

DISCIPLE MAKING

A PODCAST WITH DR. JOHN TOLSON

Episode 7: Who Impacted Your Life?

I want to ask you three questions:

1. Who impacted your life? Why in the world are you a follower of Jesus Christ?
2. What did that person or those persons do for you that made a difference in your journey of faith? How did they invest in your life? What did they say? What did they do?
3. Why did they do it? What motivated them to help you come to Christ and to begin to develop and grow in your relationship with Him?

The reason for these questions is this: Think about what was done for you and the impactful ways in which that led to the strengthening of your faith and your relationship with Jesus, helping you grow and mature as a Christian. That is pretty much what you are going to do in discipling others and helping them grow in their faith.

As I think about the people who have impacted my life, there are about fifteen people that come to mind, and I wish I had the time to talk about all of them in depth because each one had a significant impact on my life and growth as a Christian man.

I think of my mom. I think of my sweet grandmother who lived back in the hills in Kentucky. I think about my crazy uncle who taught me how to throw a baseball and shoot a basketball. He had no relationship with Jesus at that time in his life, but he helped me figure out a way to get to college on athletic scholarship. No one in my family background had ever been to college.

I think of a young man named Sharry, one of my best buddies in high school, who got me in a position where I could hear the gospel our sophomore year and that's where I gave my life to Christ. Ernie, the man who spoke at the retreat where I gave my life to Christ. A guy named Joe who helped me for the first couple of years to develop my faith. A guy named Chuck in California, who helped me understand the critical nature of disciple-making. Russ, a guy in Washington, DC.

Ruth Anne, my sweet first wife. The thirty years we had together before she went to be with the Lord impacted my life in so many ways. And then my wonderful, beautiful wife now, Punky, who has deeply, deeply modeled before me a life in Christ that has been unparalleled the last fifteen years of my life. A man named Dwayne. A man named Jim Smith who taught me years ago how to be confident in Christ, confident in myself and how to help other people, especially in the area of counseling.

And finally a man named Howard Hendricks, who was a powerful man over the years and taught at a seminary here in Dallas for over forty years. Let me tell you a quick story about Howard. He said when he was a young man, he lived in a dysfunctional family. They finally shipped him off to live with his grandparents and in the little town where they lived, a man named Walt brought together thirteen young men and they would eat hotdogs and play marbles and he'd do a little Bible study with them. Howard said over the years this guy developed their lives and their faith in Jesus Christ and after they all grew up and went off to school, eleven out of those thirteen young boys were in full-time ministry, giving their lives to Christ to make a difference somewhere around the world. Howard Hendricks alone impacted untold thousands of people for Christ. But here's the kicker: Walt, the guy who invested in their lives, never finished past the sixth grade.

There are only two things the Bible says God's going to take from this planet when it's all over. The first thing he's going to take is His Truth - Truth as it resides in the scripture and in the Living Word, Jesus Christ. They are eternal. Isaiah 40:8 says "The grass withers, the flowers fade but the Word of our God stands forever. It is eternal." The second thing he's going to take are people. Scripture tells us in Matthew 25:46 "And they will go away into eternal punishment [that's those who weren't followers of Christ], but the righteous [those who have a relationship with Christ] will go into eternal life."

So everyone is going to live forever either with God or without him. If those two thoughts are true, and I believe they are, then what's the most important thing I could ever do with my life? I believe it is to know the Truth, to know Christ, to know the Scripture, and by His grace to live it and get other people to that Truth.

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