

Abide – The Way of the Alongsider

3/14/21

Various Text

Sunday AM

Most of you know I'm a big fan of golf. I like to play golf. I like to watch golf. I like to play golf video games, and I even enjoy going to PGA tournaments to watch golf live – especially the Masters.

My love for golf began when I was 8. My dad's job required him to work the PGA Tour stop in Atlanta at the Atlanta Country Club. So, every yr, I'd ride out to the tournament, and while he worked, I was one of the kids carrying a score sign inside the ropes. I was able to meet golfers like Nicholas, Crenshaw, Palmer, and Seve, but my favorite was Raymond Floyd. In fact, Mr. Floyd was my first golf mentor. In the middle of a round one day, he began asking me questions and upon learning I was new to the game, he pulled a PW from his bag and taught me how to hold a club – and I've been hooked ever since. In fact, since that day, I've read 1000's of articles, hit countless balls on the range, watched 100's of rounds on TV, and toured a few golf courses in search of some ball I hit into the woods.

**BTW** – just so you know, the #1 item on my bucket list is to play Augusta National. If you can help me out – I will rise up and call you blessed! And NO, if you've played the course – I don't want to hear about it!

I tell you this b/c my love affair w/ golf began b/c one man made the investment of his love for golf into me.

***This is what disciple-making is.*** It's investing the love and vitality of Jesus in you into the lives of others so that they too can experience God personally/vibrantly.

Truth is, it's quite amazing what can happen when we take the things we're most passionate about and we share them w/ others. I think this is what Jesus had in mind when He asked His followers to go into the world and make disciples. He was asking them to walk passionately w/ Him so they might be able to invest the joy of Jesus in them into the lives of others.

Unfortunately, I think there's a lot of confusion on this issue today. Often, ***people want to make it more than what it is or less than what it needs to be.*** Either we want to make DM some complex, in-depth process only a few can achieve, like climbing a spiritual Mt. Everest, or we dumb it down by thinking disciples can be made in bulk by working thru the latest Bible study handed out by one of our celebrity pastors.

It reminds me of a statement made by Herb Hodges – The typical church in America today has a giant undeveloped ***labor pool*** in its membership. The typical Christian is unemployed as far as Christ's standard of employment is concerned (making disciples), and the typical employed Christian is often "under-employed," spending much time/effort in activities that show little result in reaching/building people. The typical Christian church meets Sunday after Sunday in an ***auditorium*** and its members are individual ***auditors*** forming part of a listening ***audience***. In short, the typical church is jammed w/ "pew potatoes" whose only intent is to come to church, listen to a sermon, and go away, hoping this course will help to privately smuggle their souls to heaven and help them to have a reasonably comfortable life along the way. Any resemblance b/w this lifestyle and the Christian life pictured in the N.T. is purely coincidental. *Hodges*

**Point** – There's more to the CL than just going to church. The CL is daily knowing/serving our God to give Him away to others so they can know Him too.

As we've discussed, at the core of DM are (2) things: (1) To make a disciple, one must first be a disciple – which requires trusting/obeying God as Lord/Savior. (2) To make a disciple, one must be willing to come ***alongside*** of another person to invest in them what God has already established in you.

Which means, like everything else in the Christian life, the key to living a fruitful, DM life is **abiding** in Him. In fact, unless we abide, we cannot make disciples!

Jesus said, *I am the vine and you are the branches, if you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:6

Jesus was saying that living unplugged from the source of God's power is meaningless/impotent.

Lest we forget, the G.C. starts in vs. 18 – Jesus said, *All authority in heaven/earth has been given to Him...*

Thus, the key to an influential DM, Christian life is abiding. And abiding is living under the influence of the H.S. by plugging into His power by faith/surrender – so you can follow His leading in your life. As we abide, God will use our lives, gifts, talents/abilities to influence others to know/follow Him.

Recently, we've been discussing the idea of making disciples to replicate the Jesus in us into others. We've spoken about the **Five Marks of a Disciple**, the call of the G.C., and even entrusting ourselves into reliable people. Today, I want to put a bow on this calling by discussing the role of **abiding** in to come alongside of others to help them to follow Jesus too.

**Truth** – an abiding, Jesus-follower cannot help but to invest in others what God is doing in them.

*Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the H.S., teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. Behold, I am w/you always, to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:18-21

So, this is the mission – **make disciple!** But the mission can't be achieved unless we're plugged into God thru living the abiding life. Otherwise, we're powerless.

So, where do we start? What has to give for any of us to participate in the mission of the Kingdom?

I Understand Your **COMMISSION**

C.S. Lewis wrote – Christians exist for nothing else but to draw men to Christ, to make them into little Christ. If they're not doing that, then all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are a waste of time. God became a man for one purpose – to redeem people to release them into His service.

I call this the ministry of **alongsiding**. We get the idea from the H.S. who is the ultimate alongsider. In John 14:16, we find the **paraclete** – it means to call to one's side or to be an active helper/counselor.

*If you love me, obey me; and I will ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter, and He will never leave you. He is the H.S. who leads into all truth.*

The Father gave us the H.S. to walk alongside of us!

In DM, **alongsiding** occurs when one maturing believer intentionally takes responsibility to come alongside of another believer to spur them along to faithful followship in Christ. It's a **life2life** spiritual journey w/ others around an open Bible and a desire to share life together in Christ.

Our example was none other than Jesus who walked alongside of people moment-by-moment, and who walked intently w/ the (12) disciples. In both, Jesus walked w/ people to meet them at the point of their need to point them to intimacy/relationship w/ God.

There are (2) aspects to the ministry of alongsiding. First is **Reactive Alongsiding**. This occurs as we walk w/ people thru life circumstances to care for them at the point of their need to encourage them so they don't grow weary or lose heart in the faith.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> way is **Proactive Alongsiding**. This occurs when we take the time to intentionally invest Jesus in us into the life of another person. This is a *life2life* journey where we spend concentrated amounts of time encouraging one another, dialoging over truth, and spurring one another along in the faith.

*God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love – like Christ in everything.* Ephesians 4:15

Discipling is done by someone, not something. It's done by persons, not programs. It's accomplished by individuals not institutions. Discipling is one maturing believer pouring himself and imparting his whole life into another believer who too desires to follow Christ.

But this isn't how most of us have been taught. We've been taught discipling occurs by church osmosis. That is, if you go to church, listen to a sermon, sit in a S.S. class, sing a few songs, give, and go on a mission trip, then you will become a disciple.

I'm reminded of the Russian comedian, Yakov Smirnoff, who talked about how he loved the USA. He said he was amazed when he first arrived in the U.S. Everywhere he went, he found instant everything. You go to the store and there's powdered milk – you just add water and poof – milk. There's powdered O.J. – just add water and poof... O.J. He then said he saw on the shelf *baby powder* and thought... What a great country! If you want a baby, just add water.

Sometimes, I fear this is what we think of following Jesus. If I just go to church and add the water of baptism – then poof – instant disciple!

Discipleship is a process – it takes time, but time alone doesn't guarantee growth. To make disciples requires:

time + effort + obedience + accountability = disciple.

Salvation is free, but discipleship cost everything we have. *Billy Graham*

II Follow the **EXAMPLE** of Jesus

**Simple** – If you want to learn how to make disciples, then follow the lead of the Master disciple-maker.

For whatever reason, we have come to believe that there's a better, simpler, more effective way to make disciples than what Jesus modeled – but there's not.

Disciples can't be made in bulk; nor can they be made w/out a personal investment of you into another person. Disciple-making is a life2life endeavor. There are no short cuts b/c DM always requires a willingness to get your hands dirty by sticking them into the goop of someone else's life.

This is one reason I fear we've abandoned the DM business in exchange of making converts. We don't have to get our hands dirty. And why should we? If we can stand behind pulpits/lecterns and throw the truth to other souls w/out ever having to get our hands dirty – what could be better. But this isn't G.C. It might be called church/ministry, but it's not making disciples.

**Lest we forget.** A disciple is NOT solely a church attender whose spiritual life is qualified by saying grace over their meals or offering a bedtime prayer. Nor is a disciple casual/cavalier about the things of God, but rather, they're abandoned to His will/grace. A disciple leads a life of abandoned commitment and instead of comfortable convenience. A disciple is one who lives to pour the Jesus in them into others.

So, we learn from Jesus that while ministry might be engaged on multiple levels, the most important level of ministry in DM is the life2life engagement.

**Explain** – Suppose I placed you behind a line over here w/ a bucket of water and placed (25) empty jars over here. How would you fill them up? You have (2) options: (1) You could throw the water until you filled the jars (which would take forever w/ great loss) or you could fill them one at a time by carrying the water.

Church today is like throwing the water. We throw scripture from pulpits/lecterns hoping to fill people w/ Jesus. But the truth is, very little gets into the lives of the masses and much is lost. DM is like filling the bucket and walking over to pour the truth directly into the jars until they're full.

I know what most of you are thinking – that'll take forever. Actually, it doesn't b/c it compounds.

**Which would you rather have** – a penny every day doubled for 30 days or \$1 mil.? If you selected the mil. dollars, you would have lost out on an additional \$4,368,709.12. Why? B/c things grow much faster when they compound! Jesus' way of making disciples uses a compounding method. Someone invests Jesus into you and then you go and invest Jesus into someone else – and then we all repeat the mission.

A disciple is called to take the fullness of God in them and pour it directly into the lives of others so that they may grow up and fulfill God's commission on their lives. And yes, it takes time and intentional effort, but it requires less time than we're doing it now.

Making disciples begins w/ being a disciple – knowing Jesus as your Savior and abiding in Him as your Lord. Such a life requires a willingness to surrender in order to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

*Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life will lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same will save it. What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, but forfeits his own life? Luke 9:23*

Whenever I read this passage, I think about living a life w/ no regret. Living a life that takes advantages of opportunities when they're placed before us. Such is the life of a disciple-maker. They live on mission investing the Jesus in them into others w/ not regrets.

I started this lesson talking about my love for golf. And while this might seem small to you, one of my biggest regrets occurred on a golf course. But not just any course – St. Andrews, the home of golf.

Several yrs ago, I was in St. Andrews w/ friends and had the chance to play and didn't. Yes, I stood on the Swilken Bridge there on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole, looking over the valley of sin, back at the Royal/Ancient Clubhouse – but I didn't get to play. And I can still kick myself. What in the world was I thinking?

Fast forward a few yrs, only this time I was at Pebble Beach. As me and a friend walked the course, I knew I didn't have the \$500+ to play, but I had to do something. And this time I did. As we walked up the 18<sup>th</sup> fairway, one of the groups hit their 2<sup>nd</sup> shots close to us. As they pulled up to the balls, I made my move – flipflops and all. I asked the guy if I could hit the shot into the 18<sup>th</sup> green. He looked at the caddy, the caddy looked at me, I gave him my St. Andrews sob story – and the guy said, "I'll do it if you buy me a beer!" I responded, "Dude, I'm a Baptist pastor. I won't buy you a beer, but here's \$5, you can do w/ it what you want. Well, he tossed me a ball,

handed me his club, and I took advantage of the moment – and got to play Pebble Beach for 5 bucks – w/ no regret.

Do you want to live a life w/ no regret? Here is how you do it? You receive the gift of God's grace but accepting Jesus as your Savior and then you surrender each/every day to Him by living plugged into the him thru the abiding life. In so doing, God will begin using your life and witness to influence others to follow Him. You will begin to live the great adventure of being the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus to the world around you – but apart from Him... you can do nothing. So, if you want to be somebody who does something for God's glory – abide in Him!