



## LEADING AND DISCERNING IN A FRAGMENTED CONTEXT

**Short Excerpt**

**Complete Conversation**

In this video Alan Roxburgh and Mark Lau Branson introduce two pastors, both leading Nazarene churches and both deeply embedded in neighbourhoods in the Los Angeles area. Marcos Canales is a

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pastor of an intergenerational Latino congregation in Pasadena called [La Fuente](#). Immigration is a major issue in the church and many members are undocumented. They do not have the documentation required in the US to live and work. Josh Smith has been a pastor at [Mountainside Communion](#) in Monrovia for the fifteen years of the church's existence. From the beginning it has been committed to the life of the city, meeting in the center of town and participating in a numbers of partnerships including an Immigration Resource Centre which also involves Marcos.

*Video to 12 min*

In this segment of the video Mark opens up a discussion on leadership. Both Josh and Marcos act as plural leaders where leadership is shared and diverse. Josh works to cultivate a church environment which is about joining with God in their context. Marcos' Latina church has more regard for titles, more desire for clear hierarchy. (See the [church website](#) for the picture of the leadership team.) The title 'Pastora' has been helpful for female pastors, signaling that the church is led through multiple voices and gifts.

*Video 12 min to 21 min*

Alan comments that both pastors work in stressed and contentious environments. Both Marcos and Josh describe many members of their congregations as having been 'deformed' by prior experience of church. They need healing from this, and, in an uncertain time, reassurance from the extended family of the church. In Marcos's church in Pasadena many people have experienced of authoritarian churches which have taken a very negative posture toward the wider culture. La Fuente is a place where they may be liberated from this and introduced into new ways to read scripture and new forms of liturgy which reach beyond a modern mindset.

*Video 21 min to 32 min*

Alan asks Josh and Marcos to reflect further on building Christian community in the context of fragmentation and distrust. Marcos tells a story of discernment and discovery. A Latino women's prayer group were asked to pray for a woman dying of cancer. Marcos had to reassure them that they were called for this, they were empowered, and didn't need a 'professional'. When the woman was well enough to return to her home in Tijuana, Mexico, and was again close to death, the same prayer group community set out on a risky journey on which they experienced the presence and protection of God in surprising ways. As the Mexican border wall controversy was being discussed in Congress, these women were able to reflect on their opportunity to join with God transnationally, across borders, and what they learned on that journey.

*Video 32 min to 46 min*

Mark reflects that partnership with civic and not-for-profit organizations has been significant for both churches. According to Josh, this is the fruit of first steps in relationship twelve years earlier. The church has recently opened a Community Garden. (The brief press report and photo of the dedication event are [here](#).) For Marcos these networks have also made possible a mentoring service for young people involving the entrepreneurs and business leaders of the town.

*Video 46 min to 54 min*

The conversation concludes with some thoughts on the changing role of the pastor. For himself Josh hopes for a creative, listening, empowering role in the church. Marcos is sensitive to the potential of the bilingual, bicultural youth of his church. He has a sense that God is calling this generation into a church which does not yet exist. Marcos feels that he is called to walk alongside, to help this younger generation dream and embody the kingdom.

*Video 54 min to the end.*