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**Episode 28: Missions – A Pastor’s Perspective**

Terry Young is Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at Ambrose Seminary in Calgary. He has over thirty years of pastoral experience in churches of various sizes and in different locations throughout Canada – including eleven years as lead pastor at First Alliance Church in Calgary.

His doctoral work (PhD) was on holding environments for leaders and the need for all leaders to have a secure base from which to live and lead. He is dedicated to encouraging and inspiring church leaders towards wise, calm, and healthy engagement on the front line of ministry.

Terry is married to Maureen and together they have a tribe of four grown children and six amazing grandchildren.

***Tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to be passionate about global missions?***

* I grew up in a pastor’s home – my dad was a Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor. My dad was passionate about missions and I like to say that a lot of the need of the world of missions splashed up on me ever since I was a little boy.

***How will we define missions for today’s discussion?***

* We often think that missions applies to a special group of people but we need a broader understanding.
* Missions has to do with the church, the body of Christ, living out the very word of Jesus in his final commission to us – to be people who are making disciples close to home and around the world.
* There is a strategic, intentional action that we think of missions but I think missions in its truest sense is the work of the people of God.

***Why should God’s people be involved in missions?***

* We are involved in missions because it is at the very heart of the character of God.
* Whose mission is this? It is first something that belongs to our God.
* God has a mission for his church in the world. It should be understood that God has a church for his mission that goes back to God’s blessing to Abraham, where God’s people are in the world to be God’s blessing to the world.
* We can see missions in the Bible right from the book of Genesis. The whole of God’s purpose is encapsulated in God’s promise to Abraham.

***What are some of the ways that we best get a clear understanding of what missions is? What Scriptures would you cite?***

* Genesis 12:1-4
* Psalm 67
* Solomon and the Temple – it is clear that God’s temple is a place for all nations to gather.
* Jonah – You can’t read Jonah without realizing that God’s heart is for the nations
* The Gospels – there are 28 encounters that Jesus has with non-Jewish people and this indicates to us that God uses the Jews but his heart is for all nations

***Is missions optional for the church today?***

* No, based on the Biblical witness from Genesis to Revelation, missions is not optional.
* If we are God’s people, we are to be on God’s mission to bless the nations. We are to continually have our eyes open as to how we can bless our city, our nation and the world.

***As a pastor, what are some of the ways you’ve sought to cultivate missions awareness in your church? How did you advance the vision for missions?***

* If I were speaking to pastors, I would encourage pastors to expand the understanding of God’s mission, to fuel the understanding that we are on mission together.
* To missions committees I would say that their job is not easy these days. Maybe people see it as a subcategory that a small group in the church is responsible for. The work of a missions committee is hard.
* Pastors and missions committees need to work together. I would encourage a pastor to be involved in some kind of regular basis with the missions committee who are seeking to fan the flame of missions.

***What are some things that you’ve seen missions committees do that have been wonderful and what things have you seen that drive you crazy?***

* I think the trouble is created by a gap of connection and communication and it goes both ways. If a pastor isn’t communicating with a missions committee as to how this could fit with the larger picture, that causes frustration among the missions committee.
* Keep communication. Keep one another informed.
* In the ministries I’ve been involved in, we’ve developed a strong sense of building community in life groups and one thing that I’ve seen mission committees do well, is provide those life groups with the kinds of things that encourage them to pray and to be engaged with a given missionary. It’s the whole challenge of bringing the support of our international workers close to the view and hearts of our congregation.
	+ It takes some administrative work but it has a big impact. Most groups don’t know where to begin so a missions committee that facilitate that relationship is great.
* A missions committee that understands the essential role of prayer are a joy. How do we encourage prayer for our missionaries and for the nations? I saw a missions committee take hold of a several chosen nations, and they gave basic information to the congregation and were able to engage the congregation to pray for these nations.
* A missions committee that gets creative in how they support international workers, encourage prayer and help the congregation understand the needs of the world, are successful committees.
	+ In the church there is so much that needs to be communicated. Every ministry wants some air time, and it can be difficult to give every ministry as much platform time as they want.

***Can you comment on the value of having traveled overseas – how did that help you as a pastor as you brought mission awareness to your congregation?***

* It helped me understand that the people working on the front lines, our international workers, are people just like us. But it also grows your appreciation for the work they do – it is challenging, challenging work. It is complex and difficult. It opens your eyes to the reality of Christ followers in the majority world.
* You have a greater understanding of the needs of the world.

***What types of activities did you enter into as a pastor as you traveled overseas?***

* It varied. Sometimes I spoke, which didn’t surprise me, but I often felt that the local pastor would do a better job than me.
* I had the opportunity to travel with a few missionaries and have them communicate the reality of their work.
* I had some contact with pastors and had the opportunity to encourage them in their work.

***If you could offer a word of encouragement to other pastors who are listening, how would you encourage pastors as they think about global missions?***

* I would encourage them to take the opportunity to refresh yourselves on what the mission of God is all about. I’d recommend a book by Chris Wright.
* I think theologically, pastors are well grounded in theology but its good to be reminded that the heart of everything we do is this mission of God.
* If it is possible, be exposed to the front line of the majority world and what is happening with your international workers around the world. But don’t do it alone. Take a few people from your missions committee or globally minded people from your congregation with you.
* Communicate and spend time with your missions committee – talk together, have good conversations about what they desire for your local church and communicate to them what your desire is for your congregation.
* As a pastor, don’t be afraid to share with your missions committee that sometimes there are restraints on what we desire to have on the platform and encourage them to work together on other ways to communicate with them congregation.