

# ALONGSIDER BRIEFINGS

Building discipling cultures by Bill Mowry

Volume 5

## Make Time

At the top of my question list when I initially meet with a leader to discuss discipling is, "What will you stop doing in order to begin discipling others?"

As leaders, it's difficult to drop one thing to add something else. A leader's life can be like the stage act of a man spinning a plate on a pole and then adding additional plates and poles, all spinning on the stage at the same time. When the plates stop spinning, they crash to the ground. The trick is to frantically run from pole to pole to keep the plates spinning!

Discipling can be like one more spinning plate in an already spinning schedule of people's lives. Making disciples will not happen if its treated as one more plate on a stage of plates. We do not have enough arms or energy to keep them all going. We must create margin in our lives for the ministry of discipling.

Margin is an interesting concept. At one level, it describes the edge or border around a page of paper. On another level, it describes the amount included or allowed to ensure success or safety, such as "there was no margin for error." As culture-builders, we must choose to intentionally create borders of empty space in our lives so that we have time to disciple people.

Without margin, discipling is treated as one more item checked off in a full schedule. We allow this vital ministry to become a program to implement and manage rather than a priority to live, a short-term event rather than a lifestyle. Margin is needed to turn our discipling efforts into a way of life.

How can we begin to practice margin? The following statement sounds trite but it's true. We must spend time alone with the Father to discern our priorities. *The Message Translation* gives this perspective to Psalm 46:10: "Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God . . ." Stepping out of the traffic means spending time with our Lord. The prophet Habakkuk spoke to this quietness when he wrote, ". . . let all the earth keep silence before him (Habakkuk 2:20)." I think silence is the ultimate act of submission.

It is far more biblical to learn quietness than to be driven by demands and success. Being quiet in God's presence helps us discern His priorities. Pastor Tim learned this lesson the hard way. Pressed with the demands of a growing church, he ran himself into the ground trying to meet people's needs. At the end of his rope, he began to practice

## SUGGESTED READING

*Margin*

by Richard Swenson, MD

*Tyranny of the Urgent*

by Charles Hummell

*Boundaries for Leaders*

by Henry Cloud

*How to Spend a Half-Day with God*

by Loren Sanny

two disciplines. The first was to invest a morning a month to gain direction from the Lord and to invest in prayer. This monthly investment became a lifeline. Second, he set aside time each week to review his notes, his calendar, and his priorities. This allowed him to follow through on details and slow down the number of spinning plates.

Margin can be practiced by a discipling tithe. Just as we tithe our finances, let's tithe our time to disciple others. Invest five hours weekly to disciple others over a meal or in a small group. This amounts to two breakfasts and a lunch a week (or another combination of times). If tithing is too difficult, then begin with an investment of 5% or 2.5 hours a week. A tithe is a place to get started.

The third way to create margin is delegation. We must listen to Jethro's advice to Moses, "What you are doing is not good . . . you will certainly wear yourself out, for the thing is too heavy for you (Exodus 18:17-18)." Moses needed to delegate. Building a discipling culture is too much for one person, or even a staff, to do. We can create margin and expand capacity by training and delegating to others.

John Maxwell's first irrefutable law of leadership is the "law of the lid." I've asked myself, "What could put a 'lid' on my ministry, limiting my leadership?" The lid for me was a failure to raise up other leaders and delegate appropriately. By investing in leaders, through life-to-life discipling, I expand both my margin and my ministry.

One last quality can make margin a reality in a life — a margin partner. Look for another leader who will hold you accountable to find margin to disciple others. Make sure that you have enough margin for an accountability partner!

Author and leader Jerry White wrote that "every need does not constitute a call." We live in a world of competing and urgent needs clamoring for our time. Our daily routines become reactive ones rather than proactive. We can turn this around by creating margin in our lives.

Margin is built as we seek His Priorities through quietness. We must be proactive, tithing time for discipling. Our efforts are multiplied through delegation to trained leaders. Our success begins with an accountability partner. When silence, tithing, delegation, and accountability happens, we create margin in our lives to disciple people. Margin is critical in creating discipling cultures.

You can order *The Ways of the Alongsider* at [navpress.com](http://navpress.com).

You can contact Bill Mowry at [www.alongsider.com](http://www.alongsider.com). Check out other discipling resources and alongsider training on his website.

The Navigators Church Discipling Ministry has a proven process for creating intentional discipling cultures. You can find out more by visiting [navigatorchurchministries.org](http://navigatorchurchministries.org).

