



SESSION 9 CHAPTER 5

THE WAYS OF THE ALONGSIDER

Pray

Does anyone have any lingering questions that they need answers to before we look into Chapter 5?

Does anyone want to share something that was special in their QTs this week?

(Select four people to read the italicized sentence below the Chapter headings.)

Today, the transition continues as we look at Relationships from a different perspective. I want you to know up front that Chapters 5 and 6 could have easily been put into a single chapter, but the author decided to split them so that we could place adequate interest on their separate issues.

Skip down with me to the bottom of page 47. (Select someone to read the last paragraph and as it continues on to page 48.) You recognized how Bill vetted out the three components of what he calls 'authentic relationships'. Those components are love, transparency and vulnerability.

How do you define the word 'authentic'? WAIT

Why do you think being 'authentic' enhances the value of a relationship? WAIT

The use of the word 'authentic' sets the stage for how Bill moves from simply interacting with others into the realm of deepening your relationship with them. The key I want to share with you is this. ENVIRONMENT impacts relationships. This is why I want to remind you of something you already know: A classroom environment like this one has very real limitations insofar as deepening the level of relationships we can have here. There is a sense of 'availability' that exists in small group settings that simply cannot exist in a larger group setting.

Classrooms satisfy the need for training, but real authenticity is challenged in one. That's because we miss opportunities to have everyone truly flesh out their inner thoughts and feelings as we cover issues. The greater the number of people, the more shallow the relationship potential.

That's one of the key reasons why Pastor Wes and I both encourage discipling to be done in one of three groups: Either in a One to One setting, or a One with Two setting (aka 'triad'), or a One with Three setting (aka 'quad'). These sizes encourage relationships where we can truly experience loving transparency and appropriate vulnerability.

Q2 asks you to list some common places in your own life where you might build relationships with others. He's asking you to consider the 'where' in becoming an alongsider. What answers did you record? WAIT

Did you notice that the two follow up questions 3 and 4 pick up on the 'why' and the 'how' of becoming an alongsider? Let's hear some ideas for Q3 and Q4.

Fortunately for all of us Bill sneaks in a comforting thought on page 51. He turns the use of the word 'classroom' upside down when he frames it as a new picture to be hung on the walls of our mind.

Will someone read paragraph 3 on page 51?

This passage re-shapes the perception of a classroom where a teacher helps train people into the classroom of life where we can model Jesus in real life situations. God is not looking for professors; He's looking for amateurs. It's another way of reminding each of us that any and every real disciple can carry out the Great Commission Jesus set before us.

When we take that thought up to the next level, it also reminds us that the church relies on each disciple to do his or her part in this endeavor. That's because each of us has a somewhat different area of influence. Some have contacts in one area of life while others have differing areas of influence. Paul's message is a reminder that we are different in role and responsibility, but we are equal in value in our carrying out God's mission for His church. At the top of page 53 we have an italicized sentence. Will ____ read it for us?

What does that sentence mean to you?

How does that message impact your perspective when initiating a discipling relationship? (Loving means accepting others and making a choice to be 'real'.)

Bill defines transparency at the bottom of the page. What were some of your early thoughts when you read that definition? WAIT

The topic of transparency is similar to the topic of communication. A few weeks ago Pastor told us about the different levels and how our level of relationship frames most of our communication. Just as a hint of what's to come, you will see another presentation of that issue in our next Chapter.

Bill limits the breadth of the meaning of transparency among the alongsider and those within the relationship he or she has with the disciple(s). Again, he uses the example of Jesus as our role model. How did you answer Q12 at the top of p 54?

At Q14 we're asked to consider that different circumstances dictate transparency. How did you connect circumstances and levels of appropriate transparency?

Bill ups the ante when he adds vulnerability to trump transparency. Will someone read his definition at the middle of the page?

Your answers to Q16 further defines how being willing to be vulnerable will shape the relationship among members of your triad or quad. I want to mention a book title. It might help you with this issue. The book is LEADING WITH A LIMP by Dan Allender. He takes the reader past the idea of being the 'macho man' and gives some excellent suggestions on drawing closer to people by risking vulnerability.

Bill changes gear somewhat when he reminds us that people really do want to be free enough to share their lives with other people. It's part of what I call filling the 'holes in their hearts'. Everyone has a story. Story tellers fascinate us. I had a friend in business who could tell stories with his deep Mississippi drawl that could leave people in stitches and hanging on to every word. I would love to have that kind of gift, but I don't.

This issue, however, deserves to be re-framed when it comes to our disciple making relationships. It's not about our gifting to tell a good story; it's about our willingness to share

ourselves and our loving acceptance of the other person's story. The level of that loving acceptance we exhibit will partially define the limits for future expressions of his or her vulnerability. I appreciate Bill's reminder that we have to earn the right to be part of someone else's life, and we earn it through our authenticity.

I want to encourage you to fill in the timeline you saw at the bottom of page 55. If you did, would you care to share your timeline with us? (If none, I will.)

Bill closes with a reminder that disciple making is not about spending time with someone. It is about investing in other people. He addresses both our dual roles as evangelists and as disciple makers. Investing requires making wise choices. Since we know that wisdom is available from God's Holy Spirit, we need to ask for His guidance in considering all aspects of this process. We're in this for the long term, so choose wisely.

Does anyone have any questions that want to bring up?

Will _____ close us in prayer?