

Discipleship Series
50+ Class – All Saints Presbyterian Church
Fall 2020 – October 4, 2020
Week Four: Being An “Alongsider”

A few questions to start the conversation...

- Does God really want to use you in helping others grow spiritually? Can He?
- Have you ever helped someone take a next step of faith in their walk with Jesus?
- Do you feel prepared to help someone take such a next step of faith?
- Must I go to seminary before I can help someone grow in Christ?

1. All Christians are Called to The Great Commission—to proclaim the Good News and help others grow in Christ

Matthew 9:38 (NIV)—Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)—Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark 16:15 (NIV)—He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Luke 10:2 (NIV)—He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Luke 24:46-49 (NIV)—He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

John 20:21 (NIV)—As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

Acts 1:8 (NIV)—you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.

Acts 14:21 (NIV)—They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples.

2. Everyone in the Body of Christ has a Role to play in advancing God’s Kingdom and helping others grow in Christ

Most of us have had the experience of being left behind, left out, or not being chosen for the team. We can be brave and say, “I don’t care!” but regardless, not being chosen hurts—it’s a form of rejection. But God, in His love and compassion, welcomes all to His team. No one who wants to be in the game is left out or on the sidelines. In God’s economy “everyone gets to play”—not because of us, but due to the wonderful, deeply loving nature of God.

Each of us have different natural and spiritual gifts and varying levels of experience and training. Regardless, God can and wants to use our lives as His disciples to advance His Kingdom. Give your life to people, to serve and help them take a next step with Jesus. The question is not: *Will God use me?* The question is: *Am I willing to be used?*



There is no varsity or junior varsity team of disciples. We are all called by and enabled to hear the voice of God in our lives. We are all called to a lifelong habit of listening to the Voice of God.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV)—There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NIV)—The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

1 Corinthians 12:18-19 (NIV)—But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be?

1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (NIV)—Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.²⁸ And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?³¹ But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

3. Look for “People of Peace”

Luke 10:1-11 (NIV)—After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.² He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.⁵ When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’⁶ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.⁷ Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.⁸ When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you.⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’¹⁰ But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say,¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.’

Helping others come to Christ and grow in faith is relational, not transactional. We’re not trying to make people do what they don’t want to do; instead, we’re helping them go where they want to go.



From the 3DM Ministries App—

“Jesus is never more detailed in his instructions on how something is to be done than he is about evangelism. What is his key? His strategy? Find the Person of Peace. Find the person who is open to you, likes you, likes your mission, and wants to serve you (because in doing so they are showing their openness to Jesus). We see this exact same strategy playing out all through the book of Acts and the early church.

“Jesus’ message to his disciples then, and to us today, is that as we are walking in this world, we are to be on the lookout for a Person of Peace. Who is this Person of Peace, and how do we recognize him? Very simply, *a Person of Peace is* one who is prepared to hear the message of the kingdom and the King. He is ready to receive what God will give you to say at that moment. This should be *our prayer* as we venture forth each day, ‘Lord, bring into my path today a Person of Peace, and give me the grace to speak your words to this person.’”

Consider—Who are some People of Peace in the Bible? *Answer:* Zacchaeus ... The Women at the Well ... The Disciples ... Mary ... Martha ... Lydia ... Cornelius. *Who else can you name?*

From Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture* (2017) (emphasis added)—

“One who is not a Person of Peace will not receive what you have to say. We are not to belabor the issue.” (p. 187)

“The Person of Peace is someone God has prepared for that specific time. It is no good trying to force open doors that God has not opened, and we must not be distracted so that we miss the doors he has opened. This really is exciting news. Even in the most important task we have been given, the assignment to go and make disciples, *God does most of the work*. *Our main job* is to walk through life with our eyes open and our ears listening to the Spirit as he reveals to us the Person of Peace he has prepared.” (p. 189)

4. Ways & Principles of “*Alongsider Ministry*”

Adapted from Bill Mowry, *The Ways of the Alongsider* (2016) (emphasis added)—

A. Most Christians have never had someone seriously invest in their spiritual growth—consequently, they don’t know how to invest in another’s life.

Have you ever had anyone take a serious interest in your spiritual growth and development? Have you ever been discipled?

B. *Alongsider Ministry* is natural (not forced), relational, and based on genuine friendship

We are serving people; we are not using people for our agendas. Discipleship ministry is relational, not transactional. *Alongsider Ministry* is nestled in the quiet—everyday people in everyday routines having everyday conversations. Real ministry is done in the quiet of our neighborhoods, workplaces, or family settings. Oswald Chambers knew this to be true when he said: “One of the most amazing revelations of God comes when we learn that it is in the commonplace things that the Deity of Jesus Christ is realized.”

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12—Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

C. *Alongsider Ministry* happens in the simple, small, “everyday” events of life

God often starts with the small and works in the quiet. Eugene Peterson says, “The metaphors Jesus used for the life of ministry are frequently images of the single, the small, and the quiet, which have effects far in excess of their appearance.... Our culture publicizes the opposite emphasis: the big, the multitudinous, the noisy.” An insider’s ministry is accomplished in the quiet of everyday routines and among everyday people. “As you go through life, make disciples....” (Matthew 28:19-20)

D. *Alongsider Ministry* is “intentional” without being “formal” or “a system”

Alongsider Ministry is intentional—it moves in an intended direction. As you work with another you have an intended destination in mind. But it is not formal. Alongsiders intentionally do simple things. They build authentic friendships, read the Bible with others, tell stories, and ask questions. Alongsiders encourage application and accountability. Finally, Alongsiders invite people to live on mission with them, advancing the gospel and recruiting others to follow Jesus as His disciples. Is this a picture you’d like to hang in your mind’s gallery?



John 9:4—As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.

E. *Alongsiders* find time in their busy schedules to help others grow in Christ

Reflect on your relationships where you live, work, play, and worship. Can you pursue authentic friendship with someone? Can you read the Bible with a friend? What about sharing stories or asking questions? When you do these things, you’ve hung the picture of an Alongsider in the gallery of your mind. Are you ready to find time in your life to become an Alongsider? If so, you will jump-start a life-changing adventure with God and others.

Today’s most precious commodity for us is *time*. We’re a culture of multi-taskers, with our ears glued to cell phones and our hands busily text-messaging friends. We run from event-to-event, with little margin in our lives. Peter Scazzerro writes that a “pervasive form of contemporary violence is activism and overwork . . . it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.” Not only is godly wisdom killed, but without time, relationships wither on the vine. Alongsiders think differently. They build margin into their lives so that they have time to invest in relationships.

F. Friends & Neighbors aren’t “religious projects”—they’re real people with infinite value

Our neighbors aren’t our project. We don’t love them because of the church’s witnessing program. We act as good neighbors because that’s what Jesus’ disciples do. These are God’s people. It is not “my” ministry. Jesus says repeatedly in John’s Gospel, “I must be about my Father’s work.” If anyone had a right to claim ministry as their own it was Jesus; instead, it was “my Father’s work.”

John 4:34—“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

John 5:17—“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”

G. *Alongsiders* provide pictures to hang in your mind’s gallery—people do what they’ve *observed* and *experienced*

The pictures we hold in the galleries of our minds will either motivate us to disciple others or they’ll hold us back. What picture hangs in the gallery of your mind? Jesus chose and then trained the 12 disciples. They were not in a classroom; instead, they followed Jesus everywhere for a while, and then He sent them out to begin their ministries.

Mark 3:14—He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

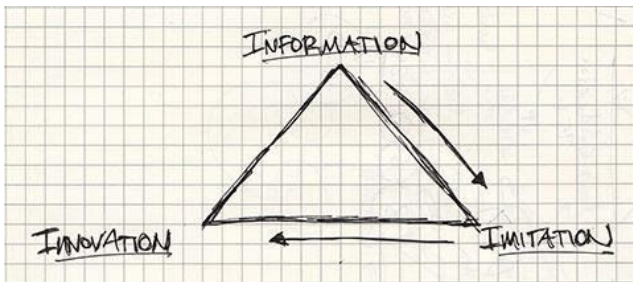
Mark 6:7—Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

Luke 9:2—He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

H. *Alongsiders* model ministry service for disciples to observe, then practice, then do

Alongsiders can push and plead with potential disciples and make them feel guilty, but if a novice isn't comfortable and doesn't feel safe in discipleship ministry, they won't do it. For people to begin to serve in such ministry, they need to see an Alongsider in action, guiding them toward a pathway forward and leading them on at least the first few steps.

From the 3DM Ministry App—



“The discipling process is the same today as it was 2,000 years ago when Jesus was investing in a group of 12 men and we see Paul doing the exact same in his missionary journey. It starts with Information. But we need more than facts, theory, and doctrine. We need to see what those things look like in the life of someone with real flesh and blood. So we Imitate someone whose life looks very much like the life of

Jesus. “Imitate me, as I imitate Christ,” Paul says. But the point of imitation isn't to become a clone of that person. The point is that it builds enough Character and Competency in us as disciples, that the foundation we have because of them can lead to Innovation in our own life so that it truly becomes us.”

Luke 10:1 (NIV)—After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

I. *Alongsiders* are ordinary people, with a heart for others—*Amateurs* please apply!

Churches are often looking for a silver bullet—the right program, technique, or motivational hook to launch a new wave of growth—while a simple, sustainable strategy stares us in the face—ministry amateurs. Since the Great Commission began, God has sought amateurs. This should encourage anyone wanting to participate. The word “*amateur*” comes from the Latin meaning a “*lover*”. Amateurs do things out of love and joy, not for pay. Instead of seeing amateur in a derogatory way, it should be restored to its original meaning. God's simple, sustainable strategy is to send people into His harvest, motivated by love and passion. The Apostles were *ministry amateurs*. When a Jewish boy reached his mid-teens, the best and brightest were recruited by the local rabbi for advanced study. For those who didn't qualify, apprenticeship in a vocation was the next step. More fishermen were always needed. Jesus recruited disciples from a vocational school not a university. These religious amateurs created a stir. When the ministry professionals observed their boldness and confidence, they were amazed because “they were uneducated, common men . . . and they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). God's grand strategy for the church was launched by fishermen—ministry amateurs! The early church was a movement of amateurs.

Jesus does the unthinkable. He invites us, in our weaknesses and inexperience, to be his helpers in the Great Commission. He recruits ministry amateurs to walk across the street and love their neighbors, come alongside people to read the Bible, ask questions, tell stories, and encourage application. This simple, sustainable strategy does not depend on better materials, luxuriant buildings, or high-tech presentations. The secret of the strategy is its simplicity—coaching and then releasing people, motivated by the love of Jesus, to advance the gospel and come alongside people to make disciples.

J. *Alongsider Ministry* is about ordinary people “partnering” with the Holy Spirit—it’s not about complications, classrooms, lectures, or long to-do lists

The pictures hanging in the galleries of our minds will either motivate us in discipling others or hold us back. What pictures hang in the gallery of your mind? Here are some pictures we need to remove from our mind’s gallery. One picture is the classroom, with a gifted *teacher* leading. Our response may be, “I could never make disciples because I’m not a teacher.” *Over-complication* is another picture. One disciple-making resource book lists over 30 topics to cover in discipling others. We retreat from such a list and say, “I’m not living out half of this curriculum! How can I make a disciple?”

Instead, suppose we hang in our mind’s gallery a new picture of disciple makers as “*Alongsiders*.” The wonderful New Testament Greek word is *paraklesis*—a call (urging) from one’s side (by someone nearby). Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate *Alongsider*, the “*counselor*,” or “*helper*,” who is with us forever (John 14:16). We partner with the Spirit when we come alongside people to counsel, encourage, or exhort (1 Thes 2:11-12). *Alongsiders* are people who live *life-to-life* with others, joining them in their life stories, helping them become wholehearted followers of Jesus. Instead of being the teacher, placed above people, we’re companions on the way.

K. *Alongsiders* carefully listen and walk together with others where they are

If you’ve ever tried ballroom dancing, you’ve discovered a simple rule—someone must lead. In evangelism training, we often make the gospel-explainers the leader while the hearer follows by listening. Instead, suppose the roles were reversed and the hearer was allowed to lead. What if evangelism started from the listener’s point of view? **Proverbs 27:14** says, “If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.” The vision here is of a friend rushing into a home with a great message, but shared in an inappropriate way and time. The message was delivered but not received. Effective communication delivers messages in ways that are received and understood by the hearers.

L. *Alongsiders* help to translate the language and the culture

How we receive and understand the message is important to God. His invitation to Isaiah is, “Come now, let us reason together” (1:18). The first recorded exchanges between God and Adam are all *questions*: “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9) “Who told you that you were naked?” (Genesis 3:11) “What is it that you have done?” (Genesis 3:13). God knew the answers to all these questions. But He asked in order *to invite thoughtful conversation* about the answers with Adam and Eve and Himself. God communicates not to impress or to be admired but to be understood. If a message is delivered but not understood, it is not much help. Consider some words we cherish: “sin,” “salvation,” or “saved.” Would they make sense to an unchurched neighbor or coworker? What current, everyday words could you use as an alternative? What word-picture or analogy might help to communicate their meanings? Ultimately, we believe the Holy Spirit gives true understanding. But this doesn’t mean we have no role. When we live *life-to-life* with our non-Christian friends, we should always be asking ourselves: “Is my message making sense from their point of view?” We need to move from simply delivering the message to the point where we help people *understand* the message. And all the while, trust the Holy Spirit to help us communicate wisely so that understanding happens.

Isaiah 1:18—“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

M. *Alongsider Ministry* often starts with a meal or time getting to know one another

How did Jesus “do” evangelism/discipleship? One way was over meals. Surprised? Eugene Peterson says, “Our surprise develops into a sense of urgency when we recognize that a primary, maybe the primary, venue for evangelism in Jesus’ life was the meal.” Why meals? They are natural, safe places to begin faith conversations.

Jesus loved to eat with sinners. The Gospel records are rich with Jesus' dining ministry (Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 14:1-27; Luke 19:1-10). We can learn from Jesus' model of being hospitable and living life-to-life around a shared meal. He didn't set preconditions on who could attend the banquets. There's no record of Him calling people to repentance when dinner conversations stalled. He never gave his host a list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Grace invites everyone to the table of truth. Meals became a symbolic expression of the Lamb's wedding feast (Revelation 19:9), the banquet where outsiders are urged to join (Luke 14:23,24). Jesus easily moved into these social events, accepting people as though they were his own family. As He did so, many chose to follow Him and became new members of His spiritual family (Luke 19:9).

N. *Alongsider Minisry is a process, not a one-time event*

The Bible is brimming with life stories. Starting with Genesis, the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph unfold before our eyes. We're thrilled by their faith, saddened by their poor decisions, and rejoice when they're vindicated. These narratives explore the work of God in a person's life. Too often, evangelism approaches urge someone to "make a decision", and in so doing, we push the person's life story in a way that's out of step with the Author's pace. We want to skip to the end of the novel to see how it ends. We end up watering when we should be planting; or reaping when we should be sowing (1 Corinthians 3:7-8). *What if we treated evangelism like reading thru a novel instead?*

- We would **ask more questions** in order to catch the nuances of a life. Nuances reveal what people really think and value.
- We would **listen more than talk**. When we listen, we discover where people are in their journeys. We meet them in each chapter rather than skipping to the end.
- We would **savor the journey** instead of being fixated on the closing. People know when they're truly being listened to and cared for. If we jump to the end too soon, we turn off our friends.

1 Corinthians 3:7-8—So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

O. *Alongsiders are Incarnational—they're willing to sit in the smoking section sometimes*

Our time and personal comfort have become two of the church's primary hindrances to effective evangelism and discipleship. We fill our evenings with volunteer opportunities and meetings, leaving little margin to invest in the lives of our non-Christian friends. Sometimes we can "build the church" at the gospel's expense. Jesus lived differently. John Stott noted that "The church is the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefits of its nonmembers." Jesus demonstrated this commitment. Our Lord effortlessly made Himself available to interruptions (Matthew 9:1,2), requests for healings (Matthew 15:22), social gatherings (John 2:1,2), and meals with "sinners" (Luke 5:29). One author writes that "If you want to win this world to Christ, you are going to have to sit in the smoking section."

P. *Alongsiders understand the value of "See Ed"*

When I (Bill Mowry) trusted Christ at Bowling Green State University, I knew I should do three things: read the Bible, pray, and see Ed. Ed was the guy who lived across the hall from me in my freshman dorm. After we first met, I discovered that he was a Christian. Even though I initially resisted Ed's "religious talk," we became best friends. His persistent witness drew me to the Savior. I knew that if I had questions about my new faith, I could *trust Ed to be my guide*. When I told Ed about my faith commitment, he did something very simple but profound. He invited me to read the Bible with him in the dormitory study lounge. This appointment launched a pattern. We spent hours praying together, talking about the Scriptures, debating our interpretations, and sharing our discoveries. This was **life-to-life discipleship**—two friends, meeting over an open Bible, sharing their lives together. All of life became a spiritual classroom. I soon discovered that Ed was following the example of Jesus. When our Lord invited

His disciples to follow Him (Mark 3:13,14), this meant joining Him in His life. Together, they participated in social events, walking expeditions, intimate conversations, and in the joys and sorrows of shared ministry. Jesus ministered to them life-to-life. He expects us to do the same. Ed's pattern marked my life. Besides imprinting my life with a love for God, Ed taught me that helping others follow Jesus is more than mastering a curriculum or perfecting techniques. Discipleship is passing-on a life in Christ from one person to another. Relationships are the highway to spiritual transformation.

1 Thessalonians 2:8—We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

Q. Alongsiders are God's Insiders—no more shouting the gospel from a distance

All of us are "**insiders**" at work, with family, or in social settings (i.e., our "sphere of influence"). An insider shares a common space, purpose, or interest with those they know. We're insiders somewhere and to someone. Each of us lives, works, or plays in places uniquely given by God to advance the gospel. The Apostle Paul counted on the ministry of insiders. How? On his missionary journeys, Paul saw the world through the Jewish synagogues (Acts 13:5, 14:1). Paul's ministry in the synagogues brought him into contact with God-fearing Greeks and Romans who were insiders to wider Gentile networks (Acts 13:42,43; 14:1). Among these new converts, Paul established spiritual beachheads—groups of believers who could reach out to their interconnected networks of families and friends. Like a virus, the gospel infected people who were networked together. Paul counted on the continued growth of these spiritual offspring in their surrounding areas (Acts 13:49; 1 Thessalonians 1:8). His strategy was simple: convert and mobilize enough insiders and you will evangelize the world!

We can all be God's insiders—advancing the gospel through our lips and our lives. People catch the Jesus virus when we live shoulder-to-shoulder, face-to-face, life-to-life. John Stott contrasts the value in a life-to-life approach: "It comes more natural to us to shout the gospel at people from a distance than to involve ourselves deeply in their lives [and] their problems, and to feel with them in their pains."

1 Thessalonians 1:8—The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it....

R. Alongsiders understand "Kairos" time

"Why does it take so long?" Time crawls when we wait for a friend's salvation or for someone to grow as a disciple. We look for time-saving methods and programs to speed up growth. It's easy to become frustrated if change doesn't happen according to schedule. Could we have a mistaken view of time? The New Testament uses two primary words for the Hebrew concept of time, *chronos* and *kairos*. Chronos time is chronological time. It refers to the quantity or amount of time passed (Matthew 25:19). Kairos time refers to the "right" moment (Mark 1:15). Instructors talk about a "teachable moment," when one is open to learn. This *kairos* time is the unpredictable moment when the Holy Spirit intersects with life. God's timetable may not always be our timetable. Time for the Hebrews was not only in *kairos* moments, but it was also measured by the *rhythms* of life. Instead of points on a timeline, the Bible portrays time as a series of constant rhythms—seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter . . . (Genesis 8:22).

The New Testament pictures spiritual growth as seasonal rhythms. There's a time to sow and water, plant and harvest (John 4:35-38; 1 Corinthians 3:6-8). For the Jewish mind, life was wrapped up in these rhythms, which portray life as a journey rather than a timeline. When we live life-to-life with people, we must learn to think in *kairos* time, spotting the teachable moments, observing the rhythms of the Holy Spirit. We can only do this as we get close enough to people to discern how the Holy Spirit is shaping one's life story. When we think in a Hebrew way about time, we learn to:



- *spot teachable moments* in people’s lives—they may not fit with my ministry timetable.
- *pray for wisdom*—a penetrating question, appropriate verse, or a hug aren’t scheduled.
- *hope for a future*—life is like a journey, and the final chapter in one’s life may not be written yet.

S. Alongsiders are committed to the next generation of faith

All of us have a favorite Old Testament personality. One of my favorites is the leader and nation-builder, Joshua. His impact was so significant the author of Judges noted, “The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua.” (Judges 1:7) But then comes one of the saddest verses in the Bible. When Joshua and his contemporaries passed away, “another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel (Judges 2:10).” What a sad commentary on a group of leaders. How did this happen? A clue is found in what’s missing from the biblical record. From the beginning of the Exodus, Moses came alongside Joshua, preparing him for leadership. When Moses received the Law, “Joshua his aid” was with him (Exodus 24:13). Joshua witnessed Moses’ friendship with God (Exodus 33:11). At the end of his life, Moses laid his hands on Joshua, filling him with the spirit of wisdom (Deuteronomy 34:9). The Israelites naturally followed Joshua because Moses’ stamp of authority was on his life (Deuteronomy 34:9). Moses came alongside of Joshua, ministering to him life-to-life.

So, what’s missing in the record of Judges? There’s no mention of Joshua mentoring another leader to take his place. It appears he neglected the important principle of generations. Leaders should always be training a replacement. What a sad commentary! Without a commitment to generations, we can leave behind a slowly dissolving legacy of a rope of sand. Making disciples life-to-life helps ensure successive generations of people loving and serving God. Alongsiders are committed to generations.

Psalm 48:13—consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation.

Psalm 71:18—Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.

Psalm 78:4-6—We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. ⁵ He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, ⁶ so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

T. Alongsiders are friends with an agenda who apply VIM—Vision, Intentionality & Means

Alongsiders help others become Alongsiders by sharing a vision that says, “God can use me in the life of another.” Alongsiders help others think intentionally about pathways and plans. Alongsiders give tools and means to help others grow in their experience in Christ. Alongsiders bring intentionality to the process by applying **VIM**: Vision, Intentionality, and Means. *Vision* is the motivation and desired end. *Intentionality* represents a purposeful approach. *Means* describes tools and resources to help.

U. Traditional and Alongsider Approaches to Disciple-Making

Traditional Approaches	The Way of the Alongsider
Classroom	Small group and one-to-one
Content and curriculum	Character and practice
One-way (teacher to pupil)	Two-way (discovery and discussion)
Complete the course or curriculum	Live and practice life
Teach through a lecture	Teach people to study for themselves
Tell someone how	Show someone how
Information	Encourage transformation

V. Tracks for moving forward

Bull's-eye. The New Testament's portrait of a disciple becomes the target to aim for in making disciples.

R – This stands for **R**elationships—a relationship with God and a relationship with those whom we disciple provide the appropriate context for the disciple making process.

2D – There's always an open Bible between an Alongsider and the person being disciplined.

Discovery and **D**iscussion (2D) take place around this open Bible.

3A – This describes **A**pplication, **A**ccountability and **A**ffirmation. The Ways of an Alongsider is an Application journey. Accountable relationships encourage follow-through. Affirmation gives an “attaboy!” that encourages people to keep going.

