

ALONGSIDER BRIEFINGS

Building disciplemaking cultures by Bill Mowry

Volume 6

Invest in Relationships

Blank stares greeted Lindsey's prayer request. She had just shared with her small group how thrilled she was about the women she was discipling. "Each of them is now memorizing scripture and its changing their lives," she said. The women gazed at her with a deer-in-the-headlights look and returned to their conversation about their children, marriages, and the latest church event.

It's not that these friends didn't care. They just didn't share Lindsey's vision. Sure, they were growing, they were godly, and they were serving but they weren't investing in discipling others. Investing in people marks a disciplemaking culture.

Investment requires the devotion of time and energy. In the financial realm, we make investments in stocks, bonds, or real estate because we believe they have value and possess the potential for growth. Investing in people means devoting time and energy into an individual because of their inherent worth and potential for the Kingdom.

Investment happens because we believe in the worth of the individual. When we come alongside others to help them become disciples, we are making an eternal investment.

The worth of the individual is unique to the Jewish and Christian faith. Israel's contemporaries only told stories that valued kings and conquerors. Individuals without power or prestige were irrelevant. The Old Testament changed this, packing its books with genealogies of everyday people. Each solitary life is important to God because each was made in His image. Consider Abraham. Historian Thomas Cahill writes that "Abraham's story is the first real biography in ancient writings. Here was an individual going somewhere, making time and history possible." Abraham illustrates how God often starts with a man (or woman) to accomplish His will.

The Bible is full of promises and examples of one life impacting others. God promised to bless the nations through one man, Abraham. He used one man, Moses, to lead the people to the promised land. Through one Samaritan woman, many came to faith. Jesus invested in one stubborn, impetuous man, Peter, who became the leader of the early church. The Apostle Paul invested in one man, Timothy, who invested in other faithful men. As the author Francis Schaefer wrote, "With God there are no little people."

SUGGESTED READING

The Adventure of Discipling Others

by Ron Bennet

Master Plan of Evangelism

by Robert Coleman

Changing the Landscape of Eternity

by John Thompson

Transforming Discipleship

by Greg Ogden

My mentor John Ed Robertson used to say that “discipleship is sticking with people until they get it.” This is a wonderful definition of what it means to invest in people -- we stick with them until they get it! This cannot be done from the pulpit, the classroom, or sporadic conversations in a church foyer. Sticking with people means investing time, energy, and emotion into another’s life. Here are some ways to measure a ministry of investment.

- Is my schedule filled with personal time with people? If people are important, then I will invest time with them.
- Have I prayerfully selected a few men or women to invest in? Jesus ministered to the crowds, influenced the seventy, but invested in the twelve and then the three. He intentionally selected those in whom He invested his life.
- When I spend time with these few, do I have a plan for our our time together? Investment means intentionality. It is proactive and not only reactive.
- How well do I know their daily joys, challenges, or disappointments? When I invest in another, I’m investing in the totality of life.
- Am I purposefully working towards a discipleship or leadership development goal? Investment is not done by chance. There is always a goal in mind.

Because I’m committed to a ministry of investment, I travel downtown to meet with Jim, to Dayton to see Justin, or across town to spend time with Richard. I face the inconvenience of traffic, time, and tiredness because these men have great value. Each has the potential and ability to impact people for Christ. Each represents a wise investment because they have value to God.

Here’s the challenge: who are you investing in? The Navigators’ founder Dawson Trotman used to say, “Where’s your man? Where’s your woman?” Have you bought into the quick success of the crowd or are you investing in a few who will multiply their lives in Christ? Alongsiders invest in a few because they value the worth of each individual. Investment builds alongsider cultures.

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.

