



## **Episode 27: How to Care for Returning Missionaries Show Notes**

Neal Pirolo is the founder and director of Emmaus Road International - an organization that comes alongside churches, agencies, and colleges to provide resources to ignite, develop, and expand involvement in cross-cultural ministries. He is an educator, a pastor and an author of several books, including *Serving as Senders: How to Care for your Missionaries*.

### ***Tell us about yourself and how you came to be passionate about God's mission.***

- I've been married for 59 years to my wife and have four grown, married children and 16 grandchildren, and 15 great grandchildren.
- My first missions trip was a disaster – I filled in for another leader and everything that could go wrong went wrong.
- A few years later, we went on another trip and everything went right. Being an educator, I went to a missionary kid school and the principle hired me right away. However, we ended up being sent to Peru as that was where a greater need existed.
- In 1983 Emmaus Road international was birthed and it has been a wonderful and wild ride.

### ***What are the first Biblical steps we need to be considering?***

- The area of the time leading up to missionaries coming home on home assignment needs more attention. We lose more missionaries coming home than when they go to the field. We have been given 5 simply stated steps for missionaries to go through for a good re-entry but they need a team of people to help them through these steps.
  1. **A missionary needs to know by God's direction that it is time to go home** – this is the first step and it is the most important step. Without this step, the others won't work. You need to be home physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.
  2. **A missionary needs to return to their sending church** – this may seem obvious but sometimes they don't return to their sending church and this is difficult. A missionary should re-enter through their home church.
  3. **A missionary needs to report ALL that God has done** – there are two levels of debriefing – you can share the great stories with the fellowship, but the other level of debriefing is the critical one – what has God done in me? This is verbalized with a smaller group of people.
  4. **A missionary needs to integrate into their home church** – the missionary committee should be prepared to spend solid and significant time with their returning missionary.

5. **A missionary needs to learn to be bi-cultural** – they need to learn to be comfortable in their sending culture. This is going to make it easier for them to return to the field.

***What are some of the expectations that workers have as they prepare to return home?***

- If they are well prepared, they will begin to look forward to returning home – to have the ability to share what God has done, what has yet to be done, and to challenge others to get involved as a go-er or to become a better send-er.
- Some people have the attitude that they are going to have to travel a lot, that they'll have to smile all the time and have great stories and that they'll be seen as someone just looking for money.
- Some churches may be wondering how they are going to welcome home their missionaries and how they are going to fit them into the already busy church schedule.
- Dr. Paul Smith from the [People's Church](#) in Toronto was about to get up and speak and an usher brought him a note saying that a missionary family had just returned home, coming to the church from the airport. Dr. Smith brought them up to the front and they received a standing ovation. What a great example of a church that prioritized their missionaries' homecoming!

***What are some of the expectations that churches have of their returning workers?***

- If they are not prepared, they might not know what to do
- If they are prepared, there are some many logistical things that can be done for that missionary from housing to transportation, to school opportunities for the children and to welcome the missionaries into each of the small group fellowships.
- Each situation is different, but every church of every size can do this well.
- There are some great ideas in Neal's book, [The Re-Entry Team](#).

***What are some of the factors and hurdles that missionaries face when they return to their home culture?***

- They will still be thinking about what is going on back on the field. It is a difficult time in the life of a missionary.
- Each missionaries experience will be unique.
- There are churches that a doing such a good job of welcoming their missionaries and helping them through the five steps that they must work through.
- It's a busy and a very emotional time as you say good-bye to friends and pack up and wrap up ministries.

***You talk about a church being well prepared. Some churches might assume that they have no role to play until the missionaries arrive on home soil, but what are some things they can do ahead of time?***

- Alerting the congregation that the family is coming home. Make sure the church knows the names of the family, recognizes pictures of them and knows what they've been doing overseas.
- It can be a disastrous thing for a missionary to arrive at their home church and have the usher greet them as a visitor in their home church.
- Prepare an apartment or house or transportation to help the missionary settle in and get around.
- You may need to give the returning missionary family some space to reconnect as a family and have some space to recover from transition and jetlag. One church rented a place for a returning family halfway between where they serve and their home in North America and gave them two weeks to relax and process together. This is an intense time for a family.

***Neil, are there other books or resources that you would recommend to our listeners on this topic?***

- There are many books written to the missionary:
  - [Returning Well](#)
  - [Burn Up or Splash Down](#)
  - [Re-Entry](#)
- These three books talk to the missionary and give them insight into what they can expect as they prepare to come home.
- [The Re-Entry Team](#) rather talks to the team that is going to help the missionary through those five steps we mentioned earlier. It can also be an encouraging book for missionaries to read as well.

***If our listeners would like to explore this more, how can they follow you or be in touch with you or learn more?***

- Our website is [Eri.org](http://Eri.org)
- Follow us on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn
- You can email us through our website