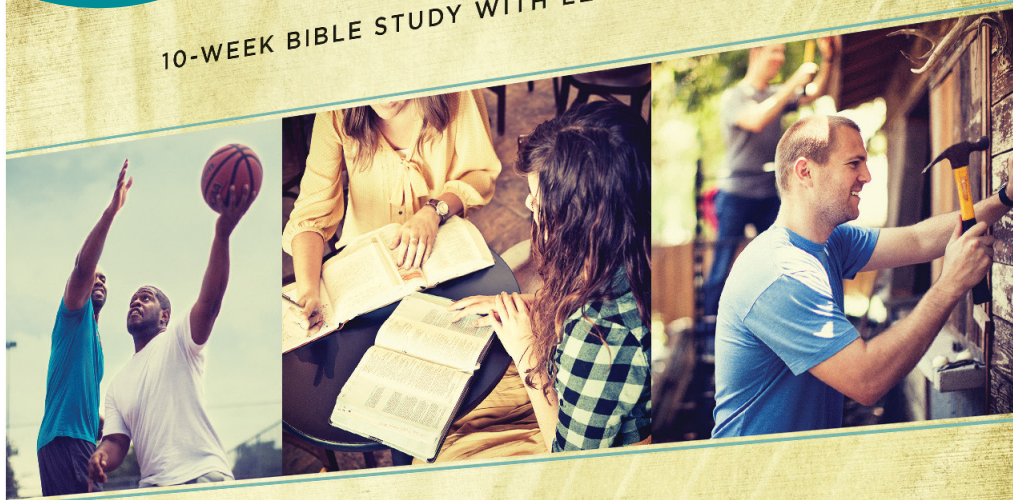


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CHAPTER 1

10-WEEK BIBLE STUDY WITH LEADER'S GUIDE



THE WAYS OF THE ALONGSIDER

Growing Disciples Life to Life



BILL MOWRY

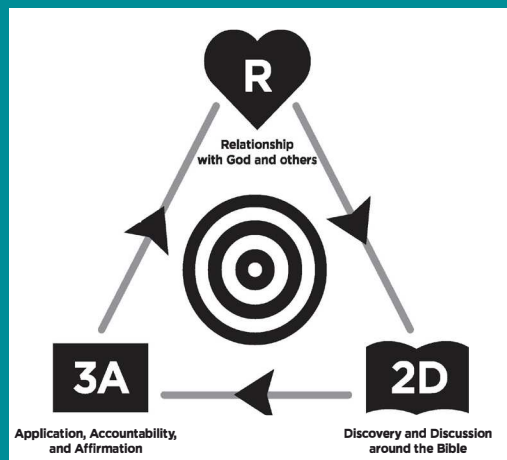
Welcome to the Adventure of Making Disciples!

Whether you're a seasoned disciplemaker, someone just getting started, or you're still exploring this ministry, this book is for you. *The Ways of the Alongsider* will help you disciple people in life-to-life, relational ways. These "ways"—patterns of life and ministry—are simple enough that "ministry amateurs" can do them. You won't find a ready-to-use curriculum or a one-size-fits-all approach in this book. Instead, you will discover biblical and relational principles applicable to your life's diverse set of relationships.



Disciplemaking can be compared to weather forecasting. Weather forecasters know that to predict the weather—rain, snow, sunshine—certain conditions must be present. When cold fronts intersect with warm fronts, weather happens. However, there's no guarantee that snow or rain will occur. Certain conditions create possibilities but no guarantees. Disciplemaking is like this.

The Ways of the Alongsider will teach you how to bring together basic biblical principles and practices to create a climate for relational disciplemaking. These "ways" of disciplemaking are pictured in a simple illustration.



Bull's-eye. Our target, or bulls-eye, is the New Testament picture of a disciple.

R. The R is for relationships. A relationship with God flows over into authentic relationships with others.

2D. There's always an open Bible between an alongsider and someone they're discipling. Around this Bible, discovery and discussion happens.

3A. 3A describes application, accountability, and affirmation, three simple steps for life transformation.

Are you ready to learn the ways of life-to-life disciplemaking? The following sampler will give you a taste of *The Ways of the Alongsider*. Enjoy!

-Bill Mowry, Author and Navigator



CHAPTER ONE

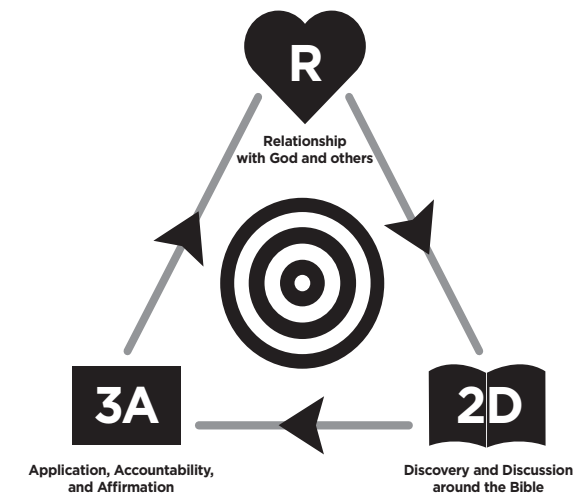
THE WAY OF THE AMATEUR

Alongsiders Do It from Love

Jesus aimed to start a movement which would reach the whole world. He had three years in which to do it. And He deliberately devoted Himself to twelve men. . . .

It occurred to me that such a strategy could not be improved upon.

RICHARD HALVERSON, FORMER CHAPLAIN TO THE U.S. SENATE



A NEW NEIGHBOR MOVED IN across the street from Jack and Mary. It didn't take long before Jack walked across the street to meet the newcomer, Matt. Through several conversations, Jack discovered that Matt was a widower and was dealing with cancer. In a natural way, Jack shared his faith in Christ with Matt. But he did more. He and Mary decided to serve Matt—Mary would take over meals, and Jack would do home repairs. They invited Matt to their neighborhood Bible study and then to church. Matt came once to both events.

"Why didn't he come back?" I asked.

"I think he didn't come back because he was self-conscious about his frequent coughing spells," Jack said.

There's a happy ending to this story. Before he passed away from cancer, Matt trusted Christ.

Matt wasn't a project to Jack and Mary. They didn't love him just because they had recently attended a witnessing seminar. They didn't invite him to church just because it was "friendship Sunday." Nor did Jack start a faith conversation just because he was a pastor. In fact, Jack had been a meat-cutter all his life, and Mary worked in the school cafeteria. They reached out to Matt because they believed that's what Jesus' disciples do. Disciples walk across the street, befriend a neighbor, serve him or her, and start faith conversations.

How do I know all of these details? Jack and Mary are my parents, and their real names are Bill and Daisy. Here's another surprise: They were in their midseventies when this happened! In the daily life of a mobile home park, my parents' lives and faith won a neighbor's heart. They demonstrated a simple, relational ministry strategy: Walk across the street, befriend a neighbor, start a faith conversation, and watch God do the rest. You could call my parents *ministry amateurs*.

Imagine the impact if we had scores of men and women like my parents—people committed to doing the Great Commission one conversation and one relationship at a time. We don't need larger buildings, costly programs, or more church staff to bring people to Christ. We just need to disciple and release people to love others right where they live, work, or play.

God Is Looking for Ministry Amateurs

God is looking for ministry amateurs. This should be an encouragement to anyone wanting to participate in the Great Commission. The word *amateur* comes from the Latin word meaning "lover." Amateurs are not people who necessarily lack skill or training; amateurs can often be highly skilled. They do what they do not for pay but out of the sheer love and joy of it.

The apostles could be labeled the first ministry amateurs. When Jewish boys reached their midteens, the best and the brightest were recruited by the local rabbi for advanced study. For those who didn't qualify, apprenticeship in a vocation was the next step. Out of the twelve men that Jesus chose, not one was trained to be a rabbi. All were involved in secular pursuits. Jesus immersed the Twelve in the Old Testament, but He had something bigger in mind. His goal was to train Kingdom activists.

These religious amateurs (the apostles) eventually created a stir. When the ministry professionals of their day (rulers, elders, scribes) observed their boldness and confidence, they were amazed because "they were uneducated, common men . . . and they recognized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13, esv). The word that is translated

"uneducated" means that they were laymen with no special professional qualifications or technical education in the Law.¹

The early church was a movement of amateurs. Church historian Michael Green writes, "The great mission of Christianity [in converting the Roman Empire] was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries. . . . They did it naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing."² God wants to use ministry amateurs, everyday people who have a heart to serve God.

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

My friend Pastor Ron was in the middle of a teaching session on discipling when a participant in the class raised his hand and made this statement: "Pastor, I can never make disciples because I can't do what you do. If discipling means teaching a class, I guess I'm disqualified. I don't have the gift of teaching!"

Ron then probed the class: "How many of you feel that you have the gift of teaching and could do what I'm doing?" A few meekly raised their hands.

"Now," Ron said, "how many of you could come alongside someone to befriend them, read the Bible, ask some questions, tell some stories, and encourage application? How many could do this?"

Nearly all the hands went up! When Ron changed the picture of discipling from a formal teacher to someone who came alongside to help, people could see themselves engaged in making disciples.

Author Warren Wiersbe writes, "No Christian rises higher than the beauty and quality of the pictures that hang in the gallery of his or her mind."³ What we picture in our imaginations can impact our behavior. Too often, we're like the people in Ron's class. In our minds we have certain pictures of discipling that we can't rise above. We think, *I could never make disciples because I'm not a teacher*. Another picture is a complex image of standards and qualifications. One popular discipling book lists thirty topics to cover when discipling someone. *These thirty qualities are not in my life!* we say to ourselves. *How can I ever make a disciple?* What would happen if we changed this picture? What if we hung a picture of an alongsider in our minds?

Jesus does something wonderful. He invites us, in our weakness and inexperience, to be His helpers in the Great Commission. He recruits ministry amateurs to come alongside friends to model behaviors—how to love God, build friendships, read the Bible, tell stories, ask questions—and encourage application. We can call these amateurs *alongsiders*. Are you ready to hang this picture in the gallery of your mind?

1. Describe your current picture of disciplemaking. Feel free to be creative and combine words with sketches.
2. Here's a description of an alonsider. Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you.

When we minister as alonsiders, we earn the right to intentionally become involved in people's lives. Alonsiders partner with the Holy Spirit, helping others wholeheartedly follow Jesus in all of life. We purposefully do this in simple, life-to-life ways: loving one another, reading the Bible, telling stories, asking questions, encouraging application, and living on mission.

Alonsiders Use the Language of the Holy Spirit

The ministry of the alonsider is derived from the Greek concept of *paraclesis*, meaning “a calling to one's side,” “an active helper, or counselor.”⁴ The Holy Spirit is the ultimate alonsider, a Helper who is with us forever (John 14:16, 26). We become channels through which the Holy Spirit comes alongside of others to encourage, comfort, and exhort. In Romans 16:1-14, the apostle Paul identifies about thirty people who were ministering within the Roman church. These friends included a new convert, professional tentmakers, a woman of wealth, and people who opened their homes to ministry. In many and diverse ways, these men and women came alongside of others, partnering with Paul in his gospel and church-planting ministry.

Alonsiders use a different language (*paraclesis*) than the formal language of teaching (*didasko*) and preaching (*kerugma*). Author Eugene Peterson notes the difference by describing how preaching is typically directed toward the will, while teaching is directed to the mind. The ministry of *paraclesis* complements these two. “[*Paraclesis*] introduces a quieter, more conversational tone, something on the order of, ‘I'm here at your side, let's talk this over, let's consider how we can get in on everything that God is doing.’”⁵

When alonsiders practice the language of *paraclesis*, we help move men and women from understanding Scripture to applying its truths to life. Peterson describes this process of truth to life in this way: “Paracletic language is the language of the Holy Spirit, a language of relationship and intimacy, a way of speaking and listening that gets the

words of Jesus inside us.”⁶ We can practice this paracletic ministry as alonsiders, people who walk in the Spirit and disciple others in life-to-life ways.

Living as an Alonsider Means Changing the “How”

When I put my trust in Christ as a sophomore in college, I knew I should do three things: read the Bible, pray, and see Ed.

Ed was the guy who lived across the hall from me in my freshman dorm. After we first met, I discovered that he was a Christian. Even though I initially resisted Ed's “religious talk,” we became best friends. His persistent witness drew me to the Savior. I knew that if I had questions about my new faith, I could trust Ed to be my guide.

When I told Ed about my faith commitment, he did something simple: He invited me to read the Bible with him in the dormitory study lounge. This began a habit of praying together, reading the Scriptures, debating our interpretations, and sharing our applications. This was life-to-life discipleship—two friends meeting over an open Bible, sharing their lives together, and helping one another follow Jesus.

I soon discovered that Ed was practicing a New Testament pattern. When the Lord invited His disciples to “be with him” (Mark 3:14), it meant joining the Lord in His life. Together, they went to social events and on walking expeditions. They enjoyed faith conversations, and shared in the joys and sorrows of ministry. Jesus was an alonsider, intentionally ministering life to life with this select few.

My friend Ed entered into my God-story and imprinted me with a love for God. *How* did Ed disciple me? He did more than recruit me to a video series or a course. He demonstrated the *how* of the alonsider, a *how* where a life in Christ is passed on from one person to another through a relationship. In life-to-life ministry, relationships become the highway for spiritual transformation. I'm eternally grateful that Ed was an alonsider, taking time to live life to life with me.

3. The apostle Paul practiced a relational approach to ministry. Even though his mission as an apostle typically meant launching a church and then moving on, he demonstrated a relational approach to ministry. From his example in the Thessalonian church, what can you observe about his relational approach?

- 1 Thessalonians 2:7

- 1 Thessalonians 2:8
- 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12

4. What do you think it meant for Paul to be like a mother or a father to this new group of believers?
5. Describe Paul’s intentionality in growing the faith of these new believers.

Living as an Alongsider Means Changing the “When”

We have unintentionally created a gap in the Christian life. We rightly emphasize evangelism, encouraging personal conversion to Christ. The promise of conversion is a life lived in eternity. However, we can sometimes exclude the gap between conversion and eternity, life lived in the middle. This life in the middle happens between Sunday church services, where we live, work, study, and play. Alongsiders know that discipleship is about what happens in the middle.

The apostle Paul understood how life is lived in the middle when he exhorted the Philippians to live without blemish “in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.” Right in the middle of work, neighborhood, and family, we’re to live “as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15, ESV). The test of a disciple’s life is not found in a worship service or a retreat but in the middle of a crooked generation. We come alongside people in this middle of life, the *when* of everyday routines and relationships where God is at work.

Living as an Alongsider Means Changing the “Where”

The alongsider ministry takes down some traditional pictures of where spiritual growth happens. For starters, we take down our pictures of the classroom, study, or church

sanctuary. These still have a place, but they’re not as prominent for alongsiders. We now hang some new ones, pictures like a living room, a workplace, or a bleacher seat. Instead of the formality of a classroom, all of life becomes a place for learning. Instead of being the teacher, placed above students, alongsiders see themselves as companions on the journey, purposefully coming alongside people to follow Christ together. To do this we must hang a new picture of *where* discipleship happens.

Here’s one way to illustrate the differences between traditional approaches to discipling and the alongsider’s approach.

Traditional Approaches	The Way of the Alongsider
classroom	small group and one-to-one
content and curriculum	character and practice
one-way (teacher to pupil)	two-way (discovery and discussion)
complete the course or curriculum	live and practice life
teach through a lecture	teach people to study for themselves
tell someone how	show someone how
information	encourage transformation
scheduled program	lifestyle to live

6. Consider the picture of discipling you formulated on page 4. Would you now change anything about your picture? In the space below, combine some words or sketches of this change.

Living as an Alongsider Means Changing the “What”

Living as an alongsider is highly relational but not haphazard. Like the apostle Paul, we want to intentionally “present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28, ESV). What we do is very purposeful and intentional. We are friends with an agenda!

One way to bring intentionality to the alongsider process is to apply VIM: vision, intentionality, and means. *Vision* is the motivation and desired end. *Intentionality* represents a purposeful approach. *Means* describes tools and resources to help. Dallas Willard

says that these three elements are “the general pattern for personal transformation” and the path for spiritual change and maturity.⁷

- *Vision*: Do I have a picture, or vision, for discipleship?
- *Intentionality*: Do I want to become more Christlike?
- *Means*: Do I have the tools, practical helps, and training for spiritual maturity?

All three work in concert. If I have vision and intentionality without means, my intentions may be good, but they bear few results. If I have intentionality and means without vision, I can major on methods without heart. All three are indispensable to the process. VIM is what we apply in coming alongside others.

Keep the VIM principle in mind as you come alongside people in their discipleship journeys. VIM will challenge you to ask such questions as *What is your vision for discipleship? How are you intentionally encouraging spiritual growth? What practical tools or resources can be a means to build a life of discipleship?* Sprinkled throughout the book are some VIM examples.

Assessing My Current Life as an Alongsider

The following assessment evaluates your ability and commitment to disciple people through the ways of the alongsider. Each statement is a belief or behavior about discipling. Rate each statement on a scale of one to five. “One” indicates a low practice or belief. “Five” indicates a strong belief or regular practice of a behavior. Total your scores at the end.

- ___ 1. I believe that effective discipling flows from a healthy walk with God.
- ___ 2. I take time to learn a person’s background and hear his or her faith story.
- ___ 3. I believe that a friendship with a person is as important as the right curriculum.
- ___ 4. I seek to participate in common hobbies and social events with people I’m discipling.
- ___ 5. I often have discipleship goals in mind when we meet together.
- ___ 6. I look for others in the body of Christ who can contribute to people through their unique set of gifts and experiences.

- ___ 7. In discipling, I invite people I’m coming alongside of to join a small group for maximum spiritual growth.
- ___ 8. I spend one-on-one time with people to show them how to practically follow Christ.
- ___ 9. I come alongside and help people meditate and apply the Scriptures.
- ___ 10. I have a clear picture of a New Testament disciple.
- ___ 11. I set the example in transparency and vulnerability with people I disciple.
- ___ 12. I make every effort to model a life of discipleship.
- ___ 13. I do not depend on my abilities or techniques but, through prayer, intentionally trust God to change people.
- ___ 14. I take time to visit the home or workplace of people I’m coming alongside to disciple.
- ___ 15. I seek to set an example of discipling others.

___ TOTAL

- 15–35** I’m a beginner at being an alongsider.
- 36–55** I’m growing at being an alongsider.
- 56–75** I’m a skilled practitioner at being an alongsider.

7. What did you discover about your strengths as an alongsider?
8. What did you discover about some areas of growth for yourself as an alongsider?

9. Over the next few weeks, what would you like to strengthen in your ministry of being an alongsider?
10. Over the next few weeks, what area of need would you like to turn into a strength?

Living as an Alongsider Means Taking Action

Describe a highlight from this first chapter. What was a new *insight*? An *affirmation* of what you already believed or practiced? A particular *challenge*? Write out the insight, affirmation, or challenge in a simple sentence:

How could you apply this truth to your life in the coming week? Imagine yourself living out this truth in the next twenty-four hours (or another time frame) of your life's routine. What specific action might you take? List a specific action.

Turn to the Alongsider Action Page (page 119) and record your insight and action step.

ALONGSIDER TOOLBOX

Personal Application Is a Key to a Changed Life

JESUS DID NOT sugarcoat His message: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Obedience is the mark of a Christ follower (John 14:21) and secures God's blessing (James 1:22-25). Our *vision* as an alongsider is to be an obedient disciple. We come with good *intentions*. However, what is a *means* to live out a life of obedience? Personal application is one means to grow in obedience.

An application is a simple, practical, and personal action step I take in response to God's Word. It is marked by three qualities:

1. **Passage.** Application starts with an open Bible. We ask the Spirit of God to teach

us as we read and meditate on His Word. We ask Him to connect His Word to our lives and our hearts. Identifying a key truth from a passage is the launching pad for application.

2. **Personal.** Application starts with our hearts. We bring open hearts before God, asking Him to speak to our hearts through His Word. I will ask myself this heart question: “How is the Bible speaking to my values, passions, life assumptions, or motivation?”
3. **Practical.** Application is a practical action step, something we do. Many times it is a step to take in the next twenty-four hours. Applications are not usually a lifetime commitment but an immediate and personal response to the Holy Spirit.

Our imaginations can be the canvas for application. Here's how the process works. The Lord touches our hearts with a passage by highlighting a faulty life assumption, a misplaced value, a word of encouragement, or a challenge to obedience. We then begin to imagine living out this passage within the next twenty-four hours.

Here's an example: “The Lord spoke to me on prayer from Philippians 4:6-7. I need to pray rather than worry.” Picture yourself acting on this insight. In the next twenty-four hours, how could you pray instead of worry? Imagine how your life's routine in the next day would change if you resolved to pray. You could ask yourself, *When is a good time to pray tomorrow?* Think about your anxious circumstances. How could they influence what you pray about? Once you settle on an action step, write it down, and then live it out. You've now created a simple memory that will linger with Philippians 4:6-7. Applications build spiritual memories—mental photographs of our obedience to our Lord.

Throughout *The Ways of the Alongsider*, you will be asked to make an application. Each application becomes a personal memory of practical obedience to our Lord. Your Alongsider Action Page will be a record of these memories, a testimony to how God changes life in little ways.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1: THE WAY OF THE AMATEUR

1. William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003).
2. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 172–173.
3. Warren Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 62.
4. W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company), 400.
5. Eugene Peterson, *Practice Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 173.
6. *Ibid.*, 175.
7. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 85.

More “Ways of the Alongsider”

In addition to chapter one, “The Way of the Amateur,” if we are to be used of God to grow disciples life to life, we will also focus on the following “ways,” featured in *The Ways of the Alongsider* as well:

The Way of Love

For alongsiders, loving God is at the core of our being. Jesus gives us a clear picture of what this looks like. Modeling the Son means modeling the love shared between Him and the Father (John 17:23). Alongsiders invite the Lord into our lives and His love becomes more than a belief but an intimate relationship. As we do, we recruit others to the Great Commandment, motivating and enlisting them to love God.

The Way of Intentionality

Alongsiders “think big but start small.” Jesus did just that. He thought big about the gospel’s advance throughout the world, yet started with an intentional investment in only a dozen men. Jesus didn’t leave discipling to chance but focused His energies toward a picture of spiritual maturity. Like Jesus, alongsiders “go small,” seeing the world through individuals, who will affect generations right where they live, work, or play.

The Way of Prayer

“Kneeling by my bed, I asked God for one person a year to disciple for the rest of my life. God has answered my yearly prayer commitment beyond my wildest dreams.” Indeed, prayer is absolutely essential for alongsiders! Following the examples of Jesus and the apostle Paul, alongsiders partner with the Holy Spirit through prayer to pray the big themes of knowing God and character growth—“macro” prayers—for those in our alongsider ministries.

The Way of Relationships

Alongsiders practice the importance of relationships—not surface but **authentic** relationships characterized by **love**, **transparency**, and **vulnerability**. They don’t simply tell people the way to Jesus; they personally show them how to live like Jesus. They disciple in the classroom of life, demonstrating how to love God and live on mission. Alongsiders enter into others’ life stories, investing in others “until they get it.”

The Way of Depth

Alongsiders know how to “go deep” with people, creating relationships of trust that give room for the Holy Spirit to work. We live authentic lives. As we do, we find that people are more likely to allow us to enter in and connect with the “backstories” of their lives. As we follow Jesus’ example, we start at a person’s point of need. When that happens, with God’s help, He uses us to help our friends move toward change.

The Way of the Word

Alongsiders love and live the Scriptures. Because we love and live the Scriptures, there’s always an open Bible between an alongsider and someone they’re discipling. Like Jesus, the Scriptures are embedded in the souls of our lives and ministries. Alongsiders are not only committed to helping people read the Bible, but we teach them how to meditate on, study, and apply God’s Word.

The Way of Discovery

Alongsiders follow Jesus’ lead and encourage learning through discovery. Since all of life is a classroom for Jesus’ learners, we purposefully open doors of discovery through asking powerful questions and telling personal stories. Alongsiders believe that discovery is the key to conviction.

The Way of the Triple Play

Alongsiders know just how much God uses **application**, **accountability**, and **affirmation** to change lives—the “triple play” of transformation. Application is a simple, daily, practical response of obedience to God. Accountability is the action of helping one another faithfully follow through on commitments. And affirmation has the powerful impact of affirming progress and acknowledging God’s hand at work. Together, He uses all three to transform lives!

The Way of Mission

Alongsiders have an “in!” We are **insiders** somewhere and to someone—that is, we share a common space, purpose, or interest with one or more groups of people. As insiders, we live **on mission**—knowing that God has placed us in special groups of people “for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14) to the advance of the gospel. We share God’s heart of love for people outside of Christ. Since each Christian is **next door to someone**, we can be next door to everyone. Alongsiders spread the gospel one conversation and one relationship at a time.

– Summaries of chapters two through ten adapted by Dean Ridings.

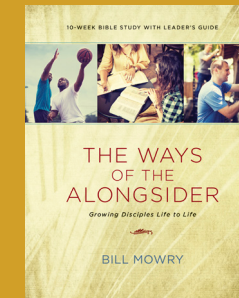
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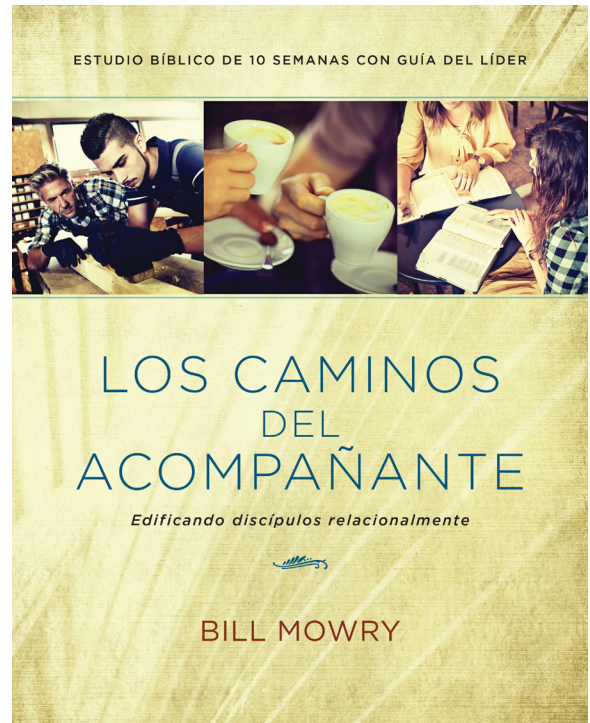
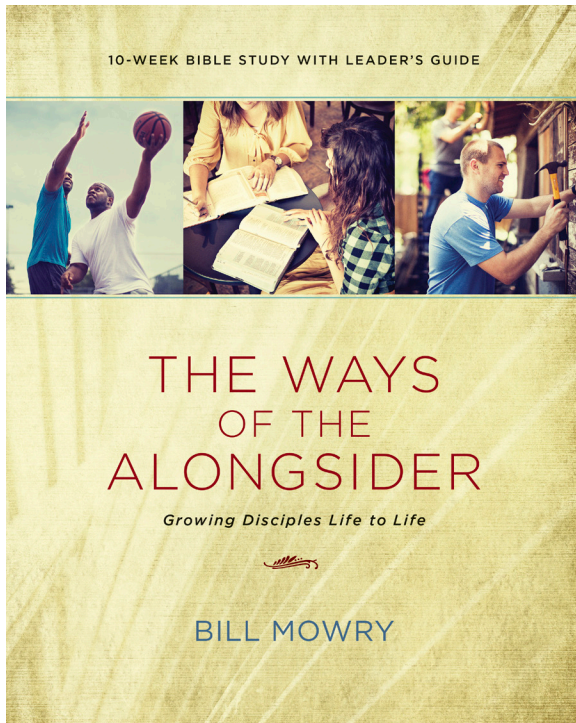
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