



Episode 53: Following the Call When Your Family Isn't on Board - Tiffany Godbey

Tiffany Godbey, who is the Director of Internships and Mobilization Team Coordinator at Greater Europe Mission. Tiffany has been a part of the GEM team for 5 years.

Tiffany lives in Monument, Colorado.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your work in mobilization and launching new missionaries?

- I've been working with GEM for five years.
- Initially God called me and my family – my husband and four kids – to serve in Ireland, however, along the way God redirected us and now I work at headquarters.
- I've taken on the internship program in the last year, getting 18-25-year-olds to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

Many organizations are concerned about barriers to raising up and send out new workers. We've seen different authors write about parents or other family members being a significant barrier. Are you finding this to be true in your work?

- It's more common than I think we realize.
- With a lot of the young adults, we hear them expressing that their parents have a lot of questions and concerns but we also find it with the older missionaries – maybe those who have grown children who are expressing concerns as they work towards moving overseas.
- Or a young married couple with a young baby, we hear parents saying "How dare you take away my grandchild?"
- I think the barrier is bigger than we think – often we'll have a candidate that gets quite far down the process, maybe they are even approved and are beginning to fundraise and we start to hear them say, "Maybe God hasn't called me to this..." Often, earlier in the process, parents were asking a lot of questions – we even get direct questions from the parents in regards to the interns or applicants.



Sometimes there's a perception that money is in the way and it can be, but you've even suggested that sometimes that's offered as the upfront reason but there's something else going on behind the scenes.

- Yes, we've had people say, "I just don't think I can raise this amount" but we've realized it's the parents pushing back and raising concerns.
- We've had some young adults say that their parents are concerned that they are raising money to go serve in Europe rather than working and saving money to go to college instead.

What are some of the concerns that you hear raised when it comes to the parents of mission workers?

- Safety is the biggest one we hear – there's so much on social media and the news, and often this raises parents' concerns.
- As the refugees are pouring into Europe, we have a lot of parents who are concerned – I've had a parent ask me if the refugees get off the boats fighting. Their main concern is, "Will my child be safe?"
- One of the things we talk about is that your child is probably safer where we are sending them, then sending your child to downtown Chicago. The unknown is scary.
- Many parents are concerned about their children going away from them for such a long time. Parents who are used to being with their child or having a say in what they do on a daily or weekly basis, and to have that change can be scary for a lot of parents. Distance and time is hard on parents.

We've talked a little bit about the idea of a normal career. You've heard that at times?

- I've heard that a lot – especially from parents whose children are wanting to do a 'gap year' either after high school or university. Parents see it as having invested in their education and their child is throwing that away.
- Along those lines, I've noticed that because their thinking "this is the way things have always gone and how I've planned my child's life" they know that going overseas is going to change their child – how they see the world and if they are following Christ and are influenced by the church overseas – that changes how their child worships and shares Christ with others. That's another concern that parents have – this is going to change their child.
- There are lordship questions for the go-er but also for the senders.

How can we help those who are called obey God's call while maintaining that tension of honoring our parents?

- That is the big concern and there's no cut and dry answer.
- We have this commandment to honor our parents but then we're also told that "anyone who doesn't hate their mother and father for my name's sake" or the time that Jesus's mother and brothers show up while he's doing ministry and he says, "those who do my will are my mother and brothers."



- It comes down to discernment and prayer and I firmly believe that the church that missionaries are being sent from need to spend time praying with their potential missionary candidates about it. It's a multi-generational effort.

For those workers who sense God's call and sense that their family aren't on board, what advice do you have for them? How can they involve their parents in the process?

- They need to be open and honest – they need to be able to express to their parents why they are passionate about following Christ overseas. They also need to be open listeners and hear their parents' concern.
- Greater Europe Mission has a member care department that give emotional and spiritual support to our missionaries – when our workers are struggling with family who isn't on board, we recommend they talk to the member care department.

Do you have advice for those whose family aren't believers?

- That's a tough one – it does create more distance as they don't understand why their child believes the way they do and why their child is willing to give up the life their parent had planned for them.
- They really need to pray and discern if this is God calling them despite their parent's disbelief or is God asking them to stay in North America longer to be a witness to their parents.
- Sometimes a non-believing parent who sees the joy in how God provides and what is happening while their child is serving is the witness that they need to trust in God themselves.
- Don't argue with your parents in a negative fashion. Be respectful and loving of your parents, even while standing firm in what God is calling you to do.

What advice do you have for the parents of potential workers who are struggling with this?

- This is something that I struggled with in regards to my own children. God graciously gave me a couple of chapters in the Bible in 1 Samuel 1-3. Hannah had prayed so desperately for a child, and when God gave her a child, she dedicated him to the Lord and gave him to a priest and yet Hannah trusted God to care for her son.
- If you're struggling with sending your child off to a new place, it's a hard thing but it's true that God is their most loving father and protector.
- It's a heart issue – we need to ask God for the faith to trust Him with your child. We have to trust Him with everything we have.
- God is going to do amazing things for their child and work in their life in incredible ways. Encourage them with how God is going to use their son or daughter for the cause of Christ.



What advice do you have for churches and mission organizations that want to help mission workers and their families who are struggling through this?

- *Mind the Gaps* is a great book about engaging the church in missionary care – it's not just a biological family that sends but a church family that sends as well.
- The church needs to understand that they are sending this person as well and they can ask the new missionary what they are struggling with and how the church can pray for them.
- Don't be afraid to ask the parents or children who are left behind how they are doing – commiserate with them so they know that they are not alone.

If our listeners want to learn more from you, is there a way that they can contact you?

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