

ALONGSIDER BRIEFINGS

Building disciplemaking cultures by Bill Mowry

Volume 2

Nourish with Fresh Bread

The question hung nervously over a group of pastors and leaders. "How many of you are practicing a regular time in the word and prayer apart from sermon or teaching prep?" They nervously looked at one another and no one raised their hands. Not a single person was soaking in the Word for his or her own personal enrichment. For this group of leaders, spending time with God in the Scriptures was a utilitarian task -- a means to accomplish the goal of delivering a sermon or prepping for a class. Disciplemakers live in a different way.

Willow Creek's Reveal Survey has sampled the growth patterns of tens of thousands of people in churches scattered across the world. What was the number one practice that people rate for spiritual growth? It's reading and reflecting on the Scriptures. Men and women in churches are longing for practical help to spend time reading the Bible. We urge others to practice this discipline but are we practicing it ourselves? What's it take to get started? It starts with fresh bread.¹

In Exodus 16, God provided food for the nation of Israel through a mysterious "manna from heaven." Daily, God supplied sustenance through this coriander seed, honey-tasting wafer (16:11). This manna from heaven can be analogous to the word of God. In Deuteronomy 8:3, the Lord describes how He used manna to test Israel, revealing whether they were willing to live by "every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus used this passage when confronting Satan, declaring that: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Fresh bread from God's word nourishes the soul of the alongsider.

- **We need fresh bread daily.** Israel had to daily gather the bread from heaven (Exodus 16:20). The manna would spoil if they tried to hoard it overnight. It's dangerous for us to live on yesterday's bread from the Word. We need the fresh touch of God daily from the Scriptures. Without it, we live on past memories and worn-out sermons. Ask the Lord to give you one new insight daily from your meditation on the Scriptures.

- **We should record our fresh bread.** Writing down our daily insights from the Scriptures is a powerful act of meditation. Physically transferring your insight from the Bible to paper through writing is a simple discipline that enhances memory and application. This practice builds a rich storehouse of insights for disciplemaking.

SUGGESTED READING

The Reflective Life
by Ken Gire

Meditating on the Word
by Dietrich Bonhoffer

Feeding Your Soul
by Jean Fleming

Savoring God's Word
by Jan Johnson

• **We must share the bread.** Sharing your daily insights with people cements discovery and sets the tone for a disciplemaking culture. Alongsiders always have an open Bible between them and the people they are discipling. You create a hunger for the word in others by sharing your discoveries. Watch what happens when you start every appointment or meeting with an open Bible -- sharing your most recent slice of fresh bread. We demonstrate the value of the scriptures not from last week's sermons or an inspirational writing but from our daily discipline of feasting on God's word.

How can we start gathering some fresh bread? Steve may be like you. Attending an an Alongsider Clinic, Steve came up to me with an embarrassed look on his face. He confided that he was too busy to spend time with God. With children at home, it was difficult to find time in the mornings to meet God in the Scriptures before leaving for work. He was overwhelmed with details when he arrived at his office. The clutter on his desk, the texts on his cell phone, and a backlog of emails robbed his good intentions.

We talked through a plan to get started. He decided that he could arrive at work fifteen-twenty minutes early, detour around the secretary, and retreat to an empty room. Now he could spend uninterrupted time with God. I sent him a copy of the *5x5x5 Reading Plan* to get started.² Steve now has a vision, is choosing intentionality, and has a plan to help him spend time in the Word. I also encouraged him to secure an accountability partner, someone who would check up on his progress and plan.

In closing, let me share a word of caution. Don't be fooled by the allure of devotional books or commentaries. While I value the insights of others, I want a first-hand experience with God in the Scriptures. Use devotional aids as an **appetizer**, reserving the Bible as the **main entree**.

To create a disciplemaking culture, you must resolve to lead from a life enriched by God's word. Alongsiders always have an open Bible when they meet with people. When you "break the bread of life," you begin building a culture of life, a culture that's essential for disciplemaking to happen.

¹The inspiration for fresh bread came from my friend and partner in the ministry, Dane Allphin.

²You can download a free copy of the 5x5x5 reading plan at alongsider.com.

You can order *The Ways of the Alongsider* at navpress.com.

You can contact Bill Mowry at www.alongsider.com. Check out other disciplemaking resources and alongsider training on his website.

The Navigators Church Discipleship Ministry has a proven process for creating intentional disciplemaking cultures. You can find out more by visiting navigatorchurchministries.org.

