



Speaker 1:

Welcome to the Global Missions Podcast, a show for Christ followers who want to participate more effectively in God's work both at home and to the ends of the earth. Visit us at globalmissionspodcast.com to find show notes, resources, and previous episodes. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This podcast is brought to you by the Global Missions Toolbox, a new online collection of practical, trusted resources made for those who support global missions from home. Visit us online at globalmissionstoolbox.com to register for access to this growing collection of tools for Senders. And now here's your host, Rob Magwood, better known to many friends as Mags.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, hi everyone. And welcome to this episode of the Global Missions Podcast. Hi Maddy.

Maddy:

Hi Mags.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

It is a beautiful spring day here in Southern Ontario. How's your day going so far?

Maddy:

It's great. It's a day full of podcast recordings. It's always a day that I look forward to.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Yeah. And this morning was a very special experience for us as we recorded our conversation with Pastor Ryan Sims. And Maddy this was a pretty unique interview. Maybe just take a minute and explain to everyone why it was special.

Maddy:

Sure. Yeah. And can I just say, I feel so inspired after hearing that episode. It's just really, really cool. So our topic today is reaching the deaf community with the gospel and Pastor Ryan is our guest and he is himself deaf. And so that changed how we needed to do this podcast interview today. We did the interview on Zoom. We often use another platform, but it was important that we could see each other and have that video aspect. Ryan spoke through his interpreter, Elizabeth, they were using sign language. We were able to continue this conversation through interpreter. So our discussion today is with Ryan, but you'll actually hear his interpreter Elizabeth's voice.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Yeah. It was amazing, really interesting to watch and to engage with him. And it was, audibly we hear her voice of course. Now, we're also doing one extra piece here due to the nature of this. Tell us about that too.

Maddy:

Yes. We wanted to mention that you all know we usually have show notes, but those are just some links to resources and things like that. Today we've also prepared a full transcript of this episode. So in case



you'd like to share this episode with someone who would be helped by seeing it in written form that is available as a link in our show notes as well.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Very good. Well, I'll add just one other thing. At first blush, it might seem that we're not talking in this conversation too much about global missions directly. But it became pretty clear to us as we were going along that in many places, including North America, the deaf community is actually an unreached people group, even though they're right here among us. And so that's what I would like to encourage you as our listeners to keep in mind. This is a discussion about reaching an unreached people group, as we listen to this conversation with Ryan. Our guest today is Pastor Ryan Sims, who is the senior pastor at Silent Friends Chapel of First Baptist Dallas in Texas. Ryan is also the director of Deaf Community Relations at the Deaf Bible Society. And being deaf himself, Ryan is speaking to us today in sign language with the help of an interpreter, Elizabeth. So I say welcome both of you to the Global Missions Podcast.

Interpreter:

Wonderful. Thank you so much. I'm thrilled to be here with you.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

We appreciate you both joining us. Ryan holds a master's degree in deaf education and deaf studies, and he's married and has three children. Ryan, I'd just like to begin with a bit of a personal introduction and invite you to share with us. How did you become passionate about reaching the deaf with the good news about Jesus?

Interpreter:

Sure, absolutely. Well, I was actually born hearing. I became deaf when I was seven months old. I had spinal meningitis and when I became sick, I lost all of the hair in my cochlear. They completely went away. And my parents in a Christian home had been teaching me to have a foundation at a very early age. And so when I grew up, I noticed a lot of my friends and my peers they really didn't have an understanding of the Bible, of the scriptures. And so when I became an adult, I became even more focused and passionate, and wanted to be able to reach the deaf people and really just wanting them to understand and have scripture in their language. Many people didn't have that opportunity to even share the gospel with the deaf. So really to condense the whole reason it's that growing up, I was one out of my whole class of probably 15 to 20, who had an understanding of the Bible. None of the others had understanding because many of them didn't have communication in their home. They didn't go to church and it really broke my heart.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Now, you grew up in a family, were the rest of your family hearing?

Interpreter:

They were hearing. Yes. Both of my parents were hearing and then my siblings as well were hearing. And all of them wanted to learn sign language just to be able to have communication access in my home. But that's very rare just to let you know, my situation is not common.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:



Well, it would be a remarkable thing to have one of the family deaf. It sounds like a beautiful thing that everyone around you wanted to learn to communicate well. And I've understood in some cases that's not always the case. We will talk with Ryan about some of the barriers in just a moment that sometimes emerge out of these various situations. Ryan serves with the Deaf Bible Society. And I'd just like right here at the opening Ryan to just ask a bit about this organization, how it's serving and what are the purposes and priorities of the Deaf Bible Society?

Interpreter:

Yes, absolutely. And Deaf Bible, their mission and goal is to make sure that all of God's word is accessible in every sign language around the globe. And that every language has access to the Bible and specifically to create local, sustainable, great commission initiatives among the deaf to reveal the hope of the gospel so that every deaf person has the opportunity to receive, experience and share it.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, thank you. It's a good quick overview. Of course, this is a very broad mission and I'm just going to mention the website here. I had a chance in preparing for this discussion to visit the Deaf Bible Society website, deafbiblesociety.com. And there's a page I'm going to suggest as a starting point, the slash how page, where there are a number of common questions that was very helpful to me. For example, you've already heard Ryan mentioned that there are various deaf languages. That makes total sense to me. We have various audible languages. It makes sense that there would be various deaf languages. But we don't in the hearing community necessarily understand that. Why isn't there one universal language? That's one of the questions answered on this page. I found it very helpful to grow in my basic awareness and looking forward to our discussion Ryan.

Interpreter:

Absolutely. Me too.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

So according to that website, approximately 98% of deaf people are unreached by the gospel. So let's begin in this first half of our discussion to talk about the challenges. What are some of the key challenges involved with reaching the deaf with the gospel?

Interpreter:

Primarily it's access to their own heart language. It's just not available. And also there are many deaf people who are isolated. They don't even have access to sign language until they get to school. And there's just no communication access even at home. So they're expected to rely on the school system to educate and catch them up. But previously, a lot of hearing people already have language. A lot of hearing children from the time they're born, they're hearing things and they have that language stimulus all the way up until they get to school and they already have that foundation. They're already above 500,000 different words. They've had vocabulary, it's in their head, at a very early age. But for a deaf child, when they arrive at school, maybe they have five to 20 gestures and they're just gestures. They're not even signs, like hungry, food, mom, dad, sleep, play, bath.

Interpreter:



That's all that they've had to communicate. That's all the vocabulary they've had. So they really haven't been able to have deep conversations or develop those things. And then now they're getting to school and having to learn all this new vocabulary. And they've been deprived of that opportunity before they even get to school to learn some of those things. And so to expect a teacher to be able to teach, how can you expect them to understand the scriptures if they haven't even been able to have foundational language at an early age. So being able to have support for children and when they can't even have this access until later, then they have to pick it up very quickly. And then they become an adult who feels maybe that they haven't had the time, they've had to put in so much work just to get all this extra exposure later. And then they're in the world and they get distracted more easily because from the Bible, the scriptures itself, it's not easy to understand. They've already had to work so hard to understand other things that other children have been exposed to since a young age.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, it makes total sense really, but it's just helpful to hear it. Latent learning was one of the terms used in the notes we prepared. How does that work in a typical family? If there could be a typical family. Is there a lot of support in the Christian community where families have deaf children to give them the gospel as little people?

Interpreter:

There's not many resources out there. There are a lot of resources through one organization called Silent Blessings Ministry. And they have developed a lot of children's resources specifically. They're trying to create more of those resources and gain awareness and exposure for parents so that they know how to cope with having a deaf child and providing resources, providing language. But it has to be parents having this willingness to invest a lot of energy and being able to do that. Yes, but the result is such a benefit later for those children. But honestly, there's not many parents that are willing to put in that much effort. They would rather give the responsibility to educators or to an audiologist to solve the problem through having a surgery, or through different types of devices, hearing aids, cochlear implants, et cetera. So often that's just, their reliance is on practicing how to speak orally.

Interpreter:

Or even though they still can't hear or having to, it's so much faster to be able to do things visually. But a lot of parents just don't want to learn sign language so they focus so much on the audio because they're already comfortable with it. It's natural to hearing people, but for the deaf child, who's new to language, who's new to all this information, it can be so much work to be able to go through that and focus on audio things that they can't hear and speaking. But it takes a lot of involvement and a lot of work, and a lot of investment at home for parents to be able to have these resources for sign language. And most parents, they just expect children to be able to pick it up on their own instead of taking the time to practice and to really teach. And then they get to school and they can develop much more quickly if they've had that foundation. But that latent learning and language deprivation just means that they haven't had enough language exposure at a young age.

Interpreter:

So again, the emphasis is not all deaf people have the same level of hearing loss. There is a big variety there. Some can hear some, some have had a surgery that they've been able to hear some. But that doesn't benefit all deaf people, even that surgery doesn't benefit all deaf people. So there's no one size fits all and not each deaf child is the same. There is such a continuum and variation there. So being able



to really research and figure out what's the best option for each child is important and they make it a professional decision instead of a parent's decision. And parents should be able to empower themselves instead of just relying on an educated professional or a doctor to make that type of decision for what's best for their child. Instead, there should be an enormous amount of research on what's best for the deaf child, and there should be ownership. But unfortunately that's just not there a lot of times.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

This so helpful to just learn it to be increasingly aware and hopefully sensitive to some of these unique challenges for these families. A few questions that will lead us again toward these barriers. How many sign languages approximately are there in the world today? We talked about multiple sign languages.

Interpreter:

Yes, there are multiple, I think there's around 350 sign languages around the world.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Wow. Of those 350 some languages, how many of them have the Bible available, the scriptures?

Interpreter:

One.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

One. Oh wow.

Interpreter:

There's only one. American sign language is the only one that has a full Bible translation that's been completely developed and signed. There's many others that don't have any, I would guess about 40 have something in their language. So for example, [inaudible 00:13:57] they have just parts of a chapter or a full chapter, or a few verses. Only 40, there's only one full Bible. So there's roughly what would be 330, 320 left, 315, something like that, that have nothing. They have absolutely nothing yet. No Bible translation in their language.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, in our discussion before we started recording, Ryan mentioned Pioneers Translation, and I saw on the website Wycliffe as well. Are there efforts underway to address this?

Interpreter:

Well, right now there's Wycliffe, Pioneer, there's DOOR International, there's us, Deaf Bible Society. And there's several more, I could give you a huge list. There's many organizations that have now noticed this work and have been collaborating and trying to develop and set up more translation projects. But I want to clarify this. We don't go and do the Bible translation work ourselves. Our goal is to be able to look and find local people there who have this as their native language, and then train them on how to do the Bible translation work. And so they are the natives. They are the native users, and it's so much better. They're better at the sign language than we are or that we could be because our first language is ASL. That's where our skill is. Their first language is their own native sign language. So we want to empower



them to be able to develop their own Bible translation in their own community, from their own leadership.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

That's excellent. And we hear a healthy missiology in that as well. And the inclusion and the priority of the local people. One of the challenges is the availability of the Bible itself and the scriptures. What are some of the other challenges facing the deaf community in gospel ministry?

Interpreter:

Well, for leadership or translation work, there's the more narrow focus of just finding deaf people that have the type of skill level to address some of these issues. We have more hearing people that are doing the work, but again, this is not their native language. So trying to have someone who has natural vocabulary, natural text, it's not their native language that they're translating into. And so having deaf people who, again, how many deaf people that are qualified to do this? There's very few. So just trying to find the people within the community that are qualified to do this. And then in other third world countries, there's a much lower education level compared to here in America. And so it takes a long time to teach and to train, and to raise up leaders. And that can really make the process a lot longer.

Interpreter:

So it was easier here and the process was faster here, but then trying to find, obviously work on the text and everything, but the actual signing part takes three or four times as long, just finding someone who's qualified. Trying to find the right deaf person who has the right skill level, who's high functioning and has that higher education, and has a background so that we don't have to teach and train just to catch them up to the level where we would normally take someone from. And so the education system in a lot of those third world countries is completely broken because at home they don't have access. They get to school and then they're late and have to work so hard to try to catch up in school. And then finally they can be able to get into leadership, have a mentor, et cetera. So it just delays everything and makes it later.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, some of those challenges we can relate to in the hearing community. Kath and I moved to a part of the world where we learned to speak another language and we were not able to. We could communicate, but we were not the right people to translate the scriptures. We needed a native speaker there. And so this all has very clear parallels, very understandable, but it's laden with even additional challenges that it's helpful to understand. What are some of the other challenges that are facing this community Ryan?

Interpreter:

Some of the other ones are churches. There's not a lot of churches or there's not people who are willing to be involved with deaf ministry. So there's not many churches that deaf people can come to worship and that can come together. So we don't have the right type of leadership or the right type of interpreters. There's a lot of churches that provide interpreters, but having a quality interpreter that can really benefit the deaf community is important as well.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:



Okay. How about resources for these communities?

Interpreter:

Again, there's not many. If you look in deaf church history over time, we have had to fight so hard to even have deaf churches set up in the past at the late 1800s, specifically in America. And in other parts of the world, there may have been things a little bit before that as well. But we're looking at maybe 200 or 300 years old history. That's it. It's very young, still relatively. And so for history before that, there was nothing. And so we're still very raw, still very new in terms of church history and having churches that we can actually develop and set up. It's still not the right, there's still not the right type of resources out there. For example, we have internet access in a world where technology is really incredibly, it's developing so fast. And then also having churches in general who it's just easy for hearing people to speak.

Interpreter:

It's very audio focused. And then deaf people rely on visual. Visual cues, being able to see high quality technology, high quality video, and being able to have good funding as well and having good technology. That's hard financially. So just getting churches to invest in that, or a lot of audio technologies is already out there. It's inexpensive, it's easy, but for deaf people having high quality visuals can be expensive. And that's a barrier. Is just the financial investment it takes for churches to set this up. And for some churches, there's just not many deaf people who live close to each other. So they have to drive from a very long distance, maybe an hour, hour and a half to be able to congregate together.

Interpreter:

In another country, you may end up having to drive very, very far to get to just one city where they can finally be involved and go to their own church, while hearing people, they have that option really close by. It's a privilege to be able to go to church or just listen through the radio, or listen to a podcast, or just anything, there's all these resources available. But for deaf people, maybe technology is really terrible or the internet connection is terrible in their country. And so they have to just be able to come to church just to be involved and drive a really long ways. And there's no, there's an absence of churches that are willing to provide the resources and make an impact, and resources can be limited.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, again, helpful for us to just be aware of this. It makes me thankful immediately for things that I haven't, maybe I've taken for granted that I can listen to a podcast for example. And it's just not that simple. So helpful to listen to some of the challenges here. After our break, we're going to ask Pastor Ryan to take us to a local church environment and to talk about some of the ways that the church really can be sensitized and be more helpful perhaps than we have been in order to reach the deaf community with the gospel. Just before we get to that part of our conversation, we'd like to share with you this resource that we hope will be helpful to you in your church.

Speaker 1:

Do you desire to pray more effectively for Muslims? Praying through the Arabian peninsula offers numerous prayer guides that direct you to pray for specific people groups, cities, countries, and topics. Visit pray-app.info today to get your own copy of their prayer guides and to check out other helpful related materials. And now back to today's conversation.



Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

We're back with pastor Ryan Sims from the Deaf Bible Society. We've been talking about some of the challenges facing the community, and we don't want this only to be negative. There are a lot of positive things and Pastor Ryan is going to help us get there too. Ryan, I'd like to ask about your own church in Dallas there and what that community meeting looks like. We'll draw over that some principles afterwards, but when does your community meet? What does it look like? Just share with us a little bit about that please.

Interpreter:

Yes, absolutely. So our church meets in different places. So it is part of the same church building, but we have kind of our own section, our own place to worship. And that's where I am the pastor. And we have a music worship leader as well. We have local internal deacons, elders and then also a congregation as well. And so it's exactly the same structure as a hearing church. So we're part of this bigger church, essentially. We're a smaller church, part of a bigger one. A lot of how we process is on our own, but of course there is advocacy and support that goes both ways.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Is there an integration, are there hearing people that participate in this group to some degree or any degree, or is it, we understand the differences of course, but how does that look?

Interpreter:

For my church specifically, it can be different in some other churches, they may have a different structure, but ours, we do have a voice interpreter team that's there as well. For example, right now you're hearing Elizabeth, who's speaking for me. It's the same concept and the same approach to church. So we do have a voice interpreter who sits and speaks for me as I sign. And then there's a family who has parents who are hearing and children who are deaf, and so they're able to come and worship together. And it's kind of the other way around where some other people have deaf parents and hearing children, and the children can still hear it in their own language. So without having to leave church and be separate, that way the families can be able to discuss and everyone can benefit from having that type of atmosphere. So it's a very unique atmosphere.

Interpreter:

It's a lot of benefit to both the hearing and deaf world that we can mesh them together during that time. So some of the interpreters have been able to come and join us, but our facility is still, sometimes we have deaf people who join the hearing church. Sometimes we have hearing that join the deaf church. Sometimes we'll have crossovers for Bible studies. So especially with the teenagers, typically they don't want to be with their parents. So they may go join the hearing church service or the parents they want to allow their older teenagers and their deaf kids to be able to stay in deaf church. And the parents want to go be involved in the hearing service. And then after church they'll all meet up together [inaudible 00:24:46] and be able to go home. So it's still, it's just providing this opportunity to be able to go into either service and you could even have double dipping and go into both messages. So again, it's just a different, it depends on each individual family and their preferences, but we do provide the best of both worlds in this situation for our church.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:



Yeah. Well, I see some similarities, of course, between hearing and the deaf community that teens don't necessarily want to sit with their parents. We have that in common.

Interpreter:

Yeah.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, it's so helpful to have a picture Ryan of a helpful and healthy integration that provides these opportunities. What are some of the ways that a typical local church community can help reach the deaf with the gospel? Let's go to some of the hopeful ways that we can help.

Interpreter:

Sure. First and foremost, I would say, if you already have a church with an interpreter, that's a really great way to start being involved. But make sure that the interpreter has qualifications, has a background and not all interpreters are a good fit for doing this type of work. Even if they're certified, even if they have high level skills, do they have religious vocabulary? Some don't. And so being able to go in and interpret, for example, like a school training, interpreter training programs don't have religious background typically. So being able to just put them in a church setting, they could be really caught off guard. They might not know what the signs are for different topics. So being able to interpret the concepts of scripture is another challenge as well. You have to make sure you really understand the scripture well in order to be able to interpret it accurately and interpreting in sign language, you have to understand the concept.

Interpreter:

It's not a word to word translation. There are kind of two types of styles of interpreting, but most of us would prefer not having the word to word translation. We would prefer having the conceptual translation into American sign language instead of signed exact English or see. That can be more easy to interpret in general, but it requires so much more processing and trying to translate in a deaf person's mind, what's being said from one language to another, instead of in sign language in ASL. Not having that, the literal meaning for that, but instead for the Bible, it is full of different situations where we have love and grace, and people that were legalistic who were very strict, the Pharisees. They were black and white, only following what's there instead of Jesus who is trying to say, no, you need to have grace and love, and understand the concepts.

Interpreter:

And we need to make sure that those are very clear because they're foundational. And if they're interpreted incorrectly, that could really impact the deaf community. And so again, making sure that's not just one way strict, but having an interpreter who can offer the information and who really understands the concept behind what's going on to be able to give people a clear understanding of grace and love, and what's there, and what's involved in the message instead of being very legalistic and having that legalism involved, that's a big challenge. And so for interpreters to be able to have a foundation and know the scriptures and what they mean, and not just know the words, but be able to know within the church setting and the church system. Because some things, the worldview and the church view are so completely different. So a lot of interpreters will be interpreting the worldview on something, and that really hurts the deaf community that's watching.



Interpreter:

And we need to make sure we have the right type of interpreter who has background knowledge and can interpret well. I would really encourage that, make sure you know who your interpreter is. And then also having, if there's a deaf church there, that's maybe close by, maybe within 30 minutes or 15 minutes from your church, go ahead and set up. If you have an interpreter at your church, why not take down that division in the community and why not encourage that church in their growth. Maybe taking three or four people from that local church and trying to put them in your church to lead like youth ministry there or something. You can try to help and come alongside that deaf church, or if they have children or different type of ministry in their church, if you're trying to take interpreters from that church into your church, that could be taking resources.

Interpreter:

So my preference would be seeing a big community that's collaborative, that's working together instead of just having separate ministries all the time. And I don't want to criticize that. I can be very honest with you that there are a lot of churches who like to have an interpreter just to be able to say, look, there's a beautiful language and a beautiful interpreter, and we're providing for deaf people's needs. And are you really? Are you really meeting the needs of the deaf community? Or are you doing that just because you want to look good and accommodating, and you want to be able to have people see that there's people there who can't hear and we're just providing access and that's it? So you really have to look deep into the motivation and make sure that you're providing the right kind of access for the people who are there.

Interpreter:

Otherwise, it could end up hurting the deaf community along the way. So that's something that's very important. And also to look at, if you have a local church, a local deaf church that's already started, support them, work alongside them. And I know that with denominations, it can be an issue, having a different denomination church. But again, the deaf community is so small, it is so small and there's such a small number. So if you decide to make dividing lines because of denomination, that could end up hurting the deaf community in the long run. So collaboration is so important right now and that's my heart.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, on this podcast, the Global Missions Podcast, we're talking about global ministry of course. We talk about doing missions far away and doing missions close to home. And this topic today helps us realize, again, this is a mission field of sorts to collaborate together on and to reach a community with the good news of the gospel. And they may be in proximity, physically may be very close to us, but still because of some of these challenges, at distance. One of the things you've mentioned along the way where we might be able to help is leadership development. Could you speak to that a bit please Ryan?

Interpreter:

For leadership development, the focus obviously is how we develop leaders. So really getting someone who can experience leadership and have that hands on training, and experience, and building that opportunity means that we need to be really involved. We need to do the work, get our hands dirty, experience having a mentor, experience having other people come and grow alongside us, and then being able to go out afterwards and do the work on our own. So that's the concept for leadership and for the local church or the church just in general, having that training to become a youth pastor, and



then become a pastor of another church. We do this training, then send people out. But for deaf people, there's such a challenge, because there's a lot of division on how do we have mentors. If there's a person who would benefit in the local church doing ministry in the area, maybe we don't have that service in our community that's well established.

Interpreter:

Maybe we don't have enough leaders there to even do the mentorship. So for myself, I was able to become a leader, I'm able to teach, but finding someone with the right heart who are ready to lead, I have to really go back and make sure that we understand foundational scripture. Make sure we understand foundational concepts before I can turn over the reins and let them lead on their own. So it's really not easy. Maybe there it can take two or three times longer just making sure we have the foundation there. Again, because of the language deprivation, because of the latent access, because of all of these issues, we have to work to get them caught up before I can turn over the rein. So for hearing people it's really easy. We have all these resources out there. We have so many things that are easily accessible, so much training that's easily accessible, but having enough teachers and then having other people who depend on me as the pastor to be doing all the work, and trying to find people who I can even have to support me as a pastor.

Interpreter:

It feels very overwhelming at times because I'm trying to train somebody, I'm trying to train one person that I can get ready to go and to be able to help others. And I need the Lord to be able to anoint them to go to another area where it's really needed to have a pastor. So then they go away to another church. So for example, I'm working here at Deaf Bible Society and I work with one project called deafchurchwhere.com. And so there's churches all over the world that provide any type of access or resource that a deaf person could use. So maybe it's an interpreter. Maybe it's an interpreter with a Bible study group, or maybe we have churches listed there that are just advocacy for churches on how to support deaf people. So for my church, I have that. And then it's like a standalone independent church. So there's four different types of churches that we have set up on that website.

Interpreter:

So many people they just don't know. So just provide a nice platform where you can actually see where the resources are. And so when you look at that resource, there's a lot of places on the east coast in America, but we don't see many on the west coast. For some reason, there's just not many. So I have tried looking into that and I don't know if it's because of the mountains and the terrain, I don't know. But there are some big cities there, some big states that don't even have any type of service for the deaf. So I've been trying to evaluate that and send out information to, or get in touch with deaf people there. And still it's been such a huge struggle developing more than one person who I can develop and send. And then I have to start over again with my work and find another person.

Interpreter:

And I feel like my efforts in teaching and sending, and teaching, and sending, it's all there, it's all teaching and developing people to be able to go out, but then they keep coming to me over and over again. And it would be nice if I had some people that I could retain locally and even have church support to be able to work together with me and provide more, do more work together than I can do just one man on my own with my own power. If I could have a group of people around me doing this work and



being able to empower more deaf people to go out, that would be so much better than focusing on one individual to do all the work.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

I've got a follow-up here. I want to ask you about resources in a minute Ryan. But if a church wanted to step toward this, this leadership development that you've spoken of, what would you suggest would be one of the first steps for them? What would they do next now?

Interpreter:

Ask, always ask. So if you have a deaf person, just ask them, what do you need? And then really listen. Don't just assume that you know how to solve the problem for them. Don't just put them in a program. If you see, oh, you need an interpreter, just give them an interpreter. Maybe it's the wrong type of interpreter. Or maybe you just give these resources that aren't really hitting the mark. I want you to think about like leading a horse to water. It's like giving all these resources, giving all these things, but maybe you're giving the wrong type of resources. So really sit and listen, and figure out what resources will really be a good match. So ask what that deaf person needs and then be able to sit, and maybe you just read the Bible together. Maybe you help to build that type of discipleship.

Interpreter:

And maybe even just building that discipline or devotions daily, that's what they needed. Or maybe they don't have a sign language Bible, and you are able to say, hey, do you know this other organization that provides a free app you can download and see the Bible? And you can give them the Bible in their language and they feel more included. Or maybe that's not where they're struggling and they're struggling with music. And you can say, why? And understand maybe the interpreter isn't interpreting it adequately for music. And so we can have, that's another challenge because not all interpreters can do that. Music translation for our concept is very different than just regular interpretation, like a conversation or a message. Music is so entirely different. It's a different cup of tea, if you will. So being able to see what does that deaf person need, maybe it's the interpreter that's struggling.

Interpreter:

Perfect. You know what to do to be able to address that situation. So just ask the deaf person you're working with, just ask, what do you need? What type of approach can we have to make sure that that deaf person feels like, oh, I really am being heard. I'm being seen. You see me, you see my heart, you see my challenges and you see what I need. And being able to ... That deaf person will share with the community and say, hey, I feel welcome here. And they'll start bringing other people in with them. And that's how you start building a community. And so being able to start growing and being able to recognize that leader that then can have other people visiting, that can start discipling, that can start growing in that way, is just this multiplication that will happen. So you just have to start with one person.

Interpreter:

And again, the challenge is many big churches are constantly looking at the numbers. They're looking at this saying, just for one or two, three deaf people, that's a waste of time. That's a waste of resources to invest that in them and it's not worth it. And it's so sad. I see that happen many times. For deaf missions, for deaf churches that are closing all over the place because no one is willing to come alongside and



support, and provide resources, and ask the question, what resources do you need? And be able to find support. And so they see the deaf numbers going down and they just close it down.

Interpreter:

They don't think that it's worth their money and the investment for deaf people. They want to see the numbers grow and grow, and to them it's not worth it if they don't see the numbers. If they just see one or two, they think that it's not worth anything and they don't put attention or resources towards it. So again, one person can make a huge impact because maybe it's going to take 20 or 30 years before you get to the next generation and you can make an impact there. So it can't just be looking at statistics and numbers, and looking at the face value of who's there. You need to be able to trust the Lord and trust that just with one person, you can start to grow this.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, this is so helpful to hear ideas about resources and dimensions, I would say, of a ministry that would be supportive. I'll just say this for our audience too, many of you know that we take show notes and Maddy is on the line listening and capturing some of these ideas that will be included in the show notes that you can find at globalmissionspodcast.com. Just as we wrap up Ryan, I'd like to ask you about the resources for kids. And you've mentioned the importance of that already earlier, developing kids' resources, children's ministry resources, is something that maybe the hearing church can help with. What do you have to add to that?

Interpreter:

Yes. So for children's resources specifically, again, I want to emphasize that it can be beneficial at a very early age to have resources and to make them visual, make them in sign language, expose them to that language so that they can pick it up more easily. So for example, with myself growing up, it was a Christian home and my parents were able to communicate at home. And now I am able to be involved in church, like look at where I am in leadership. But a lot of other deaf children, they don't have that exposure at a young age. So having it at a young age is so important and it makes a really big impact on the deaf community in the long run and in the future. And then that silent hands ministry that there's Bible study leadership, there's language classes, not really class, I guess it's more just resources that parents can use to learn sign language.

Interpreter:

And so there's communication with children, resources for that. And again, it's for parents who don't feel that resistance to basic communication, because even basic communication can make such a big difference with relationship with their children. And so having that barrier come down just a little bit and understand, what's wrong? How can I help you through this? What are you frustrated with? Just asking basic questions like that and having a Bible story, and being able to explain the Bible story. Who this person is in the Bible story, what they struggled with, how they had a hard time, how they had faith, how they were disappointed or angry. God can use those people and he can use you too, my daughter or my son, God can use you too. So just being able to have those basic conversations and start exposing them to language, in sign language. I work a lot with teenagers and they have a lot of anger, disappointment, bitterness, that they're working through.

Interpreter:



There's a lot of struggle with expressing frustration and emotion, and a lot of it it's because they haven't had language to communicate it. And so trying to get them to get it out and communicate, and then feeling like their hopes are kind of capped out, feeling like what's the purpose for life or knowing Jesus came to earth to give us hope. But many of them don't know that, many deaf teenagers don't know that, we've told them too late. And so they should be able to know that at a young age that there is hope. And so this can make such a huge difference just to have this hope grow in them and be able to be saved at an early age instead of waiting until they're adults. And then finally, again, it takes many, many years of struggling with language deprivation in all these different situations and that makes it so much easier to disconnect from all of these.

Interpreter:

So again, for Christianity, it's possible we can do this, but the perspective is, is it fair to them? And it's not fair to them where we're set up in the world. It's not fair to them. But can we do something about it? Yes, absolutely. And so why not? Why can't we be the ones to do something instead of just saying, oh, there's information, I'll remember it for later and then I do nothing? If you're just aware about it, where's the application. So we should be able to take this knowledge and use resources, and be able to actually put it into action. And that is a challenge, but I really encourage people to go from awareness to talking about it, to figuring out, where's the action? Where can I be involved?

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Well, Ryan, this has been so helpful to sensitize us, to help us be aware of a community that needs the gospel that might be very close to us here. I would like to ask you generally about resources, maybe websites. Of course, there's your organization. We can re mention, so to speak, the deafbiblesociety.com. But what other resources would you recommend for people who want to learn more about this?

Interpreter:

Sure, absolutely. Well again, yes, Deaf Bible Society, they do have links. They have www.deafchurchwhere.com. And in that you'll be able to see a tab that's called the blog. And when you click on that, you'll be able to see different articles, different resources for local churches, things that can benefit deaf ministries. And for some of the churches, they do have that but you can also, there's just so many different FAQs and questions there, different things to do in different situations. So that's something that I've been developing just from my own experiences and my own research. And the information there is incredibly beneficial for churches and not just hearing churches, they can be very beneficial for deaf churches as well if they're able to see that.

Interpreter:

And being able to reference this article and list of different situations, you can look through and see what applies to you and see what different resources are there. And then there's different organizations that can support in different areas as well. So it's just a good starting place that you can look and see other references to other places and other websites as well. So it's not just looking for a deaf church and where to go to. You can start there and being able to see how close deaf churches are to you. It's just a support for the entire community. And it's a good resource so that you can find the right place.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:



Thank you. I just want to mention to our audience, often we're talking about global engagement. And we just felt that it was beyond the scope of what we could manage in one discussion to go deeply into that. We'll plan for a follow-up conversation with regard to engaging globally as well. Ryan, if any of our listeners would have follow-up questions, how could they reach out to you?

Interpreter:

Sure. You can reach out to me through, there's actually two different places. You can reach out to me through ryan@deafbiblesociety.com or [rsims, S-I-M-S, @firstdallas.org](mailto:rsims,S-I-M-S,@firstdallas.org). So either of those emails. For Deaf Bible and for me being a pastor, you can contact me at either place.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Thank you. We will include those in the show notes, if you're listening and you'd like to follow up with Pastor Ryan. I have a favorite question that I often close with Ryan, I'd like to present it to you now. If you had the opportunity to stand in front of the missions committee at a local church, including the pastor being there. These are people who would like to positively engage and step forward with the great commission. What would you like to say to them?

Interpreter:

I would like to say that if you see someone, don't try to fix it. Become their ally, work alongside them, partner with them, allow that deaf person to lead and try your best to learn. And maybe they don't know some information. That's fine, give them information, but encourage that person to lead the way. And that's what allyship looks like. And then there's other resources out there, maybe that deaf person is not even aware of. So having the opportunity through a radio, through a podcast, you have so many resources and so many information out there that deaf people don't have yet. So don't just assume that you can help and you can fix it. Instead, provide information, leave it up to them and try to work alongside and support. Try to become that person's ally. Don't just try to lead and fix it.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Very good word. Well, this has been a remarkable interview and I want to say thank you to both of you. For our audience, this is being recorded on a Zoom call. So I've had the opportunity to visually be visiting with Pastor Ryan and Elizabeth here. You won't get to see that on the podcast. But I just want to extend a shout out to Elizabeth. Thank you for helping us today and being my interpreter, Ryan's interpreter. And Pastor Ryan, thank you so much for helping us learn-

Interpreter:

Thank you.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

And grow and be more sensitive. And may the Lord bless you as you serve among this community in the Lord's purposes.

Interpreter:

Thank you so much. I really appreciate this opportunity. Just the honor of being here and sharing with you. And I pray that this is really beneficial to whoever needs to listen to the message. And again, don't feel anxious about contacting me, please. I am here to support in every way possible.



Maddy:

Well, thank you all for listening. We so wish you could have actually seen this conversation and watched as we had the opportunity to see this sign language in action, it's such a beautiful language. So we enjoyed that, but we hope you found this conversation impactful, nonetheless.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Yeah, it was fascinating. And we actually have thought about having a follow-up conversation that we'll do in the future sometime. And we've agreed that if we do that, we're going to include the video next time and just invite you into that experience together with us.

Maddy:

Yeah, absolutely. Mags, why don't you share, what's a highlight, something that stood out to you from this conversation?

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Sure. The highlight that I choose is the similarity that I saw between reaching the deaf community and other unreached people groups. So some of the practices that are wise in reaching an unreached people, so include honoring them, listening carefully to them, including them, especially when you get to the point of leadership development, including folks from that people group. And all of that felt very relevant and similar to what Pastor Ryan is doing. The difference was proximity. And these deaf people may be right in our congregations or in our communities, at least and they're not far away like many unreached people groups are.

Maddy:

Yeah. And I would say, similarly, what stood out to me was, we asked him how many sign languages there actually are. And I was surprised, he said around 350 unique sign languages. Which maybe shouldn't have surprised me as much as it did, but that's a lot of languages. And then to have that follow up question of, and how many Bibles are translated in those languages. And he said, one. One full, complete Bible is translated in that language. So you just do see the deaf communities as an unreached people group. And that was certainly impactful for me.

Rob 'Mags' Magwood:

Oh, it's going to impact some of the work that we do through our organization as well. We got a lot of learning to do here. Friends this episode has been brought to you by the Global Missions Toolbox, the online collection of resources, especially for Senders, pastors, missions committees, and family and friends of workers sent to serve admissions. We invite you to join us again in two weeks when we'll continue to explore this grand adventure of being Christ's witnesses to the ends of the earth.