



GOSPEL *for* LIFE

Walk With Me by Bill Mowry

Season 1, Episode 12 Transcript

[00:00:00] Announcer: Welcome to the Gospel for Life podcast. We provide clear, practical biblical resources for discipleship. Here's your host, Darryl Dash.

[00:00:20] Darryl: Have we overcomplicated, over systemized, and over formalized making disciples? That's the question that Bill Murray asked in his new book, *Walk With Me: Simple Principles for Everyday Disciplemaking*. It may be that we formalized and professionalized and systemized discipling to a point where it just seems too complicated for many people to practice. Bill wants to help us return to the essential biblical practices that will help people grow as Christ-followers in simple, slow and deep ways.

Bill and his wife Peggy serve on staff with the Navigators Church Ministries in Columbus, Ohio. Bill has an extensive history and experience in discipling. He's not that far away from where I'm recording in Toronto. So Bill, welcome to the podcast.

[00:01:05] Bill: Well, thank you, Darryl, for inviting me, I'm looking forward to our time together.

[00:01:10] Darryl: I'm really excited about your book. As we mentioned before we started recording, I have a concern that churches figure out how to build a culture of discipling and also that we demystify discipling so that everybody can practice it. So how did you end up writing this book?

[00:01:26] Bill: Well, all books have a variety of beginnings and I think probably one of the things that motivated me to write this book is that after being on staff for the Navigators for over 40 years, involved in a variety of discipling ministries, you periodically look back and you kind of reflect and think what have I learned and how have I grown over the years. And in some ways this book is a

collection of principles that I wish I would've known in practice 20 or 30 years ago. How it is that when we're young, and we're first starting out, we tend to think we know it all and time has a habit of teaching us that we don't know as much? And so this book in some ways is kind of a collection of principles and insights that I've gained over the years, that boy, in some ways I wish I would have practiced a while back, but I'm glad I'm seeking to practice them now.

I think the other side of the book, not only from a personal level, but also exactly what you addressed. I like to call it that my passion in life: how do you declutter and de-professionalize the Great Commission? I think we've made the idea of making disciples complicated. Now, one popular book on discipling has at the end of the book 32 things you need to disciple somebody in. And I think I can't even disciple myself in 32 things. How do I do that with somebody else? And the other thing we found is we minister in churches, helping churches build discipling ministries, a lot of times the typical believer thinks that this is the ministry that only the ministry professionals can do. After all, that's what we're paying them for, isn't it? And so that we've removed discipling from the practice of the everyday believer. So at a personal level, and I think at a pragmatic level, those are some reasons behind writing this book.

[00:03:22] Darryl: Maybe you've already touched on this, but how does your book run counter to a lot of other approaches to discipleship practices?

[00:03:29] Bill: I think that one of the things that dominates the market today — for example, a while back, I walked into a pastor's office, and he had a real interest in discipling in his church. And as I walked in, I noticed that stacked around his desk were piles of books and video series and programs for a discipling. And I thought to myself, “There's a lot of stuff there.” And I think of what the church has tended to do is to how do we condense discipling like a 12-week curriculum type of thing? How do we package it in a series of videos and run a program then that everybody could complete. And so kind of at the end of the time you have a little checklist that you mark off and you assume that, “Hey, I've been disciplined through this program through this curriculum through these books that I've read.” And so that I think what I've learned over the years is that how real change often happens. God often changes through the context of a relationship with somebody, and also a discipling really is something that's an intentional process.

God has his way. We were talking about a friend before we began to podcast. They went through a recent tragedy in his life, and God used it. God has a way of kind of interrupting our programs and our curriculums and sometimes he's just slower how he works than an outline would like us to be.

And so as I've experienced and practiced discipling over the years, I think that, boy, can we simplify it, and we can use programs and curriculums are helpful tools, but it's really something more than that and it really has to be kind of in the context of a relationship, knowing that God often works in some slow ways, and also we want to be about building depth in people's lives and not just completing a program.

[00:05:20] Darryl: A lot of people feel like they really aren't ready to disciple other people. They feel like maybe in 10 or 20 years when they've grown more, then they can tell other people, "Walk with me and I will show you what it looks like to follow the Lord." So what would you say to somebody who feels just that they're not ready to begin to invite somebody to walk with them?

[00:05:40] Bill: Let me try to answer from two perspectives.

One perspective is from the perspective of the disciples. When you look at Matthew 28, the Great Commission passage, Matthew 28:16-20 describes how the 11 showed up on this mountain that Jesus instructed them to come to. And I thought that's a great principle right there: discipling starts when we show up. I mean these 11 guys showed up.

And it says that they worshiped him, and it says that some doubted. And I thought that's an interesting statement that some doubted. As we reflect on it, I don't think the doubt was regarding his resurrection, They've had repeated encounters with Jesus and I don't think the issue was his resurrection. And so what was your doubt?

As I thought about it, I thought I think the doubt was related to the sense of mission that they knew that Jesus was sending them on. Because right from the beginning, like in Matthew 4, Jesus says, "Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men." And in Mark 3, he chooses 12 to be with him, and to be sent out to preach. There's always this sense of mission that they knew they were going to.

Now again, picture what happened a few days prior to that arrival in that mountain top. They had all deserted Jesus. I mean, Peter denied him three times. And so if you ever have a group of people that feels totally unworthy, totally defeated, totally embarrassed and humiliated, it's this group of men And they're thinking he's going to give me a mission, and who am I that I can accomplish this mission?

And so what does Jesus do? It's interesting. In that command to go and make disciples, he bookends or borders that command with "All authority has been given to me." And then he says, "I'm going to be with you wherever you go. I'm

going to be with you to the end of the age.” And so he sends him out in his authority and with his presence to always be with them.

And I thought, it's a little like kind of Jesus is writing this blank check. He said, man, whatever you need to go and do the mission, I'm going to give it to you on the basis of my authority in my presence.

I think we can all identify with these 11 men. Maybe we haven't denied Jesus or retreated to the extent that they had. But we all feel very inadequate, and maybe sometimes ashamed of who we are, and thinking, “How can I do this?” And yet he empowers us to do it. So that's one side.

Another side of this is that, and that's this metaphor, a word picture, of walking with me, that we're inviting people to walk with us. On any path that we're walking on, it's kind of like if a path as mile markers, some of us are up to mile marker three, some of us are up to mile marker six, some of us are up to mile marker ten. Now we can only walk with people to the mile marker that we're at. And so if I'm a young believer and I'm just getting some things figured out, I'm kind of mile marker three, but we can help somebody up to mile marker three, but I probably can't help him to get to six. But again this is where the body of Christ comes in right? Because in the body of Christ — and again, I think this is another sometimes and particularly with the Navigators, we are strong on person to person ministry, one to one ministry, but sometimes we can so emphasize that the discipling becomes a single sport, a singles match rather than a sport, a team sport. And so the body is to be involved in this thing at a team level, and so I can only take people as far as I've come in my relationship with Christ, but this whole body of believers out there that can take a person on two mile mark or six or ten or whatever it might be.

So I just encourage people, you've got something to offer. Start right where you are. If I can only make it to mile marker three, that's great, and I've got other people that can take somebody further, but I've got to decide do I want to go further to mile marker six, and so may maybe I need somebody to help disciple me to get to that point.

So those are a couple of thoughts on people feeling inadequate. I can look to the example of the disciples, What do I have to offer? Well, if I'm at mile marker three, I've at least got three miles worth, I could offer somebody.

[00:09:56] Darryl: It might be a little intimidating because we might have to be honest about some of our struggles. Maybe we're having marriage problems. Are we dealing with a particular area of temptation? And then as well, what if we don't know the answer, and we get stumped. So how would you deal with those

areas where either we have to be open and vulnerable about our own struggles, or we don't know something?

[00:10:18] Bill: With the issue of vulnerability. There's an interesting passage in the Gospel of Luke in Luke 22:28. This is Jesus talking to the Twelve, and he says, "You have been those who have stood by me in my trials." And I thought, "That's an interesting statement." Because when we think about standing by somebody, it's more than just my physical presence of standing next to you, but standing communicates the idea that I'm standing next to somebody as a source of support and help. I'm in relationship with them. And Jesus says these 12 men had stood with him not physically, but at a relational level in his trials. And we know that Jesus was tempted in all ways that we are, but without sinning, and we see this happening in the garden, this gut wrenching scene.

It would appear that for these men to stand with him, it would seem like the question you have to ask then as well, then, he must have told them when he was being tempted, when he was struggling, because how else could they stand with him if they didn't know the circumstance? So I think — we don't want to carry this too far because he is the Son of God — but there are multiple examples in the gospel of kind of Jesus revealing his heart and what's going on in his life. So I think the Master sets the example for us being transparent with one another.

The other side is that it's not about giving the right answer. That's what I've seen too in disciplinmaking. It's like evangelism when we're fearful about starting faith conversations because we're afraid that somebody's going to ask is something we don't know. I have to admit, "Hey, I, well, if I don't know, there's probably somebody else that does. Now, I can go and ask them and get an answer for it." Discipling is not about passing on information and people accumulating the right knowledge or doctrine. That's part of it. We want them to believe the right things. But it's really about imparting our life in Christ, and part of that life in Christ is having him meet us at our point of need and our trials and our temptations, inviting him in and so that I'm setting an example for somebody else. If I'm sharing with them, "I'm really struggling with this, I'm asking God to help me in this," that's inviting them both into my life. And it's setting an example of how Christ can make a difference in my life, right at this point of need that I have. And so that again, if it's this idea that this is reserved only for the spiritual few, I just don't see that in the New Testament. We're engaging people in a life, in a walk as I talk about it there. And in a walk, we don't have to be perfect walkers. We don't have to be perfect in our life, but we invite people into what's happening now, and how God's at work.

[00:13:08] Darryl: So what kind of practices are you recommending that we build into our lives as we invite people to walk with us?

[00:13:15] Bill: Well, there's one priority practice that I look at, Darryl. And again, if you go back to that Matthew 28 passage there on the mountain, what's the first thing they do? Well, they worship him. And now again, we can only imagine what worship looks like. It's probably nothing like our Sunday morning worship services. But there is a sense of adoration and maybe even a sense of celebration about who Jesus was. And I've often thought that the Great Commandment of loving God always proceeds the Great Commission, and that's reflected, I think, in Revelation 2 with the Ephesian Church. He says, "I've got something against you. You've lost your first love."

So one of the first things I do when discipling somebody, we talk about their first love. We talk about, "What are the things you're doing to invest in that first love in the same way? What if you're married? What are some things you're doing to invest in your marriage relationship or if you've got a good friend? What are some things you're doing to invest in that relationship?" Those relationships need investment because they never stay the same. They were either growing or their declining, and they grow when I make investments in them. So I want to invest in my love relationship with Jesus, and so I need some love habits as I call it in a book.

And just one of the love habits that I start people with is just getting a daily time with God. We can call it a daily quiet time, daily devotional, an appointment with God. It doesn't matter what name you want to call it, but I'm setting aside time to allow God to kind of speak to me through his Word, and I speak back to him in prayer. I'm kind of calling a halt to life of setting side this quiet space to encounter God in the Scriptures and in prayer. And that's one of the first things I do with the believers. We talk about, "What are you doing to invest in your love life, in your relationship with Jesus?" And that's one of the simple practices that I start with, and we can go in and talk about more. But that's one of the simple things.

Here's the other side, Darryl, that's something we can do with somebody. I could invite somebody to coffee, breakfast, or lunch and ask him, "Well, let's just take a few minutes. Let's read the Scriptures together, let's ask some questions about it, and then if it's appropriate and it's not super embarrassing, maybe we could pray it back what we've discovered." So there's something I can do easily with people. In fact, I've done it in the last year through Zoom chats like this. I've had quiet times with people in the Zoom chat because again, it's investing in that first love. And that's a that's a simple little discipline that we can get started, because we can all engage somebody else in reading the Bible

together. That's why I like the simplicity of this, and it communicates that this is a way of building our love relationship with Jesus.

[00:16:07] Darryl: So it sounds like what you're giving us isn't a curriculum per se. It's not, "We're going to complete this workbook." Nothing wrong with that, But that's not necessarily even required. And yet it's not completely spontaneous. It's not completely unstructured. There is an intentionality about it. So it could you unpack that a little about it almost like an intentional unstructured relationship?

[00:16:30] Bill: Well, let me address a little like by talking about the word organic. A lot of times we talk about organic ministry, organic church, organic discipling. And sometimes what's associated with that word organic is that it's kind of haphazard. It's spontaneous and naturally flows. And yet, as I've gotten to know organic gardeners and farmers, they are some of the most disciplined and intentional people that I know, and so that when we think of being organic, it's not so much about something that's haphazard, but it's doing it in a natural context of life way. That is highly intentional.

So, an organic farmer, for example, is just not going to assume that I'll throw some seeds out there and I'll wait around. I'm not going to use any fertilizer, etcetera, I'm not going to use any big farm equipment. But he or she is highly intentional, and they know it's more than just flowing some seeds around.

And so it is with discipling. When you look at the New Testament, there's some really important things that people need to know, do, and be. And so that our job in the context of the church and in the context of discipling is that there's some really important things we need to pass on about what people need to know, be to be followers of Jesus. In fact, that's wrapped up in that Great Commission passage of teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And so, as I look at it in the back of my mind, I've got a picture of what, to me, a biblical disciple looks like. And that's what I talk about in my book. Part of the way of simplicity in discipling is having a picture what a disciple looks like, a New Testament picture. And so on the back of my mind, I'm thinking I want to help him or her move towards being a wholehearted follower of Jesus with that picture becoming a living reality in their life.

And so along the way, I've got some verses we're going to look at, maybe I've got some books to read, I've got some studies to do. I've got questions we want to talk about. In the back of my mind I've got this picture that we're moving towards. They may or may not know that. Some people, in time, I do want to

share that picture with them, but initially it's in the context of a relationship, but I've got an agenda. I want to move them towards this picture, and we're going to do things together to help make that happen. And sometimes a curriculum program like the Navigators have, a Bible study called the Navigator 2:7 series, which is really an excellent series, and it covers a lot of these things that we need to know, be, and do, and I'll use that with people. So I'm not divorcing myself, but I use it in the context of a relationship that I have with people and not simply a classroom teaching the material.

So when we think about something being organic, it really implies not so much that it's haphazard, but it's highly intentional and highly disciplined and there's an end goal in mind. And so that with that end goal in mind, I can then adapt to the pace, to the interest, and to the background knowledge of the other person.

[00:19:43] Darryl: What are some failures that we should try to avoid as we disciple other people?

[00:19:49] Bill: Wow. Well let's say I probably ought to write a book on failures.

I think one failure that's easy to do is to — in fact, I've done this, and I was just talking to a pastor recently about this — a young man had come to faith, and one of the first steps a pastor did, he says, “Well, here's a Bible study I want you to do now.” In and of itself, there's nothing wrong with that. We want to get people in the Scriptures. But what's that immediately communicate to this person? “Well, I guess the Christian life is about doing these Bible studies, and in fact they come packaged, and I've got to fill in. See what I'm saying? Instead of saying that, “Hey that's exciting what God has done in your life. Let's get together and talk some more about that, and let's see what God's doing and let's talk about where do you think he wants you to go from here?” or inviting them to read the Scriptures together in a context of a relationship. I'm accomplishing the same thing, because in the back of my mind I'd like to hit on some of those things that might have been that Bible study, but that's different from presenting a Bible study to somebody. You see what I'm saying?

I remember one time when I was in campus ministry at the Ohio State University here in Columbus, Ohio. One of my roles was training some young leaders, and these were all young guys in their early 20s, they all had full time careers, and they were involved with us on campus. One of the men was a buyer for a major department store, and so he'd often interact with the guys in the warehouse, and so he ended up then leading one of these guys in the warehouse, a young guy, to faith. And so he invites him to get involved in our campus ministry. And it was interesting. After a period of time, this young guy comes up to me, and he says, “Man, I didn't realize that after I became a Christian that there'd be so

much paperwork to do.” The things that we find to be just normative, like taking notes at meetings or sermons and completing Bible studies, and we've got our journals that we're writing in — for somebody that's uninitiated to the Christian culture, I think, “Man, I don't know, there's so much paperwork.” So I think it's some of those things that we take for granted.

What helps me is I've got to put myself in the mind and the heart particularly of the new believer or a beginning believer, and to start again where they are and not where I'd like them to be.

I think another issue that again, we've got to be careful — and I've been guilty of this — is that we disciple people in our preferences and applications. So I may feel very strongly about memorizing scripture. You know, I'm a good Navigator and Navigator is known for memorizing scripture. But Scripture memory is simply an application. The Bible doesn't say, “Thou shalt memorize Scripture.” It's an application of how to get the Word into our life. But when I force this on you, that it's really imperative for you to memorize scripture, in some ways I'm forcing my preference and my application on you without us talking through it. So in other words, to talk about, “What do you think of some good ways that we can get the Scriptures into our lives?” “Well, I can read it, and I guess studying.” “What do you think about memorizing it?” “Yeah, that'd be helpful.” And then we have a discussion on Scripture memory and whether that can be useful to him.

It's easy to, whether it's political preferences, worship preferences, clothing preferences — it's easy to end up discipling people in our preferences and in our applications rather than taking people to the Scriptures, asking questions, and helping them sort it out, before the Holy Spirit, how this is applicable to them. And again, that implies an approach where I'm asking more than I'm telling.

I would say that's another piece, particularly for pastors. We use our exhortation gifts in this one on one setting, and we end up exhorting people more than we're asking people so that personal discovery is not taking place.

So that's a long-winded answer. But those are several things that I've been guilty of and I've seen others be guilty of.

And I would say another issue is that — and I find I'm guilty of this too — is that it really is about how am I loving this person that I'm with? And again, that if I'm only focused on the curriculum, to cover the information, they need to know the accountability. In the midst of that, do they feel loved? And if they don't feel loved? Yeah, I'm probably doing all the right things. John 13:1 is a fascinating passage. It describes Jesus. The Apostle John says that he loved them to the end. This is in reference to the Twelve. Now, I don't think this is a cosmic love of

John 3:16 of loving the whole world. It's his love for these 12 men. And I've often thought if I was one of the Twelve, how would I have felt loved by Jesus? How would I have experienced that love?

And so again, I think another thing that we can get sidetracked on is that we want to so make sure they understand and believe and do the right things, that maybe they don't feel loved and it's simply a curriculum, it's more paperwork that they have to do.

[00:25:25] Darryl: Well, Bill, if there's one thing I've learned about people, it's that they're messy, and sometimes growth even in our own lives is very slow. So how do we cultivate the patience we need for this slow work of disciplinmaking?

[00:25:37] Bill: To me, we all have issues in our lives, right? That over a period of time, that God will work on. And one of those issues in my life is patience. I remember one time I was doing an outside job at home, and I was on our driveway, and then I got mad at something, I became impatient. So I threw my hammer down on the ground, and this hammer had the rubber into it, right? And so it hits this paper, and it bounces off, and it breaks the window in the house. My wife comes back, and Peggy says, "Hey, how that window get broken?" "That's where the hammer broke it." "So how did the hammer break it?" "I threw the hammer on the ground and it bounced up." And so yeah, patience is really an issue with me.

I picture patience as slowly pushing this rock up the hill right, one step at a time, and if I stop the rock, me roll back on me, but if I just kind of keep pushing it up the hill... And that's what I keep reminding myself, I'm just kind of slowly pushing this rock up the hill, and so it is in my life, and it's really true in other people's lives. You and I were talking, referencing this mutual friend we have, and this tragedy that happened in this family in this past year. It would appear that, without his participating, that maybe God just stopped. But no. God intervened and kept working. And I think we're often surprised as we are patiently waiting how God is often work.

What I find is that impatience with people comes as I want to see change happened fast, but I can't force that change. I've got to wait. For example, a young man I was meeting with, he was in middle management and in a business here in Columbus, and he never really had a regular routine of reading the Bible. He told me, "Yeah, sometimes I think God is more of a concept to me than a relationship." But we plugged away. About once or twice a month we'd meet and coffee shop and just read the Scriptures together, and then one day he came in and said, "Man, I'm having a terrible time of work, the stress level is up to here, I'm working 24/7. How do I deal with this?" And we went to the

Scriptures and looked at how do you deal with anxiety and so on. Some things began to click, because God put him in a position of desperation. And so when we get together now, he's sharing from what he's learning from Psalms, and how God's using the psalms to help him deal with anxiety and stress and so on. It's like I was patiently meeting with him, and because I was in relationship with him, when that opportunity came up, when it was desperate, now God's got his attention. It's kind like I was there.

I think that's the other part of being patient. It's patience and relationships, waiting for God to be at work in a person's life. And if I'm in a relationship with them, I can then jump in. But if I'm not in relationship, it's hard to jump in.

And so patience, I think, is key. That's just in my book, I talk about God being a slow God. I don't mean that in a pejorative sense, but it's the idea that God's timetable, at times, is not like our timetable. For example, I bought a new iPhone last week, and the speed over my old phone is amazing. And our culture is wrapped up in speed. But God often has a slow timetable, and we need to wait on him.

And so patience is something that's an ongoing character issue for me. It's really important, by the way. What's the first quality of love in first Corinthians 13? It's being patient. And so patience is really important, and I think it's one of these ... I'm just always on the cutting edge my own life of learning patience.

[00:29:34] Darryl: 2 Timothy 2:2 talks about not only making disciples, but this vision of a multigenerational approach to discipling: that the people that you're imparting the Word to, they're going to pass it on to another generation. So in this whole discipling picture that you're creating for us, how do we actually disciple others in a way that they were going to end up discipling others?

[00:29:57] Bill: Let me give you another picture, another place besides the 2 Timothy 2:2 passage. This is something I've been reflecting on. It's in Psalm 128.

You know, it says that blessed as everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways, and he says,

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed

who fears the LORD.
(Psalm 128:3–4)

I've got two grown sons, and I've got two grandchildren. When we all gather, you've got three generations around this table. But in children there's always a potential of the next generation. And so sitting around this table is this next generation, and multiple generations that are sitting there. Not only is it illustrated in 2 Timothy 2:2, but we can see that illustration in back even in the psalms, that every child has this potential of reproducing him or herself, that there's kind of the seed that's present in every person.

When we think about multiplying our lives, that's why you have to uncomplicated disciplinarianism, because I want to interact with somebody in such a way that they think, "I could kind of mimic what Darryl did to me with somebody else. I'm not related to Darryl as a pastor, and his bookshelf on theology behind me, but he just simply read the Bible with me and ask me some questions. I think I could do that with somebody else." And so part of making life transferable is that it's something that can be mimicked or imitated with somebody else. And so that's why I think that we need to be engaged in.

I call it the triple play of application, accountability and affirmation with people, that we're encouraging a sense of accountability with one another. We're encouraging application: how do I apply what I'm reading? And then I'm giving affirmation to people. I'm affirming what God is doing in their life. And so, and that's done in a relational context. Again from a pulpit or podium, it's hard to do. I can exhort people in application, but I have no idea if I'm making one. But in a relationship we can talk about that. Now from a podium, it's hard to have accountability, But if we're one to one, one to two, one to three, I can have accountability. Again from podium, it's hard to give affirmation. But, "Boy, I've seen Darryl, I've seen your life really changed in the last couple of months. Tell me what's going on." I can get that information because we're accountable to one another.

When I think of disciple in people, it's how am I giving and encouraging accountability, application, and affirmation? Then people can mimic that. They can say, "Okay, I can do that with somebody else now."

Also, what I found is that — and you need to approach us with a sense of humility — you also want to deconstruct times, what just happened in, say, a conversation I had with somebody. So sometimes, I'll say, "Let's step back for a minute. What just happened here in our conversation?" And the other person goes, "Well, you got me to look at the Bible." I say, "Yeah, what else did I do?" "Well, you asked some questions about it," I said, "Yeah, okay, what kinds of

questions that I ask?” “Well, one of them is what difference could this make in my life?” And so we'll kind of take apart what just happened. And then I might ask, “Well, is there anybody that needs to have a similar conversation in your life? You know, maybe it's a spouse, maybe it's children, maybe it's a college friend, whatever it might be. Is there anybody else that might need to have a similar conversation?” “Yeah, I think so.” “Well, do you think that what we've done, you could have a conversation with him kind of along the lines of what we did?”

And so again, we I think there are appropriate moments where we want to deconstruct something so the other person realizes what just happened. And again, that's the principle of intentionality. I'm choosing to be intentional. And then I asked, “Well, this is somebody else, hey, maybe you could do this with,” and that just lays that principle of passing it on to somebody else.

So again, I think that the key to making it transferable is that we have to keep it simple enough, and we have to encourage people to be thinking about how they can intentionally pass it on to somebody else.

[00:34:30] Darryl: Bill. I know you do a lot of work with pastors. You help them figure out how to build a culture of discipling within their church. What advice would you give to pastors on how they can use some lessons from your book in creating that culture within their churches?

[00:34:44] Bill: One of the first things I do with the pastor is we'll talk about his discipling ministry — him personally. Who are the men, who are the women that you're investing in? If you're going to build a discipling culture, the leadership of the church, particularly the senior pastor has to be engaged in modeling it. Now, you can have a discipling ministry in a church without the pastor or the staff, or maybe they're minimally involved, you're going to have a discipling ministry and that's good. We want to have those, but to build a culture, the leader has to be engaged. Leadership has to be engaged to be modeling this.

And so one of the first challenges, I'll often ask a pastor if he wants to take this further, I'll say, “Well, I'd like to challenge you to take the discipling tithe. Just in the same way you tithe your money, you have 10% right, I want to challenge you: how can you give 10% of your time to discipling some men or women?” And, “I don't know if I can do that.” “Well, it's like encouraging your parishioners to tithe. Right, let's start with 5%. Can you get 5%?” “Okay, I think I can do that.” And then I'll ask him, “Well, what are some things he might need to stop doing or delegate or not do so you can devote that 5 or 10%?” And then we'll have a discussion because, again, pastors, particularly senior pastors are

very busy people. There's a lot going on in his or her life. And so you can't just simply add 10% more to 100% full of schedule. You've got to help them think through what are some things that need to subtract. What are some things that need to be delegated to give myself space to be involved with people?

And so that's my first step in culture building. It's that I'm going to get the pastoral staff, the leadership, involved in discipling. It starts with the challenge of a discipling time, and then we talk about how can you make that a reality, then, in your schedule?

I think this is another misconception people have is that discipling is simply exhorting you to do this. So I come alongside the pastor: "You need to be making disciples, you're missing the boat, you're not making enough disciples, you need to give more time to this." Okay, so we're exhorting him, but who's going to sit down with him or her and say, "Hey, let's look at your schedule. What do you think?" You see what I'm saying? So I'm coming alongside of them in the context of relationship to help them and help them become a reality rather than simply exhorting them to go and do this.

And so that's the first step and boy, we could talk further about this, but I always start at that point in time that well, I want to find out what the pastor, the staff's background is on discipling, what their experience, how can you, what are you doing now? Maybe they're already tithing and that's super, but most of them aren't. Then how can we begin to make that a reality?

So it's pretty simple. What I've seen is that in building a culture we need to model before we plan. And the most strategic planning approaches, you create the plan and then you figure out how to model it. But what I've seen, a discipling needs to be modeled before its planned because people mimic what you do. So if I'm modeling discipling, there's a greater probability that people going to see that mimic that and then begin recycling others themselves.

[00:38:20] Darryl: I love how you're uncomplicating everything and making it seem doable for everyone, including pastors, with their busy schedules. Because if pastors aren't doing it, then how can we expect anybody else to do it as well? So that's really helpful.

Bill, let me ask you a couple of personal questions if that would be okay. What are you learning these days?

[00:38:40] Bill: Well, it's funny you should ask that, because last weekend I was at the 90th birthday party of a friend of mine. He's actually been a mentor over the years. His wife passed away at 88 last March, right in the middle of COVID,

and I don't know what it's like in Canada, but in the USA, you can't have funerals, you couldn't have a memorial service. And so people drove past the house out of memory for his wife. And so Dave has been a mentor to me.

They had time of sharing at this party, and person after person stood up. Now again, these were friends that were invited. So it wasn't a haphazard approach, but to a person they talked about how Dave loved them, how Dave invested in them, and how Dave got him into the Scriptures, how Dave held him accountable, and again, how he loved him. And I thought, wow, what a great testimony, You know, I'm thinking that, "Man, if I ever make it to 90, Lord willing, I'd excited to have people stand out in a spontaneous ways and say, 'Yeah, Bill did this with me.'"

And Dave is still doing that. After it was over, I was talking with a couple of guys he's meeting with right now, that he's discipling at 90 years old. And, and I just think, yeah, that's one of the things I'm learning. No matter how old you are, you can keep doing this.

I think the other piece is that he's loved these people And I was sitting at the table. David and I have had a relationship for 40 years, and I helped him marry his one daughter and then his son-in-law. Both of them have been involved in my campus ministry. And as I was driving there, I knew I'd meet the son-in-law at the wedding. And I thought again, like I prefaced earlier when we first started, that man, there are some things I wish I could repeat, that 30 years ago I was more concerned about the curriculum and the goals rather than about the relationship. And, so I apologized to this fellow, I said, "I recently wrote this book on discipling, and it's really about lessons I've learned, and one of them is that the importance of relationship. And I just feel like man, if I had to do it over again, I'd do a whole lot of things differently with you and build our relationship." And he thanked me for that, and people always gracious when you say that.

But again, that's one of the things. One is that, man, no matter the age I'm at, I'm going to keep at it. And second is that it really is about relationships again. I wish I knew what I knew now about relationships. And I wish I would've applied that 30 years or so ago. I think it would have made a significant difference in my life then.

[00:41:31] Darryl: And what's encouraging you right now?

[00:41:33] Bill: One is that, for example, even though I may not have invested in this individual in ways that I would now, just talking like at the birthday party, talking as one young man —he's not so young anymore, I knew him when he was 19, 20 years old and now he's in his forties. Actually. His daughter is in

college here at Ohio State. She goes to our church. So it's kind of fun. This is like the second generation now. But just seeing individuals like him still going on and still wanting to make a difference. He's telling me about a book that he's written about the gospel, and how the gospel impacts people's lives. And it's an ongoing impact of grace. And can I help him get it published? And that's what I find when you become an author, people want some help on getting the books published. But I know him and I would trust what he's written. And I asked him, send me a manuscript and let me look at it.

And again, it's seeing people like this individual going on loving God, and his daughter loves God. She wants to go into premed and wants to — I'm trying to find a way for her to shadow a Christian doctor. And so, he's passed it on to his daughter. And I think that is so encouraging when those things happen, that somebody you invested in — literally this was 25 years ago — and they're still going on, and they're passing it on to their kids, and they're trying to figure out how to have a ministry with that. To me, that's one of the things that that just encourages me,

[00:43:09] Darryl: Bill, the discipling that you've done is going to reap benefits for eternity. You've shared a lot of your wisdom, decades of experience now, and even the mistakes you've made. You've shared them with us in this book, and I'm just so grateful for that ministry. I pray that many will read this book and apply the lessons in there, and that we will see that it's possible for all of us with the Spirit's help to be disciple makers. So I want to thank you for the book.

The last question I want to ask you is how can people find out more about you and your ministry, and where can they get this book?

[00:43:41] Bill: They can order the book through, it's put out by Moody Publishers, and I know through the Navigators office there in Canada that they can purchase it, you can contact me at alongsider.com. I also have another book on discipling called *The Ways of the Alongsider*, and that book is really like a training manual on relational discipling. That's published by a NavPress and Tyndale House. And but you can go on my website alongsider.com. I've got free resources. You can sign up for my blog. I can connect you to how to purchase these books and some other books that I've written. So alongsider.com.

Also if a church or pastor is interested in our coming alongside helping you build a discipling culture — boy, I wish I had the Canadian address, but if you go to the U. S. address they'll refer you back to a Canadian address but it's NavigatorChurchMinistries.org. And we can put you in touch with — we have

staff in Canada that come alongside and work with pastors and churches in building discipling cultures. In fact, we will be starting back up again in the Fall a monthly pastors forum, Zoom chat for that. But if you go to Navigator Church Ministries, they can put you in touch with the right person, or contact me at alongsider.com and I can put you in touch with the right people as well.

[00:45:19] Darryl: Well, thank you. Bill, really appreciate your book and appreciate your ministry and very grateful that you joined us on the podcast today.

[00:45:25] Bill: Well, thank you for having me.