

005 Living an Available Life

TaA Podcast #5: Living an Available Life

Jack: Welcome to the Apprentice Approach Podcast Episode 5 where the ripples far exceed the splash! This is your host, Jack McQueeney. Many Christians struggle with making disciples, they feel busy, overwhelmed, and not qualified. We understand this struggle which is why we've created a Bible based framework so any believer can master the art of disciple making.

In this second segment with Skip and Buzzie Gray, we look at endurance and how it plays a huge role in living an available life. We get a glimpse of how disciple making has impacted their own personal journeys, as well as their lives as a couple.

(To Skip) I know Scripture memory is something that you're deeply committed to, and you've talked about already, why is that such an important part of a Christian's life in your mind?

Skip: Well physically, my body is the sum total of everything I have put in my mouth in the last 24 months, and my inner man, spiritually, is the sum total of all my spiritual nourishment in the last 24 months, approximately (more or less). You can starve to death in a supermarket. The best thing to do is nurture your inner person through time in the Word, because we feed on the Word, we feed on the Lord and He becomes our life.

Jack: Well I've got another question for Buzzie. So Buzzie, as you think about your role as a mom and as a wife, again as you've co-labored, as you've met with so many couples over the years, what has helped you in your marriage continue to want to meet with couples when you're tired, when you've got other stuff going on, when the last thing you want to do is make

dinner for someone who may or may not appreciate what you're about to do with them?

Buzzie: It's a commitment from the very beginning, because of what was passed on to me, both by my Godly family and by the Navigator reps wife at Wheaton. That it's absolutely essential to spend time in the Word, to hide the Word in our hearts through Scripture memory, to meditate and to sit at the feet of Jesus like Mary did and just look at Him and get to know Him. That's so important to me that it is something that is tremendously valuable to pass onto someone else, regardless of how you feel. And we have had people living in our home; you can't hide when someone lives with you, and so we've tried to pass on our lives by being real and sharing who we are and what's going on. But also with other couples as we've ministered to them as God has brought them into our lives. It's a privilege and an honor and discipleship is costly. It cost Jesus, it cost Jesus his life for us, and passing on your life to someone else is costly, but it's worth it.

Jack: I remember when an article was done on Lorne and they took a big picture of him and he made reference to, "boy you can see all the warts when they get that close." When you live with someone when someone lives with you and you begin to share your life the way Paul talked about, what happens not only to you but also to those that you open up with and are vulnerable with?

Buzzie: To me the most important thing is that we become real. It is so easy to hide, even behind ministry, to hide behind activities, but when we are real and are sharing what's really going on in our lives: the struggles, the joys, the hopes, the pain. We were with a group of dear couples that are in our ministry this last weekend and one of the things I shared with them was that I'm going through two things at the same time: one is sadness, there are some things going on with our family that make me very sad; at the same time, I choose joy and the Bible talks about the sacrifice of praise, the sacrifice of

thanksgiving, and the sacrifice of joy. If it's a sacrifice, then it costs me something, and so I choose joy, I choose thanksgiving, I choose praise in the midst of the sadness that is going on. And so that is how you can be real with other people.

Jack: How do you do that? How do you choose joy? Because I think that's a key principle we're talking about in terms of passing your life on to someone, helping them. In this day and age, feelings are such a big deal and if you don't feel like something we are quick to abandon. But when you step in and you choose joy, what happens? Not only in your own heart, but in your relationship with others as they see you?

Buzzie: It gives you confidence in the Lord because our joy is in Him. It takes our eyes off of ourselves and our circumstances and puts them on Jesus. And it just makes life worth living and is something that we pass on to others that they can experience the same thing because He is our joy and we learn to turn to the Word for our joy.

Jack: That's good.

Skip: I'd like to add a thought. That in the scripture, joy is both the fruit of the Spirit and an act of the will. An act of the will is obedience, and Jesus said if you love me you will keep my commandments. In Genesis God asked Adam and Eve where they were and they were in the trees, which were a gift of God. And today a lot of the believers are hiding from the presence of God and the gifts of God, and rather than come out from the trees and be vulnerable in their intimacy with Jesus, they prefer to stay hidden and play games. It can be a game called church or a game called Navigators or a game called something else, but it's still a game; it's not authentic, and eventually it will lead to discouragement and despair.

Jack: Skip, over the years you've met with a lot of men, you guys have met with a lot of couples. What do you do to pass on

this vision of disciple making?

Skip: What I do is ask the question, what are you going to say to God the night before you die? And it's based on John 17:4, Jesus said to the Father, "I glorified you on the earth, I finished the work you gave me to do" and over 40 times in John 17 Jesus refers to the disciples. The next day, the next afternoon in John 19, he cried out, "it is finished." So Jesus had two great works: John 19 was redemption, John 17 was leaving behind a group of men and women who would live to tell us about it. It would have been a cosmic tragedy for Jesus to come into the world incarnate, die on the cross, return to glory, not having left behind people who would tell us about it. We would live and die in our sin and be lost. So he had two great works: redemption in John 19 and the twelve in John 17.

Jack: And so, as you've passed that on, is that naturally picked up? Is that something that as you model it, men have naturally picked that up and reproduced that?

Skip: Some have and many haven't. But life being what it is, you invest your life and the Navigators used to have a FAT man: Faithful Available Teachable. I have modified it slightly to Faithful Available Interdependent (which means a team player), Teachable, and Holy ("let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and Spirit" in 2 Corinthians 7:1), so I have the FAITH man, rather than the FAT man. And some people respond to that, and those that do you spend more time with.

Jack: Other thoughts on your experience with discipleship?

Skip: Well the truth is all of us are influencing our family and friends everyday, knowingly and unknowingly. So in one sense, everybody is discipling somebody in some form or other. The question is, is it Biblical? Is it Scriptural? Is it focused on deepening their relationship with Jesus? And that's

the way we evaluate what we're doing with our time. The life I have is not mine, the life I have belongs to Jesus. And the Bible says, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind; so my soul, my breath, are a gift from the Lord on a day by day moment by moment basis, so I'm investing what I have in Him and in a relationship with others. The opposite of love is not hate, the opposite of love is indifference, and we are looking for people who are not indifferent, but who are concerned and want to walk in love.

Jack: As you two have lived life and have surrendered different parts of your life to Christ over the years, talk to us about the importance of being all in on this. You know there are some that will hold back; it might be in finances, it might be in their time, it might be in their vulnerability with someone else, there are different things for different ones. But, how did you guys work through that as a couple?

Buzzie: In the beginning of our being discipled by someone else, it was a conviction on our part that it's the only way to go. That if we were going to fulfill the Great Commission, it would be passing on our lives to other people, beginning with individuals. It never occurred to us that there was any other way to live the Christian life, any other way to minister when we committed ourselves to being full time in the ministry.

I want to go back just a little bit, Jack, you asked about the early days. My sister, when I graduated from high school, helped me to learn how to have a quiet time and to start memorizing Scripture and she introduced me to the wife of a Navigator Rep at Wheaton that Skip has just talked about. And for four years I walked from campus to her home once a week, and we would go over my Bible Study briefly, over my new verses that I was learning and talk about the meaning of them and how they applied to my life, as well as quoting them correctly. And then she challenged me to start passing this on to other students at Wheaton, so by the time I had graduated I

was meeting with eight different young women individually to do the same thing that she was doing with me. Then later I lived with Lyla Trotman in their home and one of the things Lyla used to say to us was, "Don't wear your feelings on your sleeve." And so there was just an idea of discipline that when you walk with God, you keep your eyes on Him and you don't let your feelings rule your life. That was a good lesson for me.

Jack: Yeah because you don't want to deny the fact that you have feelings, but it's another thing to wear them on your sleeve.

Buzzie: Mhm, those are just some thoughts from the early days.

Jack: Yeah. Skip any thoughts from you on those early days; what it was like to be around Dawson and those guys?

Skip: Well the Navigators in the early years, as are many today, were totally committed, focused, high energy, and "I surrender all" was the motto. There was a loyalty to the Lord, to the Word, and to one another that was Biblical and life changing. And we're excited, Buzzie and I, because we see the same thing happening on campuses, and bases, in churches, and in cities today in a wonderful way.

Jack: Anything else you would like to share, any stories, any illustrations, around this area of discipleship?

Skip: Well we have been gratified, personally, by the feedback we get, over the last fifty years of people coming up to us and saying, "you said this to me at such and such a time and it changed my life" and we say, "to God be the glory." We're just being channels, we're being vessels, but we're ambassadors for Christ, not tourists for Christ. We can photograph people in Heaven all we want; down here it's important to share Jesus' love for them.

Jack: Skip and Buzzie, one of the questions I know you guys get often, but I wanted to step into for our listening

audience as well, you guys have walked with Christ for a lot of years. Tell us what it is to finish well, what does it take to really finish well?

Skip: To finish well requires, you can't live right if you believe wrong. The only way to live right is to believe right and it has to do with God's sovereignty; He is in control and He loves us. As long as we believe that He loves us and He is in control, we will finish well. Buzzie may want to comment on that.

Buzzie: There is no limit to the importance of being in the Word of God everyday and so to me that helps me to keep my eyes on the Lord, that feeds my inner life. And then a commitment to prayer, first of all in worship, in communion with the Lord; and then investing in the lives of many people, the ones we are investing in and I pray a lot for missionaries and others, just keeping our focus on the Lord Himself and on what He has called us to do.

I'm gonna add one story, Skip and I were looking at some notes that I had kept that our daughter had written to us over the years; we have traveled a lot and most of them were notes that were written to us while we were gone, or when we would come home. And this one little note from our daughter, I don't know how old she was, but she said, "Daddy I'm praying for you, I'm praying that you will read your Bible and that you will memorize your verses and I might even check you on them when you get home."

Jack: That's special! That's great! Yeah, it's fun to see our kids catch a little bit of what we do and how we go about it. That's fun.

Well thank you so much for your time today and for your commitment to continue to press on through the throes of life.

Skip: We will continue until the Lord blows the whistle and we get out of the pool.

Jack: We've learned that discipleship is costly. Jesus paid his life for it; what a powerful statement Skip has made. We can learn a lot from Skip and Buzzie's example of making the Bible a focal point in our lives, choosing joy in every circumstance, and aspiring to be men and women who are Faithful, Available, take Initiative, are Teachable, and have a Heart for God and a Heart for people.

In our next episode we sit down with Dr. Max Barnett, a professor, disciplemaker, and authority when it comes to campus ministry and reaching 20-somethings. He shares some amazing lessons with us from intentionally focusing on disciplmaking with college students from the last 50 years.

We hope you've enjoyed this episode and feel encouraged and equipped! For more resources, our blog, and to sign up for weekly emails, visit our website: TheApprenticeApproach.org, and if you haven't subscribed to The Apprentice Approach Podcast on iTunes, do it today!

Until next time, this is your host, Jack McQueeney, believing God for generations of men and women like you!

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