A Year with Andrew Selley – Part 1

Lukas Nakos 6 June 2019



Over the last year, I felt the Lord leading me to move my family to Cape Town to serve the Lord by serving Andrew Selley. I came from 16 years of living in the Isle of Man, in business, and serving part-time with Jonathan and the other IOM elders, and seeing the positive changes in Living Hope Church as a result of Andrew and the Four12 team's input.

I've had the privilege of being Andrew's PA, and have therefore had somewhat of a unique view of both him and Joshua Generation Church (JoshGen). I've sat with Andrew in many contexts, including at home with Emsie, his wife, and Enyah, his daughter. I've seen him in the full range of work contexts, from admin meetings to global conferences to gatherings to meetings with leaders, elders, directing elders, leaders of other churches, with staff and partners of 'Freedom of Religion South Africa', in which they discussed how to protect the church legally from the attempts of the state to legislate our freedom to believe and teach the Bible, in church and at home. I've seen him with European, Brazilian, South African; white, black, coloured; leaders and saints.

I've also seen him resting, in the sea, surfing, on expeditions to find waves up the coast, and on the slopes, snowboarding.

I've been part of the Sunningdale AM congregation, where an entire eldership team was stepped down by Andrew and the directing elders due to poor leadership and response of the team, and I've seen how they responded and processed this change.

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> stronger than ever

I've listened to leaders and saints in JoshGen, and in many partnering Four12 churches across the Four12 field. I've seen Andrew and JoshGen church as it is – probably with a unique perspective, in a way that few get to – in the last year, and therefore, like Luke writing to Theophilus in Luke 1, '…it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent [readers], that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.' (Luke 1:3-4 ESV) I think I might be the first person to ever base an article on that Scripture!

I've seen a lot of great things this year. I've seen faithful men, many of whom have walked with Andrew going on 20 years now, stronger than ever, having come through many challenges and still faithfully serving the Lord and growing in their grace and gifting, bearing much fruit and leading many into maturity and their God-given destinies. I've seen saints who have come out of drugs, prison time and addictions, serving the Lord and the church as deacons and elders, shining God's glory and bringing many into a closer walk with the Lord through their encouragement and example. I've seen young leaders released – in response to the moving of the Holy Spirit – where others would maybe not have risked, with young men leading new church plants into Bloemfontein and Khayelitsha, for example, and taking over congregations, like they have in Wynberg.

There have also been some more difficult things I've seen. People, both elders and saints, lovingly disciplined – where others would have hesitated for the sake of peace or to avoid conflict. I've also seen how Andrew and the team have come alongside them, rebuking where necessary, encouraging and exhorting always, and pleading with them to return to their First Love and to submit to the loving care and guidance of the elders.

And yet, in all the good and challenging, I've seen a people devoted to Jesus, devoted to their leaders, devoted to the apostles teaching, devoted to loving community, devoted to reaching the lost and the nations, and devoted to seeing the church grow up, healthy and mature in Christ.

And I am so grateful that the Lord has allowed me to see this and to become someone who is more and more devoted in the same way.

> It's quite sobering to know that your church is becoming a reflection of you and your walk with the Lord!

The reality of it is that what I've seen in Andrew and in JoshGen culture are really one and the

same. When I first arrived in Cape Town, I was interested to see how many people would say, 'This is what Andrew says', or 'This is what Andrew would do'. However, I realised quite quickly through observing the church, its leaders and Andrew, that the culture of JoshGen is in fact the same culture as that of it's leader's life.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul said things like, 'Follow me as I follow Christ', 'imitate my faith, and 'I'm sending Timothy to you, and he will remind you of my way of life, and what I teach in all the churches'. In the same way as Paul urged the churches to imitate him, I have found that JoshGen's culture is indeed the culture of Andrew's life and walk with God, spilling over into everything that he does daily. And it has been picked up, learned from, adopted, and is being lived out now by over 150 eldership couples and thousands of saints. It's quite sobering to know that your church is becoming a reflection of you and your walk with the Lord!

I want to share what some of the hallmarks are, some of the key things that I've seen, to encourage and inspire you, as I have been encouraged and inspired.

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1. A Loving Relationship with God

I've seen Andrew taking time with God as the first thing in his day, even before surfing. He's very often up from 3am, or in the middle of the night, hearing from the Lord. He's very often adjusting a preach or session or schedule – or even a whole plan – in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He's really hearing God, listening to God and walking with God daily and nightly. He's in the Word, reading it daily and allowing the Holy Spirit to use it to sharpen his thinking, actions, priorities, even attitudes. I've seen Andrew write to leaders, and other times to individuals, to say sorry for even the tone of a conversation – as the Holy Spirit pricks his heart. It reminds me clearly of David, whose heart 'struck' him when he cut off a corner of Saul's robe. (1 Samuel 24:4-6 ESV)

I see Andrew letting this time with Jesus and in His Word overflow into discussions. 'I was reading x in the Bible, and I thought y in application of this' is often a part of our conversations. I see Andrew writing down what God is saying, treasuring it, valuing it highly. I see Andrew obeying it, and it is especially noticeable when he does so when it is inconvenient or not what is planned. For example, having begun a strategic planning session with the JoshGen directing elders, the session was put on hold in response to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This turned out to be the right course of action, despite the last-minute change.

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> with whom God then shares His thoughts and heart.

I've seen in Andrew, Russell, Kim, Philip, Mervis, and other JoshGen leaders, men living in the overflow of that love, that passion. I've often seen them in tears while preaching, worshipping or praying, and full of joy in worship – dancing and jumping or sitting quietly at the Lord's feet.

I see in Andrew someone who treasures being a friend of God, and he's therefore someone with whom God then shares His thoughts and heart. I've shared the funny story of Andrew's sneaking up on me whilst surfing and scaring the heck out of me, pretending to be a shark and grabbing the back of my board. When I tried to return the favour a couple of days later, the Lord showed Andrew a photograph of me sneaking up behind him, and he turned and told me. How unfair is that?! But it's a wonderful illustration of God sharing with and talking to His friend.

We therefore need to be found with our Daddy in intimacy. We need to find ways to daily connect with Him and to diligently study the Scriptures in order to have intimacy with God. We should worship Him and sit and listen to Him in order to see Him, feel Him near, and pour our love on Him. This is the first and greatest command. It is above all, because this is our life, our source. If there is no life flow, there is nothing to give. If there is not life flow, we are leading our people to nothing, to no one. Therefore, we should treasure this as our time with God (not for the church, but for Him and for our love for Him), more than anything else.

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This what the Lord is calling us ALL to, not just the select few! Our whole life, church life, ministry, family and personal lives – everything starts vertically, in our love for Jesus and flows from this Source. The greatest and first command is to LOVE God first, not to OBEY God first. True obedience from the heart is in fact a fruit of our love for Him. Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will obey my commandments'.

2. Loving Community

It's all about sharing time, food, thoughts, coffee, sports, books, prayer, worship, 'now words'. I've seen Andrew including people in what he does and enjoys, taking them with him – like taking a beginner surfing at the back line, or taking friends camping. I've seen him bringing guys into leaders meetings to hear and learn before they can contribute anything.

It's about really loving people, accepting them, and believing in them, and sharing life with them,

not about pulling them into programs or structures. I have to tell you, it's been such a joy to see that almost every time I see him, he says – "Lukas!" in such a way as it makes me feel like he's delighted to see me. And this love and affection is what draws us to the love of God.

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When Andrew is with people (believers or not) he is constantly showing gentleness and grace in dealing with all – from senior directing elders, to elders, to saints, to people looking in for the first time. He is always winning the heart, persuading people step by step of the truth of the position he believes to be true. Again, it is done with a posture and tone of gentleness and grace, not breaking a bruised reed, but at the same time it is boldly speaking the truth, in love. It is speaking the truth, not shying away from it; not avoiding conflict, even with close friends, even at the risk of losing close friends. It means just going straight for the issue. And also living in the light and inviting others to speak into his life and adjust him too. This provides a safe environment that allows for repentance, forgiveness and restoration, and a backdrop to relationships where you know there is nothing hidden, nothing thought but not said.

It's also about bringing people to Jesus for the first time. I've seen him speaking to a couple about Jesus, even on New Year's Eve, when other friends and 'downtime' might have been an alternative.

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Which brings us back to Point 1: Nothing is of greater importance than sharing the One he loves with those around him – for their joy, for Jesus' joy, and for his joy. I see those in JoshGen having open homes. Annie and I could honestly have dinner every night out at church friends if it were possible to accept all the invitations we've had. It's a joyful, unstructured sharing of life, outside any church structured meeting. People have helped us moving home, helped us with food when we were busy, have looked after our children, gone to get medicine for them at late hours when we were nursing them.

I've seen the JoshGen elders mediating business problems, helping those around them who are struggling in business, providing work for those who need it. Yes, always speaking straight, but respecting and allowing people to decide based on what is recommended, and live with the consequences. This is a community of genuine love and care, in such contrast to the 'world' that it is radical and beautiful and SO attractive.

This is the second half of the great command, ‘And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

God wants the overflow of our love for Him to pour out to those around us like rivers of living water. This happens in a multitude of ways and expressions, depending upon the grace that the Lord gives to each of us, but in all of them, the common denominator is the motivation of love.

‘If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.’ (1 Corinthians 13:1-3 ESV)

Whatever our grace or gift, it’s expression should be rooted in love, otherwise we end up being clanging cymbals and gaining nothing.

Read Part 2 here: A Year with Andrew Selley – Part 2