

# Just a Minute...



*Today's Church: Anticipating or Surprised? – By Gustav Krös, incoming director*

In June 2013, INcontext hosted world-renowned journalist and author, Dr David Aikman in South Africa for a few speaking engagements. Dr Aikman's illustrious career included 23-years at *TIME Magazine* where he served as senior foreign correspondent, and thus had a front row seat to most of the major news events of his generation. Although he was working as a journalist for a secular publication, his relationship with Christ enabled him to look at the world from a Biblical point of view. We wanted to learn from him, as a Christian journalist who had had the privilege of being present at all the major news events throughout the 1970's – 2000's, in China, Russia, the Middle East etc.



We gained a lot of valuable insight during our meetings with Dr Aikman, but one of the most important lessons we learned from him was when he spoke about the 'surprised' Church and the 'anticipating' Church. He said that whenever God does something amazing in the world, you are either part of the Church that's surprised by it, or you are part of the Church who anticipated it.

The 'anticipating' Church watches the news, knowing that God is in control and that He is at work in everything that happens around the world. By viewing global events from a Biblical point of view and being open to the discernment of the Holy Spirit, the Church can actively be involved in what God is doing. Depending on what the event is, the 'anticipating' Church positions itself in preparation for what is to come, and is able to truly make a difference when the time is right, or where the need is the greatest. The 'surprised' Church seldom makes much difference at all.

Through our work at INcontext, we have seen that sadly the Church is far more often 'surprised' than 'anticipating'. The Lord opens the most miraculous doors for the Gospel to be shared; or He forewarns of hardship and persecution to come, and then the largest part of the Church is surprised and ill prepared to act when it is needed most.

Think about the fall of the 'Iron Curtain', how prepared was the global Church to move in with the Gospel? In recent times, think about the 'Arab Spring' together with the refugee crisis that followed – how prepared was your church to partake in one of the greatest mission opportunities of our time?

The sad part is – with today's technology these events are happening in front of our eyes, on our television, computer and cell phone screens – yet such a small minority of the Body of Christ is prepared and available for service when God opens the doors for His servants to move through.

Jesus's words in Luke 12:56 are so true, even today, when He responded to the crowd: "*Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?*"

In June we saw mass protests in Hong Kong due to the proposed extradition bill that would allow people in Hong Kong who are suspected of certain crimes to be extradited to mainland China to face trial and possible sentencing there. Thankfully the bill has been suspended due to the protests, but it has not been fully withdrawn. This is not the first time that mainland China's government has tried to chip-away and erode Hong Kong's autonomy, and it certainly will not be the last.

For decades Hong Kong has been a launching pad for missions into mainland China, but considering the happenings of the past month, the question must be asked – what is the Church in Hong Kong anticipating for the future, and how is it preparing for a time when its autonomy has fallen away and it comes under full governance of the mainland?

It is clear for the world to see that China wants more control in Hong Kong, and whether they are going to systematically get it through amendments to the constitution or whether it will only happen in 2047, when the agreement of, 'one country two systems' comes to an end, change will inevitably come. How is the global Church, together with the Church in Hong Kong, preparing itself for the potential changes that lie ahead?

If the Church in Hong Kong merely celebrates the fact that the extradition bill has been suspended and then continues as normal, they will just be a 'surprised' Church the next time the mainland tries to amend the laws in Hong Kong.

This is a simple example of the difference between a 'surprised' Church and an 'anticipating' Church. The 'anticipating' Church knows that God is constantly at work and if we keep our eyes on His hand, we will remain in His will, and as a result we will remain useful to Him as He brings His plans to fulfilment.

The question is, do you see what God is doing in the world today; or what He is doing in your community? If so, what are you anticipating? And as a result, how are you preparing yourself to slot in with what He is doing?

As Jesus says in John 12:26: "*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.*"