form an inseparable whole. This (divine) triangle shows us not only how to hope, but also what to expect in the hour of trial.

This Christian worldview of patience is admirably described in Romans 5:3-5:

“...we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame...”

We need to learn to develop patience in trial and hope in (the times of) waiting. Then we will discover that God can transform our adversities into opportunities.

Three words in our title: resilience, patience and hope. They form an inseparable whole. We also add a fourth element: contentment:

- Resilience: natural adaptation
- Patience: bridge to acceptance
- Contentment: supernatural acceptance
- Hope: nourishment of patience

1 RESILIENCE: NATURAL ADAPTATION

Walking along the beach in a nature reserve on the Spanish island of Menorca, I observed how the vegetation, both bushes and trees, was strongly sloped in one direction. The strong north wind, very typical of this part of the island, has shaped a curious and highly symbolic landscape. It was spectacular to contemplate the thick trunks of the pines bent as if they were a rubber toy. Why are there trees that split when the hurricane blows and others, on the contrary, adapt to the force of the wind by bending? The answer is important because therein lies their ability to survive. The key word is flexibility. The more rigid a tree is – just like an object – the more likely it is to break under the effect of pressure or a strong impact.

Conversely, the more flexible it is, the more it will adapt to intense pressure without breaking.

When faced with an ordeal, people are like trees: we have an adaptive capacity that allows us to resist and reorganize our lives after the impact of a traumatic experience. This “elastic” capacity is known today as resilience: the ability to recover after a trauma. A “resilient” person is like the trees of Menorca: in the face of the wind, he or she adapts.

Here we are today: there has been adaptation to the onslaught of the pandemic. This is the current momentum. But resilience alone is not enough in human beings. If it is not accompanied by something else, it can end in resignation, stoicism at best, or fatalism, bitterness, and nihilism at worst.

Resilience is necessary, but not sufficient. It is based on a materialistic, evolutionary concept of the human being. In fact, the original word comes from metallurgy and physics. It was only later that it was applied to human behaviour (Boris Cyrulnik). It is no coincidence that today this concept has become fashionable without critical discrimination: it fits well with the way of thinking, the worldview of the world that is based on a materialistic

anthropology. People need more than resilience because we are more than trees or metals.

2 PATIENCE: BRIDGE TO ACCEPTANCE

Beyond resilience we must develop patience. Patience is the emotional and spiritual ingredient that distinguishes us from animals and objects when facing a trauma. If resilience is an instinctive reaction, patience is the distinctive reaction of humans in the ordeal. It is also the bridge to acceptance.

We need to understand the concept well because people associate patience with resignation (the stoic concept is not the Christian one). The idea of patience in the Bible is so rich that it requires two complementary words.

- Perseverance: to persist
- Strength of mind: to resist

“May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.” (2 Thess. 3:5). If love defines the essence of God, patience defines the character of Christ.

Patience is strength of mind: Resist

The word used in the original *makrothumia* is active and positive, a far cry from the popular (Stoic) idea of patience. It literally means “great courage”. It alludes to a strong, resilient spirit, which remains steadfast in adversity. This patience does not give up, does not give in to difficult circumstances. It is the opposite of a cowardly, faint-hearted person, who “drowns in a glass of water”.

It is far removed from an attitude of resignation, a conformism that is born of impotence and leads to fatalism. On the contrary, Christian patience, fruit of the Holy Spirit, does not resign but struggles, does not crumble but affirms itself in the face of adversity, is not passive but actively searches for ways out.

Now, we have said that patience is a bridge to somewhere. Patience generates fruit, it expresses itself in a reality that the Bible calls contentment. Contentment is the visible expression of patience.

3 CONTENTMENT: SUPERNATURAL ACCEPTANCE

If resilience is natural adaptation, contentment is supernatural acceptance. It is born of this patience which is divine in its origin, the mark of Christ and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

"I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation..... I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Phil. 4:11-13).

When the apostle Paul wrote these words, he was confined in Rome (probably under house arrest, not in prison). In any case, an involuntary confinement in harsh circumstances. He was not addressing his readers from a position of comfort, but from a deeply troubling situation, and in direct danger of death. Where did he get the strength to send such a serene message in the midst of trials?

He himself gives us the answer: "I have learned to be content". The original word implies a connotation of independence (autarkeia): not to depend on

circumstances, not to be tied to problems. To learn contentment, therefore, is to achieve an attitude of a certain independence from life events and not to be trapped by them.

Contentment leads us to see, think and live differently in the face of trauma. In our days we would speak of acceptance, an acceptance that is not resignation or fatalism or passivity, but the deep conviction that God works his purposes in my life not in spite of the circumstances, but through them. The conviction that for God there is no waste material in my life. He uses it all, recycles it for our good. We could say that God is the great recycler, a specialist in transforming our adversities into opportunities. This is the essence of acceptance.

Paul concludes the text with a phrase that has inspired millions of people: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). That is, I can be stronger than any adversity, overcome any circumstance when I am in Christ, "connected" to Christ. That is where we see most vividly the difference between natural adaptation - resilience - and genuine acceptance that is supernatural. Being in Christ is the source of our patience.

4 HOPE, THE FOOD OF PATIENCE

“Stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.” (James. 5:8)

Patience is inseparable from hope. In fact, it is nourished, nourished by hope and in turn generates hope in a glorious divine circle (Rom. 5:4-5). We could say that patience and hope merge in an embrace. We come to the climax of our theme.

“Hope is to life what oxygen is to the lungs” (E. Brunner) But the key question is what do we hope for? Our hope has, of course, a present dimension. In this case we anxiously await the end of an epidemic. But this hope is not enough and can end in frustration if our expectation is not fulfilled. We do not have the assurance that “everything will be fine”.

Hope does not stop in the here and now, it flies higher and reaches into eternity. Life on earth is a precious good, but it is not the supreme good. The supreme good is eternal life. That is why the Lord warned: “And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul” (Mt. 10:28). We are impressed that this text precedes the

consoling promise of God’s care “for even your hairs are all numbered” (Mt. 10:30).

It is here that the Christian hope allows us to glimpse HINTS OF ETERNITY. James mentions twice the coming of the Lord when speaking of patience. This is no coincidence. The vision of the second coming of Christ is the vision of eternity and “affirms our heart”, strengthens our patience. When we glimpse the glory of eternity with Christ our contentment is renewed and the present tribulation becomes “light and brief” (2 Cor. 4:17-18). Therefore, hope is the moving, motivating force of patience.

Christian hope is not a concept, but a person, Christ; it is not an abstract idea but a living experience; it is not based on a future desire but on a past fact; it does not say “all will be well”, but “all was well at the cross”. What Christ did one day and what he continues to do today is the basis of hope that strengthens patience and complements resilience.

Conclusion: So that, “we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have

this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." (Hebrews 6:18,19)

"And may the same Jesus Christ our Lord, and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." (2 Thess. 2:16-17).

Q&A

Q: The concept in the face of trial, in the face of difficult circumstances, the "Oh poor me, look what happened to me" speech, where would it fall within these concepts that you mentioned, and the opposite reaction which would be anger at the circumstances. Where would these two reactions fall into these concepts? And when a person falls into depression (even if he is a believer), what has happened? Is it that resilience has gone alone, and has not been accompanied by patience and hope?

A: That is a very interesting question. Let's start with the first part. There are two key concepts that are important to differentiate. One thing is self-pity, and another thing is

lament. They are two totally different concepts. Self-pity is thinking that you are the most miserable, that everything affects you, that all bad things happen to you and that only good things happen to others. Then, you fall into this attitude of self-pity that would be summarized with the phrase: "How unhappy I am and how well life is going for others". Self-pity is emotionally pernicious, it is toxic because it can lead to self-destruction, but the most dangerous thing is that self-pity can lead to bitterness. And bitterness is obviously a sin. Bitterness is a sin. Self-pity itself is not a sin, but the consequence, which is bitterness, is. Therefore, we must avoid self-pity, it is not good, it is not positive, neither emotionally nor spiritually.

But having said this, lament does have its place in the Word of God, and in fact we can elaborate, it is one of the themes that I like to deal with, an authentic theology of lament. You only have to take some Psalms, for example Psalm 137 "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept, remembering Zion". There is a place for lament. And what shall we say about a monumental text such as Romans chapter 8 where we are told that creation groans, weeps, but not only creation, but we ourselves weep. And the Holy Spirit also weeps, intercedes for us with unspeakable

groanings, therefore, there is a place for lamentation. Lament is biblical. There is a right lament that far from annoying or angering the Lord, is pleasing because it is the expression of seeing and living the reality in this world, seeing the evil with the eyes of God. It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus says: "Blessed are those who mourn, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted". And the Lord Jesus himself as he approached Jerusalem mourned, wept over it. Therefore, it is very important to avoid falling into self-pity, but lament, far from being negative, is I would say a form of catharsis, or healthy expression that helps us to assimilate the experiences we are having. "Weep with those who weep", says the Lord, right?

The second part, the second reaction: anger. Well, it is more or less the same thing. This theme, in fact, I develop it quite thoroughly in the book of the "Sting in the Flesh", also a little bit in "Beyond Pain", since they are the two books that have been mentioned. By the way, the concept of resilience I explain it quite well in chapter 3 of "Sting in the Flesh". There is anger that can be sin because it is expressed against God. But there is another feeling of anger that is not sin because it is not expressed against

God, but before God, before God. The problem is not complaining to God but complaining about God.

An example clearly helps us to understand it, the prophet Habakkuk. In Habakkuk, the word used in verse 1 of chapter 2 is very strong. He says: "I will wait to see what God will answer me concerning my complaint". The word is 'complaint' in the original. Habakkuk is making a complaint to God. However, we know that Habakkuk fought whilst embracing God. This is what the name Habakkuk means "he who wrestles embraced". Habakkuk wrestled embracing God, didn't he? Therefore, it is not a sin to expose our anger, our wrath before God. The problem, the danger is in complaining about God. That is what distinguishes complaining or anger from faithfulness; a position of submission or complaining from rebellion. This is the big difference, isn't it?

Well, I have gone on for a long time, but the question needed a long answer. That is why I hope these concepts will help. It is legitimate to lament, self-pity is not good, it is legitimate to get angry, but not against God but before God. This would be the summary.

Q: Thank you Paul. I liked the part in which you talked about triumphalism because we have accepted the slogan “everything is going to be all right”, “we will all get out of this together” and that kind of proclamations. And I don’t know what guidelines you would give us so that, especially with children or with others, we can avoid this triumphalism and have a more focused position. Above all, thinking that children are given these messages as a little pill to give them optimism, what would you give us?

A: Interesting, too. I would say that our society moves between two extremes, right? One is the extreme of magical thinking. The hoping and believing that everything will be fine, magically. For example, the emphasis in our society is on solutions. We want solutions to everything. The solution is automatic, it’s instantaneous, it’s magic. The word solution does not appear anywhere in the Bible. On the other hand, the word exit does appear. There is a very important difference between a solution and a way out, isn’t there? The verse I mentioned before from 1 Cor. 10:13. What God promises us are not solutions to problems. What God promises us are ways out.

But let’s notice that the concept of a way out gives us two very important ideas that we must transmit to children. The concept of a way out of a problem is first of all a realistic concept. It is not an idealistic concept, (in a positive sense) nor is it pessimistic. Not everything will go well, not everything will go badly. For some things will go well, some things will not go so well, and some things will go badly. This is the balance to have. Realism is very important. On the other hand, the word “exit” implies the idea of effort. First, you have to look for the way out, you have to inquire and second, when you have the way out you have to walk. You have to walk the path that the exit has shown you, right? This is the path, for example, that the people of Israel had to walk. Well, for 40 years. They probably didn’t like the way out, but it was the way out that God had provided. Let us not forget, in this sense, that the outlets that God provides are part of this recycling process. Recycling the waste material of our life, right?

So, to summarize, I would say to children it is important, as well as to adults of course. Convey to them a message that is not magical thinking, triumphalism that does not keep its feet on the ground, a totally blind idealism. In this respect, it is clear that one of the specialties of politicians

today is to sell this kind of magical thinking, isn't it? And we see it, not only in parties of one colour, but also of the other colour. All parties tend to sell this kind of thinking. And not to fall into the other extreme that we talked about, which is the extreme of pessimism, of fatalism and of nihilism, right?

Q: How do you build a faith that overcomes obstacles and solidly believes in the midst of great difficulties? How can you build a living faith in the midst of situations such as when your business is about to close, and you are going to get into debt or the need to search for a job?

A: It is a work of two, rather, it's a three-part job. I like this expression "building faith." In fact, the concept that appears in Paul's epistles is that of "growing in faith," isn't it? The idea of growth is already a process. To advance to a mature, perfect, adult state. This is the word "teleios" in Greek. "He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" the word here is to mature, to grow, right? But in this process of growth, of building faith, there are three fundamental elements. On the one hand, your willingness, you yourself. Your desire to learn, to submit, to dispose yourself to understand and apprehend

the will of God. Secondly, there is the work of the Holy Spirit, the great transformer. The Holy Spirit is the great intercessor, but He is also the great transformer. He is the one who really works this process of transformation within us. Growth in faith is not a matter of self-help. We cannot do it by ourselves alone. In the development of faith, the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit is indispensable. The help of God through the Holy Spirit. And the third ingredient, the help of God's people, the church, the brethren. The help of the brethren in the church is very important in our growth, in the construction of this faith. The worst thing a believer can do in times of trial is to isolate himself. Isolation is a serious mistake. It is in times of trial when we most need the communion of the brethren.

Therefore, to summarize: faith in times of trial, in fact at all times, is built with the combination of these three elements: your willingness to grow (like the believers in Berea who scrutinized the Word to see what it said about them) a spirit of investigation, of personal growth. The help of the Holy Spirit, a supernatural help, and the help of the brethren of the church that we cannot underestimate. It is an imperfect help, the church has defects, it has

blemishes, but it is the People of God, it is the body of Christ and it is precious. And we have to learn to value the church not in spite of its defects, but with its defects, but this would be another topic.

Q: People who fall into depression, is it because they have only remained resilient? Many of us can fall into mild or severe depression when faced with situations of pain that extend over time, is it a lack of hope?

A: The fact that a person falls into depression in times of trial, in itself, does not have to have spiritual implications. Depression is an emotional disorder and spiritual implications can come later. But I would say that resilience alone, rather than depression, leads to what we said at the beginning of the presentation. To resignation, to fatalism, to bitterness, to passivity, to stoicism. A little bit of what we find described in the book of Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity", right? In times of trial the depression that can appear is a depression due to emotional exhaustion. And this is an interesting concept, and I am going to address it very briefly.

Testing is an extra drain on emotional energy. We are undergoing a very intense drain on our physical,

emotional and spiritual energies. When we are facing the test, we are in struggle and this leads to a loss, an enormous expenditure of energy. If this emotional, physical and spiritual energy is not adequately replenished we end up like Elijah (1 Kings 18 and 19). A paradigm of depression due to exhaustion, in this case not in the midst of the trial, not in the midst of suffering but paradoxically in the midst of success; victory over the Baals, etc... but Elijah's depression was clearly depression from exhaustion. This is the greatest danger in a testing situation. There are three great dangers in a testing situation. Isolation which we have already mentioned, depression from exhaustion and spiritual bitterness. These are the three great dangers.

To prevent these dangers, we need what I commented before about these three ingredients that build faith in the hour of trial: our predisposition to grow, the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit and the help of the communion of the brethren. Depression in times of trial has a remedy, it has a treatment, it is not something that should frighten us. I would say that in some cases it is a natural response and that it is not so difficult to treat and improve from an emotional exhaustion in the midst of suffering. I am much,

much more concerned about bitterness in the ordeal. It is much, much more difficult to fix bitterness in the trial than depression in the trial. This is why the Lord Jesus said to the apostle Peter in Gethsemane, shortly before the cross, "The devil has asked to sift you as wheat, but I have asked..." The Lord Jesus could ask many things for them. He could ask that the trial be shorter, he could ask that God strengthen them. All this was legitimate, however, the Lord Jesus says: "I have asked that your faith may not fail". Because the weakening of faith, ending up in bitterness is the danger or one of the main dangers in the time of trial.

Q: I am a teacher and I am in contact with students and teachers, how can you transmit what you are saying to people at work who have gone through difficult situations, be it because of the pandemic or something else? Sometimes it is difficult, because you know that much of what you are talking about is based on faith and sometimes I ask myself, what are the little steps I can take to be a blessing to someone who is not a Christian? I say little steps, but maybe steps can be taken that can be a blessing for others, for those who suffer.

A: This is a nice question to end with. Our testimony in the midst of the trial. There is something you can do that probably conveys the most powerful message. It is one of the most powerful evangelistic messages. It is to "be with," to accompany, stand with. When you are at the side of someone who is suffering, you are transmitting a message of irreplaceable, unbeatable love. Therefore, the company in the hour of trial is a powerful instrument, if we can use this word, evangelistic. You are transmitting a message. The second step, I am speaking to you from a personal point of view because this is subjective, would be that they see something different in you, but not different in the sense of eccentric but attractive. Christian holiness does not have to be eccentric but attractive. There is something different. This, if you remember in the biography of C.S. Lewis "Surprised by Joy" he mentions it. He says that when he was in high school or college, I don't remember now, the two most attractive teachers. He was a militant atheist. The two most attractive teachers, the ones I liked the most, the ones I was most attracted to and I wanted somehow to be like them were Christians. And this annoyed me, Lewis says. But it's just that these Christians awakened something in him that attracted him. A holiness that attracted. And I think this is the second little step we

can do. First to accompany, secondly to try to show a holiness an attractive difference and thirdly I would say that the power of the Word of God is absolutely irreplaceable, indispensable. Give him some passage from the Word, share with him the Word of God that is living and effective. Something, some reading either from the Word or some commentary on the Word because the Word of God penetrates, and God speaks through the Word. "How will they believe if there is no one to preach to them?" right? And preaching through the Word is fundamental. I could say many more things, but I believe that these three tools are small steps that God can transform into big steps when it comes to giving testimony of our faith. And let us not try to convince anyone. The Holy Spirit is the one who convinces, we are called to sow, not to convince.

Podcast

Discipleship During the Pandemic

By Krisitan Lande

[*Go to the article online*](#)

Kristian Lande

Before we start this month's podcast interview, Jay Eastman will share on how the article on resilience connects with this podcast on discipleship. So, this is also a word of encouragement to each one of us – for you. We strongly recommend, that you take a moment to sit back and receive. And do pause the audio if you sense that you need to process what you hear.

Jay Eastman

I just want to build a quick bridge from the article, that was so helpful from Pablo Martinez on resilience in this time, and how resilience connects to discipleship and disciple making. Endurance. Resilience is a hallmark of being a

disciple, and walking alongside others, as we make disciples. But the question is: What's necessary in this moment to carry on, to persist in this walk with Jesus ourselves and with others? And it brought me to Hebrews 6. And let me read you quickly from verse 17. So, when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise, which is us, the unchangeable character of his purpose. Beloved, regardless of whether there's a pandemic, or not a pandemic, God has provided in Christ, the unchangeable character of his purpose. He guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement, to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure

and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place, behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone before, as a forerunner on our behalf. And so just quickly, in those words, of being encouraged, and holding fast, we see that Christ alone is our encouragement. That he holds to us fast, even when we are too weak to endure. And out of that strength, we are renewed and encouraged to walk further with him. And then that renewal and encouragement allows us to recast our mission and vision. And that comes in from Mark 1,16 through 18, that Christ invites the disciples to come, follow him, and that he will make us fishers of men, and women, and children. And so please, beloved, hear this disciples and disciple makers: Come today, in the strength, in the hope, in the anchor of Jesus Christ, and follow him anew this day. And he will make us disciple makers - in this day, and this time, in this pandemic - and he will not allow anything to get in the way of his purposes, it is sure and in him. And so I'm just glad to build that bridge from resilience and what it means to be in the shore hands of Christ. And then through this interview, look at what discipleship can look like in his sure hands, but practically around Europe.

Kristian Lande

Welcome, everybody. This is the Lausanne conversation podcast. And today we're looking at a really interesting topic. How can we keep on being and how can we keep on doing disciples, in such a time of hardship and resilience? And there are three of us today at this podcast. I'm Kristian Lande, from Norway, and we have with us Zala, our guest from Slovenia. Zala, could you just briefly tell us who you are?

Zala Cempre

Yeah. So, as you said, I am from Slovenia. I am a youth worker here. So, I work in my local church as an overseer of youth ministry. And I also work for Josiah Venture.

Kristian Lande

Wonderful. So, you have a burden for discipling young people in Slovenia?

Zala Cempre

Yes, I accepted Christ through youth ministry in my church. So, this is just what I've received, I am privileged to continue to do that, and work with youth and disciple them. So, I love it.

Kristian Lande

Beautiful. We are looking forward to get to know you more, and to hear from you. And the third guy in our podcast today is Jay. You're from the States, but you live in Germany. And you're kind of the heartbeat of the passion for discipleship in our conversation team in Lausanne. So, you've written a couple of pieces for us. And now you have this wish for this podcast. Could you just briefly say who you are? And then give us a bit of the background - why did you want to do a podcast on this topic?

Jay Eastman

Absolutely. Thank you, Kristian. I came to Berlin about 20 years ago, with my wife and three children. And our original job was to provide outreach opportunities, to add value in the life of a community - based on Christian values, and to express the Bible to people who wouldn't come inside to a church. And as people then came to faith, we did lots of evangelism. And as people came to faith, we then realized, oh, discipleship is key. People come to faith, but then they need to walk and grow in Christ. And so, we became heavily involved in outreach, and evangelism, but then also discipleship. So, I've been able to really enjoy the role of calling Christian groups and

churches, to the focus on discipleship, that as we put roots deeper in Christ ourselves, it allows us then to have a firm foundation in Christ, and then see fruit coming from those roots. And so that's the discipleship focus for Lausanne Europe this year, and also for this podcast.

Kristian Lande

Wonderful. I just have to say that that I recognize myself very much in what you're saying, like, being involved in church planting and hands-on mission in the Czech Republic, having the same experience - we were starting with excitement reaching people, and then whoops; we need to disciple people, unless this is not going to last. What we really want to look at today is; in a time like we are we're facing now, I think what many of us face hardships, frustrations, resilience, like: achhh, come on, I'm just sick and tired of the whole COVID-19, and lockdowns, and not being able to meet people and hug people - this really it gives us struggles. Then how do we make disciples in a time like this, and how do we do it ourselves? So, the two of you: What are the struggles you are facing in making disciples in this time?

Zala Cempre

I think for me the biggest struggle is face to face. I can't meet with the students that I'm discipling face to face. And my favorite - like for discipleship I love when it's discipleship on the go, they're part of my life, they come over to my apartment, we cook together. We do things together. So, that's one thing that I miss the most during this time. And we'll still do zoom and talk. But it's not - like it's different. Some conversations won't come up, that they do otherwise when they sit on my couch. And I see maybe more how they're reacting to things that I say, and that's hard to - it's still possible to do over zoom for sure, but it's just harder. So, that's one thing that I really, really miss during this past year of not doing discipleship on the go, doing something together.

Jay Eastman

I would echo exactly what Zala just said in that discipleship is a dynamic, and a dynamic means that something's changing, that they're shifting, there's growth happening. And often, that dynamic is more visible, it's easier to get a grip on that dynamic of what God is doing in a group. And right now, at least in our setting in Berlin, and many other places in Europe, that that group dynamic simply isn't

possible face to face. And when you're in a group online, it also feels more individual. There's just a lot lost over the screen. It's still possible, and we're thankful for the technology that we do have to connect in these ways. But it still doesn't reflect the dynamic of being in the same room and sharing life in that way. And, so what we're helping people focus on, is to say; the focus of the dynamic has to be different. It's you in prayer in your little closet. You know, we say in English; your little room - as Jesus teaches us to pray. There is a discipleship dynamic that way, there's a discipleship dynamic in working one on one with someone instead of a small group. And so, some of the people we work with think the momentum is slowing in the kingdom of God. And that's not true. The momentum of the kingdom of God is as steady as ever. It's just, it's harder to see it in a group dynamic. The focus has to be different on ourselves, in our personal relationship with the Lord - going deeper in Christ every day, and also more one on one relationships.

Kristian Lande

So, what I hear you're saying is that we need to shift our mindset, on how we are tackling this task. We need to look more at how me and Jesus are doing - think more one and

one, instead of thinking the group. Does anyone have you had any, any concrete examples of how that look like?

Zala Cempre

Like for me, just how I function. I'm like; I'm fine, fine, fine, ... and then I'm not. So, for me, it's not usually the progression. And I think, even this past year, I was fine, God has blessed big time: With new opportunities even though we were so limited, and people accepting Christ. So, it's been super encouraging. But I've hit some roadblocks in my walk with the Lord. I felt like I'm in the desert for some time. And I think for me, now that I look back - God, he's so gracious, things that he has taught me through it, and how he carried me. Now that I look back, I am so thankful that this year was hard for me, and that I had to - you know, when the water goes down, like the rock start to come up - they were always there, some doubts that I wasn't aware of that I'm facing. This year I had to face them and go in front of the Lord and be like: I have no idea what to do with that, but I choose you, I worship you. So, in this past year, with just focusing on my relationship with the Lord, I had to start doing more intentional times with the Lord. So, for example, this next week, I will take the whole day, and just spend in silence

with the Lord, asking a couple of questions, praying: So that I can receive from him, and I'm not relying on my own strength and my own wisdom. So, this past year, for my relationship with the Lord it uncovered some of the heart stuff or some doubts. And I am so thankful that he was so gracious to show me those things in my heart that I wasn't aware before.

Kristian Lande

Thank you. I think, I can definitely see myself in this kind of: I'm doing fine, fine, fine, and then all of a sudden - not at all. And not really understanding, until I'm in the middle of it, that I'm not doing fine right now. And, one of the things you said was; intentionally to take a day off with the Lord. Are there other things or people that helped you through that period?

Zala Cempre

Yeah. So, I love people, and that's, you know, the piece that I was missing the most. And oftentimes, you know, when you're doing discipleship on the go, you're sharing things as you ... And this past year, I had to be extra intentional to call someone and say: Hey, I'm struggling with this, or I have this doubt. So, now I'm meeting with one friend every week, and we won't just stop with how

we are doing, but we'll pray. So, every week we meet for maybe an hour, or sometimes even less, and we share - really a little bit - like: Hey, how are you doing? How was your week? This is this is how it was. And then every time we're like: Okay, now let's spend time in prayer and give the questions, the joys and the sorrows of this past week, to the Lord. And that's what I was really missing; not being with people this past year, and even worshiping together. That I now intentionally have every week; this friend, we meet, and I know that we'll pray for an extended period of time - pray together, and come in front of the Lord.

Kristian Lande

Beautiful. How is that for you, Jay? How has it been for you to tackle the downs in this period?

Jay Eastman

Yeah, I think it's similar to Zala. For myself, and for a couple key people - future leaders, from the core group of our church plant that will, Lord willing, spring out of the evangelism project that we're doing right now - it's been not just talking about; "Well, we're busy, and we need to pray more." We just have started praying more. And I think I'm just gonna leave it there. We've been relieved of some of the business. And it's been clear to us: We can now

pray more. Either by ourselves, going in a quiet place with just me and the Lord, or together, if the law allows us to meet with one other person. More prayer.

Kristian Lande

Cool, thank you. I really want to encourage all of you who are listening to talk about this in your impact group. Get it out. Pray together. And if you don't have that person, or those persons, or that kind of routine with some people: How might you find that? Thank you, guys for the tip. I'll bring it with me into my life.

If we look back at like leading others, in this time.

Discipling others: You talked a bit about getting people close, and getting people with you in what you're doing, as you walk. Do you have some concrete examples of how, how have you been able to do that in this time?

Zala Cempre

For me this past year ... so as I said, God has been blessing our ministry big time. He just started bringing people during the first lockdown. One of the students in our church, he said, "Hey, we'll be on lockdown!" On day one he said, "Let's start reading the Bible together!" And then till the end of May, we had students from across

Slovenia, who joined us for a Bible study every single night. So, as God was bringing people together, even though it was over Zoom, I was still able to walk alongside youth, to encourage them and, and disciple them - as God was bringing opportunities to be in the word, and to share Christ. I think otherwise, I went on a couple of walks. So even though we weren't able to meet in person inside, I was able to go on a couple of walks with youth, or I send them - just to be focusing on our relationship - I send them some packages. Or I call them, outside of our meeting times, over Zoom: Hey, how are you doing? How can I be praying for you? So, it was just being intentional outside of our meeting times, to check on how they're doing, praying for them. And then with a limited option of meeting new people and maybe doing evangelism, just being focused on like, okay, who is in your life that you can share Christ with, or that you can disciple? How can we not be focused on what we're limited from, but who are people in our lives right now? So, for example, even for me personally, God opened up some doors with my family. My niece, who is four years old is asking me - like for the past month she is asking me questions about God all the time. And she's like; tell me everything. So that's been a really cool opportunity. Or I was able to share Christ with my

grandpa. So, basically then leading people in this time is to be focused on; who are the people that God put in your life right now? And not just being focused on who you can't meet, and what you cannot do?

Jay Eastman

Amen.

Kristian Lande

Beautiful. And have you had your leaders doing the same for you?

Zala Cempre

Like telling me to do that?

Kristian Lande

Like calling up on you, and checking off how you're doing?

Zala Cempre

Yeah, for sure. And especially friends. I had a lot of friends with whom I was very able to, you know ... Hey, this is how I'm doing, let's pray together. So, it's been sweet to see some of those friendships, and how God provided for me and cared for me through those friendships.

Kristian Lande

The beautiful thing here is: What I hear is a culture of taking care of one another, of discipling one another, of helping one another through this time. And I think; probably that's not what everyone faces and have around us. So, I think it's something about; if you who are listening, don't have that: How can you start it? Cry out to God: I really want to see this culture in my community, in my church, my organization - because it's so needed.

Jay Eastman

Yeah, I'll continue with that thought Kristian. That's excellent. In Christian circles, we can have structures of leadership, people checking in on people, we can also have a culture of walking with one another. And both work. And the question is: What do you see as your role in the structure? Or what do you see as your life in a culture? And how can you receive but also how can you give. So, I think both are wonderful. And it's great to hear that the culture that Zala has, is so life giving. And I think that's just a great reflection of discipleship in itself. It's a life-giving culture. And that's what I would just say quickly, with our local situation, is we've had non-Christians - literally since the beginning of 2021, all of a sudden, the Holy Spirit

flipped a switch, and I've been taking walks and meeting with lots of non-Christians just one on one. And they're wondering - the biggest question is: We know you're a Christian. How then can you sleep at night, knowing there's this horrible pandemic going on? People are dying. How do you have peace? Where do you find that? And just pointing to a source of that peace, that is outside the pandemic, that God is bigger than the pandemic. He is involved with dealing with the pandemic - yes, but He is bigger, and in that sense outside of it. And to say that we know from the Bible: God created the world, it was good, and then there was a rupture in that goodness. And Jesus has come to demonstrate both the healing of that rupture, but then that the rupture does exist. So, we're in this in-between time of knowing both God's goodness, but also the fallen nature of the world, and that God has a plan to redeem that rupture, but it's not complete yet. So, we know that being redeemed, therefore, I can sleep at night, knowing that God is at work redeeming the rupture. And I can offer then hope - to point to a God that is bigger than the pandemic. And we just do the same with our Christian friends: To remind that God is bigger. But also to get past the veneer of: "Well, yeah, we have a pretty good life." To say, "Okay, what does it look like? Where are we

struggling now?" To be resilient when we are tired. When what worked last year, or maybe two years ago now. What worked then; to get through the week, have a Bible study and go to church - okay, we're struggling right now, in new ways. And God meets us in that struggle. And to point to that new needing, of a good shepherd who comes and draws near to us in our time of need. And just to work with those that we disciple and lead them to meet him in new ways, more deeply than before.

Kristian Lande

Yeah, thank you. I think what I'm hearing from both of you now, is sort of two keys of discipleship. Both of them out of the relationship you have with people, either those you're being discipled by, or the once you're discipling. So out of that relationship, I hear that: One is the support, to keep on living, to keep on coping, looking forward and be optimistic. The second one is to, in that relationship, help shape the way you see the world, the way you see everything - to shape it from a biblical perspective. To get a new way of thinking. And even, as you are saying Jay, the beauty of doing that with people who are not yet Christians - to help them in the middle of this. And I think that's where I want us to end: We are hopefully soon

getting out of this. Hopefully - I'm always an optimist. I'm planning that this summer - you're too Zala, that's good - this summer, I'm going to go on mission trips to different parts of Europe. That's ... I just want to do that. And I really think we need to plan as if it's gonna finish now. Because I think people out there need help to start living again. And I think they need help to answer all the questions they have. And now is the time to, to be there and to be present in society, and help people. Right now, it's hard to be as present as we want, because of all these restrictions. But when they leave, we can be in the middle of things, and get those conversations, and help people to understand: How can you understand these things from biblical a perspective?

Zala Cempre

Yeah, I agree. And so, again - what will summer bring is another thing - but I'm really hopeful. And so, with our church we're planning to have three camps. We've never had three camps before. It's been a weird year. We see people are seeking and asking deeper questions, and life questions. And we want to reach out. And maybe we'll need to cancel all three camps, but we are taking a step of

faith and planning, with the hope that we can reach out to all these youth.

Kristian Lande

Beautiful. You know, after the Spanish – what is it called? – the Spanish pandemic, or whatever it's called, the one that came in the 1920s, 100 years ago: They said that the world just went kind of crazy afterwards – bubbling of life. And I just want us to be in the middle of that and make it a Jesus life, and not just random life. Ok Jay and Zala, thanks a lot for being on this podcast. And have a blessed week, everybody.