



Episode 28: Social Media and Missions – A Starter Discussion Show Notes

Dr. Scott Moreau is the associate academic dean of Wheaton College's Graduate school and a professor of Intercultural Studies. He spent fourteen years on staff at Campus Crusade for Christ - now known as [CRU](#) in the USA and [Power to Change](#) in Canada - with ten of those years spent in Africa, more specifically Mozambique and Kenya. He is also the author of a number of books on missions, cross cultural communication, contextualization and spiritual warfare.

Tell us a little bit about you and how you came to be passionate about missions.

- First, I had a very strong sense of call into ministry – I had a vision when I was a sophomore in college. Following the vision, I transferred to [Wheaton College](#). At Wheaton I took an aptitude test and out of the 50 career options, the bottom one on the list was a pastor and the top was a computer programmer. This confused me as I thought I was called to be a pastor. I heeded the results of the aptitude test and majored in science. Through a series of divine coincidences, during my senior year in college, I was called to be a science teacher in Nigeria.
- When I was in seminary, the only courses that interested me were the ones about missions. I've been teaching missions for the last 25 years!

How do you see social media impacting the church?

- There are two levels – how is it impacting the church and how is it impacting the individual members of the church?
- I don't know any junior and senior high students who are not deeply impacted by social media today. Whether or not the church is connected to social media, the people in the church are and that's going to impact the church.
- Even with my kids, we don't email very much anymore – we communicate through Instagram and messaging through our phones. The reality is that social media is how I connect with my kids and that's just the tip of the iceberg in how they communicate with their friends.

How can the church use social media effectively?

- If a pastor isn't involved in social media, I think they should be. It's a simple reality.



- I spend about 20-30 minutes each morning browsing through my various social media – it’s how I connect with the world of missions. A lot of mission agencies are on social media and if you follow their feeds, you can suddenly be aware of what is going on with these organizations on a daily basis. If churches are aware of this, they can be kept up to date more.
- I am on my church’s mission committee and I see how those who are on social media are more up-to-date on what is going on in missions as compared to those that aren’t connected to social media.

Is there one channel of social media that is used more often than others that you would recommend?

- I would recommend Facebook. I hear about it the most, but I hear that Facebook is my generation. None of my kids are on Facebook – they are on Snapchat and Instagram. Some are on Twitter. You have to ask what generation are you aiming to communicate with?

What are some of the ways that social media can be used to promote awareness and participation in global missions?

- All agencies worth their salt have a Twitter account and it’s a great place to get news on the things they’re talking about.
- For the most part these agencies are promoting themselves, but I think it’s a better strategy to promote the global world of missions, rather than just their agency.
- Social media makes world events more accessible more quickly than anything else.
- I also use [FlipBoard](#) – it lets you choose which Twitter feeds you want to follow and it turns it into an electronic magazine for you. It makes it very easy to keep up-to-date and get the information you’re looking for. [Hootsuite](#) can also be used for this purpose.

What are some ideas you have for how international workers/missionaries can use social media to engage with their senders?

- In the past, we were used to people sending out a monthly newsletter. With social media, they can let us know what’s happening almost in real time.
- You can solicit prayer and let them know what’s going on.
- However, a lot of people engaged in missions these days don’t want to advertise that they are missionaries. Anything on social media is open to the public.

Businesses have social media policies. How can we help our churches have wise guidelines to protect missionaries?

- Anything you put up on social media is findable. The web doesn’t forget. This can be a potential challenge for people.
- Keep in mind that whatever you say is going to be there permanently.
- Be aware of flame wars – where people get into major battles over a contentious issue that doesn’t need to be defended for the sake of the gospel. People are less restrained online than they are in person. Be care of what flame wars you engage in.



- Churches are getting savvier and savvier. But there are those that continue to post the names and places of missionaries that should not be promoted.
- If your church is engaged and connected on social media, make sure your missionary is aware of anything you're posting about them.

It's been said that social media has turned western society into a fame and shame society. What does that mean and how does it impact the church?

- The reality today is that you can be a super star or a super idiot in the space of 24 hours. It doesn't take something to go viral – either good or bad – it takes the same amount of time.
- Having a lot of followers is important – the secular world says that without a minimum of 10,000 followers, you don't have a voice. Unfortunately, people get a lot of their followers because of negative things, rather than positive things.
- You can see this happening in the US election currently, with candidates trying to shame one another while bringing fame to themselves.
- I don't think churches should be ready to move in this direction, however, stepping into social media as an organization is something that needs to be done and be done carefully.
- Social media keeps all the content on your website fresh, but you don't always control it.
- Cyber bullying is another part of the fame and shame change in society – it shows you how much social media has permeated our culture.

Are there any resources that you would recommend to a church or missions committee looking to grow in their social media engagement?

- Do some simple google searches.
- Check out [Christianity Today](#) online and other trusted resources to find people you may want to follow.

If our audience would like to follow you, how can they find and follow you?

- Follow my Twitter feed [@scottmoreau1](#)
- I promise not to post about brushing my teeth!

