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Living a Life of Surrender

Guest: Ann Dunagan
From the series: The Mission Minded Family
Air date: November 23, 2009

Bob: Are you mission minded?

Ann: The Great Commission is not an option to consider.

Bob: Ann Dunagan says, if you're a Christian, you ought to be.

Ann: It's a command to obey.

Bob: You ought to raise your children to be mission minded as well.

Ann: And it's not just for a few, it's not just for the famous apostles, it's not just for the big name preachers, it's not just for the missionaries with the pith helmets that are headed into Africa. We are all called as believers in Jesus Christ, to expand God's kingdom. And whatever sphere of influence we're called to go into.

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today* for Monday, November 23rd. Our host is the President of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. All of us have a responsibility to help fulfill the Great Commission if we're followers of Christ. Does your family understand that, and are you teaching your children to be mission minded? We'll talk about that today.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*, thanks for joining us. When would you say you got mission minded? When you were in college?

Dennis: The summer between my sophomore and junior year when the spiritual lights came on, it all came on. I mean the floodlights came on, where I began to think about why I was going to the University of Arkansas. I just had graduated from a smaller junior college. And I thought about myself as a missionary. I thought about going through rush, and joining a fraternity and thinking about sharing my faith in Christ with my pledge brothers, which I did.

Bob: Yes?

Dennis: I bought them all Bibles. I brought speakers in from the outside. So when the spiritual lights came on in my life, I was, in poker terms--which is not really good here on *FamilyLife Today*--I was all in.

Bob: All in!

Dennis: I was all in! I put the poker chips on the number and said, "Let's go." And if the Great Commission is really the greatest assignment God has ever given to a human being, then why not get on with it.

Bob: Did you ever think that might land you in upper Slobovia, or wherever?

Dennis: Oh, yes. Yes, in fact a part of the reality of surrendering my life to Christ, was realizing that I could get on a slow boat to Africa, and that God might call me to give my life there as a single man, maybe never get married, or maybe not have a normal job. I could go give my life up on behalf of Jesus Christ. So, yes. What about you?

Bob: Well, you really haven't had a normal job ever since.

Dennis: No I haven't. You know, I ended up working with high school kids for five years, with Campus Crusade for Christ, and then went to seminary, then helped start FamilyLife in 1976. Really given my life to, I believe, what the Great Commission is all about. Proclaiming the gospel and making disciples, and what I believe is, the most powerful, great commission training center on the planet, and that's the family.

Bob: You're really talking about the whole issue of surrender, and the life that is surrendered to whatever God calls you to.

Dennis: I am. And we have a guest here with us on *FamilyLife Today* who knows a little bit about surrender. Ann Dunagan joins us on *FamilyLife Today*. Ann, welcome to the broadcast.

Ann: Thank you I am excited to be here today.

Dennis: Let me introduce you to Ann. She's the mom of seven children. Count them. How did it go? Boy, boy girl?

Ann: Boy, boy, girl, boy, boy, girl, boy. As of right now.

Dennis: I was getting ready to ask you.

Ann: As of right now. You know, we surrender. Surrender it all to Jesus Christ. My mom was 45 when she had her last one the two of us were pregnant at the same time, when I had my second. And she had her sixth.

Dennis: Oh wow!

Ann: You know, God is Lord of every area of our life.

Dennis: Yes He is.

Ann: Out of our money, He's in control of our pocketbook, He's in control of where we live, and He's in control of how we raise our kids. I surrender all. Being mission minded, is being crucified with Christ. That's what it's all about.

Dennis: Well, she is the mom of seven for right now.

Bob: Right.

Dennis: And she is the wife of one, married to John. In fact she and her husband started Harvest Ministry a number of years ago. She has written a book called *The Mission-Minded Family*. As a listener you're not going to believe the number of countries that Ann has been to on mission trips with either her husband or her husband and her family, over the past what? Quarter century?

Ann: Over the past 25 years.

Dennis: Yes. How many countries?

Ann: I'm at 29, but my husband is getting up there, about 60 countries on all seven continents. My husband has even preached the gospel of Jesus Christ on the continent of Antarctica.

Dennis: So where did you get your...

Bob: Wait, wait! Are there people there?

Ann: Oh... I'm like, "What do you mean you're going to go to Antarctica? Are you going to preach to the penguins?" He says, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. I'm going to Antarctica."

He had a dream that he was to go to Antarctica and meet a man that was running from God and somehow, he got hooked on this Russian Polar Expedition ship. And even that part of the trip, the conglomeration of people that are on a trip to Antarctica. You get rugged people from all across the world that have been to every single continent, and are just trying to get Antarctica on their list.

And, so they were passing out Russian Bibles on this ship, they were preaching to people from Europe, and different places around the world. They have a talent show on the ship, and so they use that to preach the gospel on the ship. They got to a remote scientific research station.

One thing that was kind of interesting, they had a few Ukrainian Bibles that they didn't realize they had. And they tried passing them out to one of the Russian crew members. He said, "We can't read this, this is Ukrainian." And they were like, "Oh brother, we brought Ukrainian Bibles to the ends of the earth and there's nobody we can pass them out to?" The sound came on the intercom. We just have news that a Ukrainian research station has just opened up, we're going to be the first ones that will go on land.

And so, they were able to pass out Ukrainian Bibles. And then it turned out that they met a man, the expedition leader, he used to be a remote missionary in Northern Canada and would go up to remote Indian villages and he had gotten offended, hurt, his family had fallen apart, and was running from God. And my husband met him down there and said, "God loves you, and is after you."

Dennis: Well, I don't know the number of countries our family has been to. Bob, do you know? Ours has to approach ten countries where we've taken our kids and gone on mission's trips or exposed them to other countries.

Bob: You don't count California as a country do you?

Dennis: You could. But, we're all about encouraging families to be thinking about the world. Because, that really is our mission field as followers of Christ.

Bob: I have to stop you right here. Because some of our listeners have just heard you describe your husband going to Antarctica, and they've heard you describe this, we're going to live all out, no holds barred for Jesus kind of thing. They're going, "Okay, that's not us."

Ann: She's way out there.

Bob: We're this suburban family, taking the kids to school and, so... You sound very different than the typical mom.

Ann: Well let me also introduce myself. I do laundry, and I have a Mount Everest at my home. We live in the United States, and we have actually, have always lived in the United States. I'm a soccer mom, I'm a cross-country mom. I'm a track mom, and I've been a tennis mom. Our kids have homeschooled, but our kids have been involved with public school sports. We have neighbors, we go to a small church, where we have a pastor, and we love Jesus, and we take our kids to Sunday school. We're real people.

Dennis: And you take God at his word when He commanded us to go to the world in Matthew chapter 28: 19-20. "All authority has been given to me. Go." And, so you and your husband decided early on in your marriage that you were going to go. Is that where you got your heart for missions originally?

Ann: I grew up in a godly home, wonderful parents. My mother led me to Jesus when I was three years old. I was at a family camp when I was eight years old. A teacher told us "take your Bible, go out in the woods, ask God to give you a reference, and God can speak to you through his word."

So I went out in the woods and the Lord put a thought in my head that was from Jeremiah chapter one. I opened up my little tattered Children's Living Bible, it was

green with little pictures of Jesus and the children on the front. And opened it up, and it started off with a bunch of confusing words and names and things.

But then it goes into, starting verse four, and says, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born I ordained you and sanctified you as a prophet to the nations. 'Then' said I, 'Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak for I am a youth.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say "I am a youth" for you shall go to all who I will send you. And whatever I command you, you shall speak.'"

The Lord just really spoke to me through that verse. And then I was actually at a meeting with my mom, at a women's bible study, and a woman came up and prayed over me when I was ten years old and spoke these exact verses over me. I just bawled as a little girl because I really felt like God had spoken these verses to me.

I loved the Lord, I was very involved in church through high school. My husband came on the scene, just after our senior year in high school and was preaching to our youth group about daring to be different. And allowing no compromise in your Christian life.

At that time, I looked like Miss Leader of the youth group, I was up leading worship, I was an up-front sort of girl. But there were areas of hidden rebellion, compromise, things I was listening to, movies I was sneaking into, some lies I was telling my parents. I was not--I brushed it over and thought it was not that big a deal. But it was blatant rebellion. And when he spoke about daring to be different, and not allowing any foothold for the enemy in our life. It convicted me deeply. So that was a major turning point.

For my husband, how he got a real heart for missions, he grew up as a youngest of nine kids on a farm. His dad was the guy that gave the checks to the missionaries. They would go to this little tiny country church and they would learn, they would read stories about the different missionaries.

There was this one missionary guy named Sam, he worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators down in the Amazon. The stories he heard were like stories of shooting the crocodile, and he would hear stories of eating monkey brains. He's like "Missions is the fun part of Christianity." So, that's how we came together.

Bob: You married Indiana Jones, is what you're telling us.

Ann: Oh, my yes!

Dennis: You know, it's funny you mention that, because in preparation for this broadcast, I thought about what I used to actually perceive as what missions was like. I thought it was this boring experience of, wearing black getting on that slow boat, going to Africa and, wasn't any fun, wasn't an adventure. But it really is Indiana Jones. It is. It's not, of course, the Temple of Doom.

Ann: And being godly, please. Not all the girls, different one in every movie.

Dennis: Well, I wouldn't want to draw the parallel too far here. But, the point is, it's not boring. It really is exciting to join God in the adventure in what He's doing in other people's lives. Whether it be across the street or around the world.

Ann: You know, sometimes when we think of what is missionary, the image that comes before people's mind is, maybe an old couple, outdated clothing, and they come and do boring Sunday night service with a video that's kind of shaky. And then there's this long drawn out plea for money. And that's missions.

Or even, you take the Indiana Jones thing to another perspective, and people just think that missions is, going off to the remote tribes and there's the huts and the mosquito nets and it's dancing around a fire to Booga Wooga music, and that's missions. Well, you know, that is not all that missions is about. I mean most people; so many people in this world live in inner cities, live in Europe, in remote parts of Asia. Missions is so diverse.

Bob: What you're saying is the Great Commission applies whether it's in the Inner City, or in Europe, or in remote parts of Asia. Wherever it is, wherever God's called you to, you need to have a mindset that says, I'm here to tell others about Jesus.

Ann: Absolutely. Hudson Taylor said, "The Great Commission is not an option to consider. It's a command to obey. And it's not just for a few, it's not just for the famous apostles, it's not just for the big name preachers, it's not just for the missionaries with the pith helmets that are headed into Africa. We are all called as believers in Jesus Christ to expand God's Kingdom. In whatever sphere of influence we're called to go into."

Dennis: To that very point, just reminds me of a personal conviction that I think that the area where families are most missing what God has for them today is in the area of the Great Commission. I think most families do not calibrate their purpose around Christ's command in Matthew 28:19-20. I have never gotten over the question that was asked by my pastor one Sunday.

Early in our marriage, he said, "What if you arrived in Heaven, at the throne room of God, and God was to say to you, 'What was your part in the Great Commission? What did you do? How did you and your family contribute to making disciples of all nations?' "What if you answered the question by saying, 'I didn't have anything to do with it.'? I didn't even think about that as I raised our children. I didn't think of us having a destiny, or a mission.'?" And yet, as you write your book, you really believe families do have a destiny that is all around the Great Commission.

Ann: Absolutely. As families, as a husband and wife, and as parents with children, when you were talking about the greatest place to raise up disciples for Jesus Christ. In the place of a home, you can raise up mighty disciples, where it's not only just the

biblical knowledge, and teaching them to be kids of character, but how to apply God's word into your everyday life just surrendering things to Jesus Christ.

Bob: You know, it's one thing for you to be a young twenties, couple. You and your husband just gotten married, you're going to take the world for Jesus; you're going to go wherever He sends you. But then, you have a baby. And then another baby, and all of a sudden as a mom—at least, many of the moms I know—there's this kind of nest instinct. And now I just want to be here with the babies, and raise them, and keep them safe. And, just settle.

Ann: Oh, can I tell you about when we had a toddler and I was pregnant?

Bob: Yes.

Ann: We had a toddler, little blonde haired boy, and I was pregnant with baby number two, and we went on a mission trip. First we went to the Philippines, and were going to remote villages tagging along our little one.

Dennis: You were how many months pregnant?

Ann: I was actually pretty far along. I got home at the very latest that the airline would let me travel.

Dennis: We were just wondering.

Ann: So, I was about eight months along when I returned home.

Dennis: Wow.

Ann: We smuggled Bibles. Used our little two year old as our distraction device, the guards kept looking at him, they didn't even look at our bags, it was pretty awesome. We went through and, just like brother Andrew; we were living our own adventure story.

Bob: But did you have any hesitation? Was there any part of you, as a mom going, "Now wait. This is my two year old. Something could happen to my two year old."?

Ann: We just had such a passion for the lost and for going wherever God would tell us to go. We really felt like we were supposed to go on this mission trip. I did have to deal, though with wonderful loving grandparents that we had to really make sure that this is what God wanted.

Bob: You could have gone into labor right?

Ann: Oh, wouldn't that have been cool!

Dennis: You know you mentioned the grandparents, and I'm assuming you're saying they had a few hesitations about you taking your two-year-old and being pregnant, and going to third world countries.

Bob: And these are godly grandparents.

Ann: Godly grandparents, absolutely!

Dennis: But you'll find this interesting, in Campus Crusade for Christ, the number one obstacle of young people joining the mission organization of Campus Crusade for Christ to work on the college campus, is parents. In other words, parents don't want their kids to take four years of education, that they've perhaps contributed to or helped pay for, and then end up with those young people to have to raise support to go into a ministry as such. These are many parents who are in churches all across the country. Does that surprise you?

Bob: Your own parents were a little nervous about some of what you guys were doing.

Ann: It's because they love their kids, they want their kids to have a good life, and they want to be close to the grandchildren. That's something that grandparents love to do, and it's just being able to surrender our rights. Our right to be an American, our right to have our kids move next door. Or just down the street in the same home town.

As parents, we need to raise our kids for God in this nurturing home of a discipleship training center, but we also need to release our children into God's plans and purposes. That might be different than our plans.

Dennis: But I think there's also a lack of spiritual perspective, that the Great Commission is, back as you quoted Hudson Taylor, the great leader to the China Inland Mission, it's not optional. It's not an optional command.

Bob: Well, you stop and think about it. A lot of times, for parents I think, if you graduate from college and you say, "I think God's calling me into ministry," the idea is, "What, you can't cut it? You can't get a real job? So ministry is kind of that backup?" That's because we have our priorities inverted.

Dennis: Well, I've been in ministry now, approaching my fourth decade. It could be said that I've never had a real job. OK? But I'm going to tell you something. The ministry is fraught with challenges that will tap into the greatest talents, the greatest abilities that a human being possesses, but ultimately it is the stretching of a muscle of the heart.

It's called faith; believing that God has a call, believing that God has a cause, and being obedient to both. The call and the cause, to step out and say, you know what, if Jesus be who He claimed to be, if He is the son of God, made flesh who dwelt among us, who lived for 33 years died on a cross as a sinless offering on our behalf, rose from the

death on the third day, and then gave us a command as He ascended into heaven to go to the world. Then maybe it's time we take him up on his command. Maybe we need to go.

And I'm not talking about giving money at this point. It's another thing to give your time, to give your focus, to give your attention, and to be, as I said earlier, recalibrate the purpose of your family around God's agenda and what He's up to.

Bob: You talk about giving money. I've never forgotten John Piper who said, "When it comes to missions, there are three kinds of people. There are those who go, there are those who give, and there are the disobedient. I think, in a very real sense that captures what we're talking about here; the need for us to bring ourselves, and our families in alignment with God's purpose for us here.

And that centers in the Great Commission, advancing the work of the kingdom of God by introducing people to Christ and discipling those who have come to faith.

And it captures what you talk about in your book, Ann. *The Mission-Minded Family*, which we've got in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can go online at FamilyLifeToday.com and there's more information there about Ann's book. And about how you can cultivate a mission minded orientation in your family. Again, the title of the book is *The Mission-Minded Family*, our website is FamilyLifeToday.com.

And let me just mention this as well. One of the things we can do as families, as we raise our children to be mission minded, is to read stories of missionaries. We've got a book in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center that is a collection of missionary stories. And it's a great book to read to the kids, at bedtime or at family time, or at meal time, so that they can begin to see the courage and the heroism, and the sacrifice of men and women who have said "I am going to make the communication of the gospel the central issue in my life."

Again, go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, there's information about all of these resources there, you can order from us online if you'd like. Or you can call 1-800-FLTODAY and we can give you more information about these resources and you can order by phone as well. Again, the toll free number is, 1-800-FLTODAY, 1-800-358-6329 and the website is FamilyLifeToday.com.

You know, as we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, I just want to make sure our listeners know how thankful we are for you. For the fact that you listen, and we're especially thankful for those of you who, from time to time contact us to help support the ministry of *FamilyLife Today*. We are listener supported. It's donations from listeners like you that make this radio program possible. You help cover the cost of producing and syndicating this daily program, and we could not do it without you, and we very much appreciate your partnership with us.

If you're able to make a donation this month of any amount, we have a special way we'd like to say, thank you. Barbara Rainey has recently completed a devotional guide for families called *Growing Together in Gratitude*. It's a seven day devotional designed to

help children and parents alike cultivate a heart of thanksgiving. We'd like to send this guide to you, again, as our way of saying thank you for your support of this ministry this month, when you make a donation of any amount.

If you donate online at FamilyLifeToday.com, and you'd like to receive the devotional, just type the word "GRATITUDE" in the key code box on the online donation form. Or if you make your donation by phone, calling 1-800-FLTODAY, just ask for the gratitude book after you make your donation. Again, we're happy to send it out to you. We do appreciate your financial partnership with us at this ministry.

Tomorrow we're going to talk more about what we can do to have a mindset that is a mission mindset; being on God's agenda as a family. Ann Dunagan is going to be back with us tomorrow, hope that you'll be back as well.

Want to thank our engineer today Keith Lynch and our entire production team. On behalf of our host Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We'll see you back next time, for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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