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Preparing for Missions

Guest: Ann Dunagan
From the series: The Mission Minded Family
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Bob: If God called your son or your daughter to be a missionary, would you be thrilled or disappointed? Here's Ann Dunagan.

Ann: It's one thing to say okay my son is thinking about going on a short-term mission trip to say Calcutta, India for a couple of weeks. Would I let him go? Well, we'd pray about it and see if we've got a clear go ahead from God and send him off. What about if he comes back and he says I feel like I'm supposed to go live in Calcutta, India for ten years. What would I say about that? Would I really release my kids to do that? To be away, to maybe to get married, have grandkids over there? Would I let him go to do that?

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today* for Thursday, November 25th. Our host is the president of FamilyLife Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. Is your dream for your child's life getting in the way for God's plan for your child's life? We're going to talk about that today.

Welcome to *FamilyLife Today* thanks for joining us. At this point in the week you're going to turn our guest into a coach. Is that right?

Dennis: I am it's not often you have a chance to interview someone. Did you ever say, Ann, how many missions' trips you've taken? You've never counted them all? You don't know how many times you've been overseas?

Ann: In our family it's in the hundreds. I don't know how many.

Dennis: Hundreds of mission's trips.

Ann: Yes.

Bob: Well let me ask you this, what's your status on the airlines? Are you

Ann: Oh yes, we're on gold status and frequent flyer miles and we get some of those free tickets and those are really fun you know to figure out where we can go.

Dennis: Well that is the voice of Ann Dunagan who has joined us this week on *FamilyLife Today*. Welcome back.

Ann: Thank you.

Dennis: She has written a book called *The Mission-Minded Family*. And I thought, Ann, because of your credentials of having been so many times that because of your expertise and of a couple that work here at FamilyLife who are getting ready to go to Rwanda, Bill and Tracy Eyster. I decided we'd bring Bill and Tracy into the studio and let you coach them as they take their very first mission trip with their two teenagers, okay?

Ann: That's awesome.

Dennis: Ok, so Bill and Tracey join us. Bill, Tracy welcome to the broadcast.

Bill: Thanks. We appreciate you having us.

Dennis: Bill and Tracey have been on staff with FamilyLife for now over three years. Bill is the Executive Vice President and COO of FamilyLife. He is a right-hand man around here and Bob's boss.

Bob: That's right.

Dennis: So you're going to see Bob on his best behavior as a listener.

Bob: Yes sir, Mr. Eyster, is there anything I can get you while you're in the studio?

(Laughter)

Bob: And our listeners may know Tracey as the one who gives oversight to the FamilyLife Mom Blog and if they'd like to find the Mom Blog just go to FamilyLife.com, they can find it on our home page is that right?

Tracey: They can find it on the home page.

Bob: Then you go right to the Mom Blog and see what moms are saying to other moms about mom kind of stuff. And I look in every once in awhile just to see what moms are talking about.

Dennis: Yes, and it's really good, Barbara contributes to it, along with our daughter Ashley and also another daughter of ours Rebecca has posted some things on Mom Blog as well. So the Rainey family is well represented on Mom Blog and I'm going to resist allowing Bill and Tracey to tell their own mission story of how they ended up at FamilyLife. We'll let that be for another day, but I do want you, Bill to share. Where did you come up with the idea of even thinking about going on this mission trip, taking your two teenagers with you.

Bill: Well, we're really excited. First of all I have to say that Dennis doesn't let us out of the office very often so it's going to be great to be able to get out on the mission field for a change.

(Laughter)

Bill: We've been working with a leader in the Anglican Church in Rwanda and really just he came over, spent some time with us and told us about the structure of the family and what the conditions of the family and marriages are in Rwanda. And it really just tugged on Tracey and my heart and we just feel called to go over there and help build godly marriages and families.

Really we want our children to have that same kind of a sense about kingdom work and have a heart for loving on others. So our prayer is that this is really a continuation of their ability to be able to think about others and I mean culture is always wanting us to think about us and that's really very selfish focused. And so we want them to think about other people and minister to people who need it so desperately.

Dennis: Bill is referring to Archbishop Kolini, Emmanuel Kolini who is one of more than 30 leaders in the Anglican church worldwide and it's a long story, but the essence of it is back last October we invited Archbishop Kolini and three other leaders to come and bring their spouses to FamilyLife and we paid their way over here to talk about developing a partnership between FamilyLife and this country toward ultimately rebuilding the Rwandan family. If you knew what was going on in the Rwandan family, I promise you you would understand why I use the word rebuild.

Bill: Yes, it's heart wrenching.

Dennis: It really is, the needs of this country, not only because of the genocide, but just its history and legacy, I don't think it's ever had a focus on really building the Christian family in the country.

Bob: Tracey, tell us about the conversation you had with Bill at I don't know, the kitchen table, or on the sofa or that night when he said, what would you think about all of us packing up and going to Rwanda for a few days.

Tracey: Well, interestingly when we had met Archbishop Kolini and his wife and the other families, our children were with us. We had a function where the families were there with them. We were all drawn to what we heard from them and just looking into the other women's eyes. So I don't know so much if it was Bill coming and saying, hey, what would you think about us going to Rwanda.

I think we were all feeling drawn towards the stories that we heard from the couples. We were drawn towards them as individuals just their heart and the way they love the Lord and the way the Lord had brought them through so many tragedies, but they still loved the Lord and they still wanted others to know the Lord. So we were drawn to the

people initially. Then I would say it sort of didn't matter where they were, we just wanted to join what they were doing and then when it came up that we had the opportunity to go to Rwanda the scary part of your heart says, oh, something scary could happen if we go to Rwanda. But then your heart says I want to go to Rwanda and be about what they are doing, be part of what they are doing.

Bob: And you and your husband have been to Rwanda.

Ann: Actually I've been in East Africa a number of times, near Rwanda. I have friends who are from Rwanda. My husband has been back and forth into Rwanda right after the genocide. Usually where we go in ministry is places where harvest is most ripe and often it is right after a war torn situation. So my husband had our teenage son with him in those outreaches. It was a big part of his upbringing of being able to witness some of those events.

Bob: These guys are first timers at this taking teenagers and going as a family into another country, going to Rwanda. They still have a few weeks before they are going to go. What should they be doing between now and when they get on the plane to get ready for where God is going to take them.

Ann: Well I think one of the biggest things is be prepared to be flexible. Be prepared to have your agenda totally tweaked and things are not going to come into place. Here in America we are very time oriented. In many other places around the world people are more event oriented. So you might have an appointment at 9:00 and you might be sitting there and it is 10:30 and no one is showing up yet and you think they don't care. It's not that they don't care; it's just that they are in the middle of something else. So you just kind of have to take it as it goes. Do not be, don't get worked up.

Bob: Hang on, you taking notes on this, Bill? Trying to make sure.

Ann: Okay, another thing that is very, very important is that you get on a mission trip and you get in a tight situation, you get in a place where you are all jet lagged out you are tired, you are hot, you are dirty, you are stinky, you will see the worst of each other come out. It is a test which means God is going to pull it out so you guys can work on it. Take care of things.

Dennis: I'll give you an illustration of that, there is nothing like going through customs when I took the kids to China a number of years ago. I had a teenager, a ten year old and an eight year old. I forget the exact ages, but the point was at 2:00 a.m. to be going through customs with three kids. Barbara wasn't there. It was just me and a couple of other dads. They all just had one child, I had three and I want to tell you something, you are exactly right.

You have got to practice what is called spiritual breathing. Walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, confessing your sins, exhaling what you have done wrong and appropriating

the power of the Holy Spirit. If you don't, you will be at each other's throats because it really can be a time that is fraught with interruptions and delays as well.

Ann: And just to rely on God's grace. God has grace for you for whatever it is you are going to encounter, both as a mom, as a dad, in the leadership and ministry you are going there to do. What you are also doing is instilling some things into your children. It actually is very exciting traveling with your kids overseas because you are in a different environment and so everything is new it doesn't have the same rules that you had at home and so you are able to sometimes the discussions that you have with young people and teenagers on a mission trip are fabulous.

So I would encourage you take advantage of some of these lull times when you are hanging around trying to figure out where on earth these other people are for your appointments to find out what's going through the heads of your kids. What are they thinking about? What has stood out in their minds? What are they seeing? What is standing out to them? When I think of the word compassion, you know you mentioned when you were with this family or with these people that God began to stir something of compassion in your heart and I felt that I was to really study the word compassion. What is compassion?

And there is this New Testament Greek word for compassion that is a verb, it's not just that you have compassion like a noun or it's like compassionate, an adjective. But compassion is a verb and you are moved with compassion and it's when God stirs you in the gut for something and this word is *splagchnizomai*. *Splagchnizomai* it's like this word that we get the word spleen from like from the gut. And when God gives his compassion He moves us at the gut level, you just feel like when you said I don't even care where it is, I just want to go because I know I am supposed to go.

It's because God moved you in your heart and when God moves us in our heart, it doesn't matter if we have the money. It doesn't matter if we know all the details. When He gives us His compassion, He will bring all the other stuff in.

Dennis: I want you to comment on two things, what about buying a journal for each person going on the trip?

Ann: Absolutely, we usually have a journal and have a Bible that you have. Another thing that is good, have you ever seen the Evangecube? Ok, take an Evangecube; maybe hook one to your backpack.

Dennis: I haven't seen one.

Ann: Ok, an Evangecube is kind of the size of a Rubicscube although they do make big ones and they make little tiny ones that you can attach to your backpack. It's by E3Resources.com and it presents the whole plan of salvation very simply. It starts with man and God, man is sinful, God is holy, you open it up there's the cross. It has the tomb, the resurrection, you open it up there's only one way to Jesus Christ.

Dennis: But what is it, it's a cube?

Ann: It's a little cube and you open it up and turn it different directions.

Bob: I see what you are talking about it's like a paper tract, but every time you turn the page it turns into a new cube like you're talking about.

Ann: Well it's not a tract it's actually like a little box. It's a little plastic box like a Rubicscube.

Dennis: But it's a way to present the gospel.

Ann: It is a very effective way of presenting the plan of salvation.

Dennis: And to that point, what other tools would you take with you to give away in terms of sharing your faith?

Ann: You could go and find the Four Spiritual Laws. Find it in the language of where you are going there in Rwanda. Have some extra of those tracts all ready. Actually I would bring along some tracts in some other like English, that you could pass out in the airport as you are headed that direction.

Bill: As a parent, how would you recommend we counsel our children in preparation for this trip? How should they be praying? How should they be preparing themselves? And setting their expectations?

Ann: I would say for them to just encourage them to just be willing to say, God, whatever you want to do on this trip. Do in me and through me and sometimes what's really challenging especially for a teenager maybe that's like has a real heart for God and you know wants to have this ministry experience, sometimes the most challenging thing is not being able to do what they want to do. So it's surrendering that to God and saying Lord if these openings happen, if we are able to go into these orphanages that you said you wanted to go to or maybe be to preach.

Maybe those opportunities will come and if they are that they will have boldness to step out and not think about what other people think, but that they would just be an ambassador for Jesus Christ. But then if they're not able to that they would be okay with that and mostly just that they would keep their eyes open and they would just see, just take it all in.

Dennis: Speak to the issues of just offering a cup of water in the name of Christ. I mean they're going to visit some orphanages where the commodity of the heart is love.

Bob: You're talking about acts of service of any kind. Right?

Dennis: Exactly.

Ann: Something that can even be really helpful is to take along in your luggage a few little gifts. They don't have to be expensive. You can go to a store that sells things for just a dollar and find some little gifts that they can give either to children or for you to give to other women, because they take that very kindly and it really expresses a heart of love. So prepare your heart and have some things that you are preparing.

I'd also encourage you to bring along some missionary biography books that they can be reading on the plane, because they are going to be reading something maybe they will be watching the movies or browsing through the magazines that are on the airplane. But to have some books like maybe *Bruchko* or *Is That Really You God?* by Lauren Cunningham or some of the *Christian Heroes Then and Now*. Just bring along some of these missionary biography books so that they are reading about famous men and women of God who surrendered things and then they're putting it into practice and they are keeping a journal of what's going on.

Bob: Have you guys been reading about the country of Rwanda together as a family? Have you been looking at any National Geographic specials on Rwanda or anything like that that you've found?

Tracey: Well, we just made the decision to go last week.

Bob: Okay.

Tracey: But we already went out and got a movie about Rwanda that Archbishop Kolini had told us about. Then we downloaded a book about Rwanda about socially how things are done there socially that are different than here. So we've started reading that out loud and highlighting areas so we can go back and read it again.

Then interestingly I just wanted to say that the book my son just read was the Hudson Taylor book and this is before we knew we were going to Rwanda and so when all this came up he just started talking about when we decided that the only way we could go was to raise the funds and my son said to me, he goes we can't do this unless we get money from other people? And I said "Right." And he said, "but you know, Mom, Hudson Taylor wanted five dollars and the man gave him five hundred dollars so I know that's what God will do for us."

Ann: You know David Livingston said God had only one son and He made Him a missionary. And something I talk about in *The Mission-Minded Family* is that we need to release our kids to God and in doing that it might mean that God may ask us to do some very uncomfortable things. It's one thing to say okay my son is thinking about going on a short-term mission trip to say Calcutta, India for a couple of weeks. Would I let him go? Well, we'd pray about it and see if we've got a clear go ahead from God and send him off.

What about if he comes back and he says I feel like I'm supposed to go live in Calcutta, India for ten years. What would I say about that? Would I really release my kids to do that? To be away, to maybe to get married, have grandkids over there? Would I let him go to do that? Well when I think about what Jesus Christ did for us. You think about God sending His son down here to earth.

It was like Jesus was raised by some poor couple and think about if I would send my newborn son off to Calcutta, India to be raised by some poor, obscure couple and that my son would live and be raised up in order to love these people in Calcutta, India. I would know that when he would grow up that they would hate him and they would kill him. Would I send my son to do that? It's just realizing what did Jesus do for us? It's the cross.

Bob: I've got a book you guys need to take with you. It's the one that Ann has written called *The Mission-Minded Family*. You may need to read this before you get on the airplane.

Bill: Thank you, Bob, we will.

Dennis: I'm going to have Bob tell you about how you can get a copy of the book. But before we're done here, Ann, I want you to come back in a moment and I want you to pray a prayer that is kind of a prayer of commissioning over Bill and Tracey as they go. It's a prayer that's in your book, but first, Bob, I think there are some other folks that want a copy of that book.

In fact, earlier I was talking to Keith just about the privilege of featuring a broadcast like this for our listeners knowing that there are many of them who will take action on this. We could be seeing a crop and a generation of missionaries who will be raised up in families who here this broadcast where some seed that was sown here ultimately becomes a viral spiritual wildfire for Jesus Christ.

Bob: So the question is how many bold, brave, courageous moms and dads are listening that are going to go to the website FamilyLifeToday.com and order a copy of *The Mission-Minded Family* that has right behind the title, Iran, Pakistan, India,

Dennis: Right, Maldives, Somalia

Bob: You didn't put New Zealand and Fiji like I wanted. We have copies of the book *The Mission-Minded Family* in our FamilyLife Today resource center. Ann has also written a book called *The Mission Minded Child* and we've got that in our FamilyLife Today resource center as well. And then I've been mentioning this week the book on missionary heroism, *The Adventure of Missionary Heroism* it's a collection of great missionary stories that you can read as a part of family devotions or at the dinner table. You can find all of these resources online at FamilyLifeToday.com or you can call toll free 1-800-358-6329, that's 1-800-FLTODAY. Get in touch with us and we'll let you know how you can get these books sent to you.

Dennis: Well it's been our privilege to talk with Ann Dunagan who has undoubtedly infected several hundred thousand families with the same mission minded heart that she has for the world and I know of one couple, Bob, that she has infected who have been here with us, Bill and Tracey Eyster who are getting ready to go to Rwanda. And there was a, not a poem, but it's really a prayer, almost a commissioning prayer that you have in your book that I just wanted you to share the context of it and then pray it over Bill and Tracey as they go.

Ann: This is a prayer, John and Betty Stam were missionaries to China in the early 1930's and they were ones who were willing to give it all. That was a time where there was a great depression going on things were economically tough but they were willing to go to the ends of the earth to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Something that Betty Stam wrote in her journal before she left is a powerful prayer. This prayer is actually one that Elisabeth Elliot wrote in her Bible when she was a little girl. I've also read in Elizabeth George, *A Woman after God's Own Heart*, this was a prayer that was very meaningful to her.

It says this; Lord, I give up all my own plans and purposes. All my own desires and hopes and accept Thy will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to Thee to be Thine forever. Fill me and seal me with Thy Holy Spirit. Use me as Thou wilt. Send me where Thou wilt. Work out Thy whole will in my life at any cost now and forever.

And you know for them it meant being martyred in China. They were martyred in 1934. They had a little baby over in China and actually the story of that is just incredible because the mom and dad were killed and the baby was just abandoned all by itself and someone found this little baby smuggled in a rice basket all through the mountains and was able to bring it to another missionary family and as I was doing some different research for *The Mission-Minded Family* and being able to find out what's happened even generations later for some of these families and I thought what happened to the baby? What happened to the baby that was saved?

I began to look and what I felt like the Lord was saying was that we are the generation that, it's not just what happened to the baby, but what are we going to do with the gospel message that we have been given. But so much has been sacrificed for the faith that we have today in the lives that we have been spared that we need to be willing to do whatever God would have us to do for this generation.

Bob: *FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock Arkansas Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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