

Frontier Ventures' Foray into Podcasting

BY **DAVID EARL DATEMA** and **ANDY BETTENCOURT**

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An Introduction to The Missions Drop

In the spring of 2023, Andy Bettencourt, Victoria Ky, Amanda Richey, and Dave Datema started brainstorming about developing a new podcast that would highlight the realities surrounding reaching unreached people groups. After interviewing some podcasters and doing our own research, we launched our first season in fall 2023 and our second season in spring 2024. The third season began its release this past fall, 2024.

The purpose of the podcast is summed up in its title: The Missions Drop. It's meant to stir thoughts and questions as well as deliver a bit of content from an academic or practitioner in the mission community. Along with our purpose, our format is also unique. We have four co-hosts, two men and two women. Each episode begins with one of us interviewing a guest. After the interview, the other co-hosts reflect on the interview, sharing what they think are the most significant ideas or simply how it impacted them. We hope that through the guest or one of the co-hosts, our audience will be able to identify with the conversation.

Our Angle

Each episode starts with the question: "What prevents the gospel from creating a ripple effect when it first enters a new people or place?"

That is what The Missions Drop Podcast is all about. Ideally, the gospel works in a people like a drop of water on a lake that spreads out to the edges. However, there are boundaries and barriers that stop the gospel from transforming hearts, minds, bodies, and souls.

At this point, we have categorized these barriers into three primary buckets: cultural, spiritual formation,

and social barriers. Cultural concerns are mainly ethnolinguistic, people groups, and religion. Spiritual formation includes self-awareness, spiritual maturity, and practices. Finally, social barriers include generational differences, gender differences, and socio-economic differences. Obviously, there is some overlap between these categories. Additionally, barriers to the gospel are often multi-faceted, so some episodes will include more than one barrier, and others will focus more tightly on a barrier in a specific context. We are continuing to ask our listeners what types of barriers they would most like to explore, so that we aren't only probing our guests for quality content but also considering what might help our audience grow on their own journey with Christ and community.

A Turn Towards Hope

When we started our focus on barriers, we soon realized that our podcast could develop a discouraging tone. We might focus on what is going wrong in the mission world, and although we want to deeply examine the practices and weaknesses of the mission community, we also want to learn what is going well or what gives our guests hope, even when it may be hard to find in their current context.

This created a shift in our questioning during season 2. We began asking each guest what gives them hope or where they might see opportunities for breakthrough. It also enabled our co-hosts to reflect on how episodes have encouraged us and give praise to guests, co-hosts, and most of all God, rather than simply thinking about our own next step forward (even though we still like to do that for practical reasons).

Our Guests

Our talented guests have included: Terry Wildman (Lead Translator of the First Nations Version Bible), Ted Esler (Executive Director of Missio Nexus), Kim Kargbo (Founder of Accessible Hope International), Leanne Dzubinski (Author and Professor at Asbury Theological Seminary), Vince Bantu (Author and Professor at Fuller Theological Seminary), and Jay Matenga (Author and Executive Director of the WEA's Mission Commission), to name a few. We strive to better represent the body of Christ on our podcast by including guests from around the globe, different cultural heritages, men and women, as well as academics and practitioners. To see our full list of episodes, visit our podcast here, themissionsdrop.libsyn.com. We can also be found on Apple and Spotify.

Current and Future Topics of Exploration

Looking at barriers and solutions or attempts at overcoming these barriers keeps us focused on unreached people groups and the central issues involved in taking the gospel to them. We also have enjoyed covering different areas within spiritual formation, as we have often found that the worker can be a barrier to the gospel and that their ongoing process of maturing in Christ is crucial for building communities that reflect Christ and his gospel.

Some of the topics that we have covered so far include a missiology of work, technology and emerging generations, incarnational friendships, a missiology of well-being, hybridity and people groups, contextualization across religious boundaries, approaching Muslim neighbors, and missions and intimacy with Jesus. Our third season explores peacebuilding in missions, health missions at the edges, people movements in Africa, evangelism among other faiths, and food and frontier mission.

Our Hope for the Future

We hope that our conversations continue the ripple effect of the gospel among our podcast hosts, listeners, guests, and the communities to whom they are connected. In the future, we hope to engage more with listeners: hearing ideas for topics, their challenges, and further questions or comments associated with our episodes and content. We also hope to have more practitioners on the show, so that we may hear more details about day-to-day work in engaging Christ and community at the edges of mission.



Current Needs and Challenges

If you would like to talk with us more about the details of our podcast and suggest a guest or topic, please e-mail us at thedroppodcast@frontierventures.org.

Numbers and Metrics for Success

As far as hard numbers go, our podcast was averaging about 100 listens per episode during season 1. With the addition of season 2, we are growing our audience towards over 150 listens per episode. These numbers are not overwhelming, but we have been encouraged by the feedback that we have heard from our friends and members of the mission community. We hope to develop better channels in the future to hear more about the experiences of our audience and have been happy to hear from a few people who have contacted us, asking permission to share the content in their own spheres of influence or giving us feedback on how we can improve our content.

Beyond numbers, our hope is to stir thought and reflection in the missions community, our own lives, the lives of our guests, and listeners. This is not easily quantifiable. However, some signs of this can be found in both our guests and other members of the mission

community who have used our content in their various spheres of work. This has also opened further interviews and areas to engage. The missions world is small, and the frontier missions world is even smaller, so numbers will not be the best guide for success. Instead, it will be determined by the quality of thought, ideas, and content in the episodes as well as connecting those thoughts and ideas to how they might be lived out by people in the real world. I (Andy) can confidently say that the podcast has brought me closer in relationship to some of our guests and certainly my co-hosts, provided a few stimulating conversations with listeners, and yielded practical changes in how I approach my day-to-day life. And of course, all of us at The Missions Drop are a little bookish, so our bookshelves have grown, as we know that in addition to a 30-minute conversation, an article or book from one of our guests may deepen our thinking and living.

Special thanks to Emily Simmons, Larissa Cisz, Kevin Renel, Dustin Swann, Doug Eli, Victoria Ky, Amanda Richey, and all our guests! We quite literally couldn't have done it without you and are sure we owe more thanks to others who helped make this podcast possible. 🙏



THE MISSIONS DROP

