

Strategic Focus On The Next Generation with Doug Holliday Season 2 | Episode 18

Opening

Josh Yates: Welcome friends to the Sonlife everyday disciple makers podcast and across the table from me live in studio is our co-host Wayne wrzesinski Wayne. Great to have you in the studio today. It is great

Wayne: to be. And I love that we say with me in the studio, whether I'm actually with you in person, exactly.

Or we're on our recording software and I'm 63 miles or so away,

Josh Yates: But you're always with me. Yeah. Well we're thinking this just as we get started here maybe you're, you're preparing for either a youth road trip because, and youth ministry, it seems like there's always a chance you're going to be in a van with your students.

You're driving to camp or you're going on a missions trip or our family, you know, a family road trip. You just came back from a family, a road trip. My wife and I, we spent I did a road trip three weeks, 6,500 miles. And so I was just thinking, what are some of the best tips and tricks maybe you've used for road trips with students or with your own family?

Wayne: I think one that I really like is, is breaking your. Into shorter chunks. We took a group of students down to Dinuba, California. It's probably a 900 mile trip. We stopped for the night, but when we left Hillsborough, I was like, Hey guys, we're going to eat lunch in and out in Grants Pass, go to the bathroom.

Now I don't want to stop until we get to grants pass. And we didn't. We had seven students in three adults and 10 of us made it about four hours not having to stop for the bathroom because we knew like if. 45 minutes away from Grants Pass. Like, well, I could, I could probably make it that far, but if

you don't have a four-hour destination, you're like, well, I have to go to the bathroom now.

So let's stop now. So having, having those chunks is really helped both with the family or with the youth.

Sure,

Josh Yates: sure. Yeah. Knowing where were you going to stop? One of the things we did with our family, and I've done this with students as well is you have like a taste test for your stops. So if you have a number of days, you're driving, you say, Hey, we're going to do that.

We're going to find the best burger. We're going to find the best taco. And so the. Like, you know, criteria, what makes the best burger and maybe you criteria in terms of, Hey, it's the, the ambiance of the restaurant or the friendliness of the staff or how it makes you feel 45 minutes later after you eat it how much it costs.

And so we did that with our, with our family road trip is we did the best burger across the nation. And so whenever we knew we were going to stopping, we just would Google and try to find burger places and go on. Little town and trying to find the best burger. And so it just kinda makes it a little more adventurous when you're stopping someplace and not just trying to find the quickest, fast food or

Wayne: that's great.

I know on this last trip, I can have a really, really important tip is like if you're stopping for the night anywhere is to book the hotel. For the night that you're going to be in the town. So, but we got to hotel. It was like 11:00 PM. When I went to check in and gave them the first three letters of my last name.

Cause that's usually all they need to find me and she couldn't find anything. And then she kept looking and she was like, Hey, you have a ratio reservation for next Friday. Like, I, I don't need that. Can, can I have her room tonight? And she found a room were able to stay there and it was lovely. She was very kind about my mistake, but yeah.

Booking and room for the town that you're in on the night. You're going to be there. That's

Josh Yates: a great tip pro tip. That's a pro tip. That's funny. I heard once that at a youth specialties conference that a missionary trip youth pastor was over to Europe and they arrived a week early. So all of a sudden realized that they had scheduled the wrong week of mission strip.

That would, that would be unfortunate. So yeah, knowing the location and the right day, it's probably a good thing matters.

I think the last pro tip I was thinking. Was use of wifi hotspots. And so obviously you want to stream your, you know, your TV shows or movies or having access to internet. How do you do that?

And so actually the public library, at least where we live has hotspots that you can rent for two weeks. And you can get a wifi hotspot for your family or the van or whatever you need. And for you not, you can have people who can kind of stream or connect. If you want to choose to do that, your devices.

I know that's maybe opened up other doors conversations, but at least with our kids, it was a great opportunity for the. Kinda catch up with some friends, do some FaceTime with family, as well as have some, a chance to have some, you know, in-car entertainment. Right?

Wayne: Yeah. One thing I always try and download all the podcasts that I'm going to need for the length of the trip.

We do spend a good amount of time with nobody having earbuds in so we can communicate our or play license plate, game, or slug bugs. So we all get bruises. And we all take time with, with our devices and to, to pop in the AirPods and listen to a podcast or six on the driver's always, always good to pass the time.

Josh Yates: Yeah. And then redeeming the commute having some good audio books, some conversations And definitely something to consider. So with, with that, we're going to transition now to a different interview. This one is someone who close and dear to our heart, our executive director, Doug Holliday. Here's our conversation with Doug

Conversation with Doug

Josh Yates: Welcome friends. We're spanning across the states from Portland, Oregon to Florida. So Doug, oh, it's always a great to have you with us.

Doug Holliday: It is always great to be with you. It's been too long since I've been to the beautiful Pacific Northwest and all the amazing food there in Portland. The F the food trucks. I miss it, man. I miss it

Josh Yates: Yeah, I think today you probably would not have missed it because this morning I had, I know this is gonna be tough. I had to scrape the ice off my windshield. And when's the last time Doug you've had to scrape your windshield, getting for an appointment in the morning. Has it been so cold that you've had to,

Doug Holliday: in Florida. Never.

Josh Yates: That's what I'm saying. I think the sorting have been a cold morning for you. But I am so encouraged today. Cause we're heating things up, literally just talking about our heart, our passion, our ministry is Sonlife influence over the year. And recently our staff got together it's been 18 months or so since we've had the chance to be together, face to face.

And and Wayne even shared that a few episodes back the first time meeting some of our Sonlife staff. And but that was a key, key meeting for us because you cast a vision for this strategic shift and Sonlife into 2022. And so Doug, would you just share with us a little bit more about that strategic shift and what you're sensing.

Doug Holliday: Yeah, we had a. At our, at our staff retreat kind of led off the time by sharing with our team some of the strategic conversations that we, Josh has an exact team that we had been having together wrestling through, praying through and the, the determination that we had made that Sonlife I was going to be returning to its historic roots. That we would be once again, placing a primary focus on youth ministry.

Maybe not an exclusive focus, but a primary focus on equipping for disciple-making student ministry. And, you know, that's, that's not a decision that we made lightly or quickly, wrestling through that for quite a period of time. But as, as we wrestled through that, you know, I was reflecting on the conversation that I had with Dan Spader, our founder.

Just about nine years ago now, when Dan and I sat down together here in a restaurant in Orlando, a place called Bahama Breeze, and I was going to be speaking at a Sonlife upcoming sEMP event, a training equipping thing for high school students in a evangelism and disciple-making that following summer.

And that January, as we talked about that the, the conversation turned toward the end, and Dan said, well, there was another reason why I wanted to get together with you, Doug. I wanted to ask you to prayerfully consider stepping into the role of becoming Sonlife executive director. And as Dan and I began to unpack that one of my questions to him was, well,

Josh Yates: Hmm.

Doug Holliday: why me, why why now?

And at that point, one of the, one of the key things that Dan said. You know, Doug, you are still involved in youth ministry. Some, some speaking opportunities, national things that you are a part of. And we really need someone in leadership who can help reconnect Sonlife to its historic roots of youth ministry.

And that that resonated with my heart because over the previous two years before that conversation my heart had been stirring that, Sonlife through the years it had lost some of its influence in that realm. And. And the key part that Sonlife had made and youth ministry through the years, I felt like it was missing in youth ministry.

And I remember at our, our very first leadership team meeting that we had in Illinois sitting down around a table and, and, and Dan asked the question, well, what's, what's the Beehag, you know, the big, hairy, audacious goal. What's the vision.

Josh Yates: W w why is it always Harry? I don't know why. Please

Doug Holliday: I've heard, I've heard other, other people spiritualize it and they call it the big holy audacious goal.

Josh Yates: I like that

Doug Holliday: so, but you know, the, the very first thing that came to my mind is I just said, you know, I want to see Sonlife become a part of transforming the culture of youth ministry in North America, restoring it to the disciple-making heart of Jesus.

And as, as we stepped into that back in 2013 and began to, to, to move in that direction of course we have lots of churches and senior pastors who through the years have taken a hold of Sonlife training. Lots of, lots of. Former youth pastors who had implemented Sonlife disciple-making training, who were now church planters or senior pastors.

And so our audience was much wider than that narrow focus on youth ministry. And I think as we tried to become all things disciple-making to the church we lost once again, some of our effectiveness and the impact that we needed to have in terms of truly equipping youth ministry for disciple-making according to the Son's life.

And uh, so as, as we move into 2022, our strategic shift we're making is that our primary focus is going to be on equipping youth ministry and disciple-making according to the Son's life.

Josh Yates: Hmm. I love that. I remember that moment in 2013, distinctively actually, as you shared that, that Beehag. And I would say that was a ho you know, holy audacious moment, when you know, you're saying, this is what we want to do. We want to, to restore, you know, be part of transforming the culture of youth ministry in north America restoring to the salt, making heart of Jesus.

And I remember that and and there was, that was kind of a host historic moment there at old Sonlife campus. We were there kind of taking a tour. And you mentioned something here that reconnecting it back to its historic roots. Could you maybe unpack that a little bit more, some of the.

Historic nature of Sonlife emphasis in youth ministry.

Doug Holliday: Yeah, well, well Sonlife founder Dan Spader. Author a four chair discipling, other other books over the past number of years, he was a student at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and a part-time youth pastor. And one day in one of his classes there at Moody, his professor had made this.

Comment in passing that he believed it was very likely that many of Jesus' initial disciples were teenage. Now this so gripped Dan's heart and his imagination, and had a conversation with that professor afterward. And he

decided right then and there we'll we'll have Jesus initial disciples were teenagers, essentially.

Jesus was a youth pastor leading a youth ministry. I just need to study Jesus and look at what Jesus did with his youth ministry and do that with my youth ministry and Dan went and, and got a copy of the harmony of the gospels, which by the way, his professor was one of the, the, the coauthors of that Thomas and Gundry harmony of the gospels classic resource.

And Dan purchased that and just began intently to dive into the life of Christ. Looking at it, chronologically, studying Jesus intently, seeing what Jesus did and in year one of his ministry, year two of his ministry, year three of his ministry. And then just kind of seeing the progression of. And beginning to implement that disciple-making process that Jesus had modeled for us.

And as a young part-time youth, pastor Dan began to see incredible disciple-making fruit so much so that other, other youth ministries in the Chicago land area began to take notice of what was happening in this, in this church. And we're asking Dan, if they could sit down and talk with him and, and Dan from those conversations formulated his very first strategy seminar. I actually have in our Sonlife archives, those initial notes that Dan put together that he was going to use to, to train these other youth pastors in what he had been doing.

And within, within a few years Sonlife as an organization was birthed. Now, it just so happened that Dan decided to name his youth ministry Sonlife because he was going to pattern everything that he did after the Son's life. And it just made sense to call this new training equipping ministry Sonlife as well.

And actually Sonlife started, as the as the youth ministry training division of Moody Ministries in Chicago and for its first decade, that's where it was training and equipping youth pastors initially geographically in that area. But

then of course it's spread out and spread across the U S and then north America up into Canada, a greater influence.

And, and by the time I had graduated from, from Bible college, a decade after Sonlife had been birthed I was, I was introduced to it and, and you know, my life in ministry

Josh Yates: Hmm.

Doug Holliday: transformed by, by that disciple-making training. And so you know, those roots of Sonlife Youth ministry and looking at the life and the model of Jesus and that many of his initial disciples were likely.

Teenagers and people will ask, well, how do you, how do you know that that's not what they look like in the picture. Right. You know, in any of the, any of the, the artists renderings of the disciples, they look like they're contemporaries of Jesus, 30 somethings with these full beards, like, like yours, Josh and, and you know, these virulent, young men and, but You know, one of, one of the interesting notes and there there's, there's several things that we could point to, but, but one there's there's this encounter where Jesus and the disciples returned to Capernaum and they are pressed by the, by the religious leaders why they're not paying the temple tax and Jesus sends.

Peter down to the water's edge, Peter's a fisherman. He says, cast your line in he didn't say, get in a boat and go out and drop a net cast, you know, a single line and catch a fish, open its mouth. And you'll find a coin that will pay the tax. Jesus said for you and for. Not for, not for all 12 of the apostles, just for Jesus and for Peter.

And when you cross reference the temple tax was something that was to be paid by those that were 20 years of age or older.

Josh Yates: Hmm.

Doug Holliday: So it makes you say. Could it really be that Jesus had 11 teenagers at this point and one, one adult sponsor, Peter he's the only one that we know at that point who was married one really rotten kid Judas.

Right. But Jesus had. This ragtag bunch of teenagers that he was leading and launching a movement with. And so what, what Sonlife has seen historically is. You know, beginning with youth ministry, that's, that's been a way that the church has been transformed. A lot of those youth pastors, like I said, who, who went on and stepped out of youth ministry into you know, adult ministry roles, you know, discipleship pastor role or senior pastor or church planter or whatever.

And with that they wanted to bring Sonlife training with them. And so Sonlife began to expand beyond youth ministry to focus on the whole church and offer training for the whole. But what we've seen in that process, particularly over the last number of years, as, as we try and cast that net wide strategically with the leadership horsepower that we have, if we go wide like that, it's kind of like a laser beam focus.

If you take the laser beam and you spread it too wide, it, it dilutes its. And if we can tighten the scope on that laser beam focus back to youth ministry, we can have a profound impact in student ministry. And when we do then student ministry can be a gateway to impact the whole.

Josh Yates: Hmm. absolutely. I love that. And even you could go back to sort of reminded a couple of things here. One actually that Sonlife youth ministry just had a reunion back at that original church, Judson Baptist some gathered back in there. So you think of Dan starting at 43 plus years ago that his, his After him was a guy named Rob Yonan and Rob is still faithful doing ministry.

of initial disciples and that youth ministry was a guy named Edwards. And Mark then came on the Sonlife staff over the years and then launched

Sonlife Latin America. And then Mark's son Josh Edwards on our Sonlife team now serving with us. And Josh is teaching adjunct youth ministry.

At moody Bible. So It's

Doug Holliday: It's amazing how it comes full circle. And you know, Josh, when you look at, at our Sonlife team you can trace the roots of that. Disciple-making impact on youth ministry with almost every single one of the staff on our team. I know for, for you personally, your, your youth pastor was, was trained in Sonlife implemented that even brought you to a Sonlife conference when you were a high school student and you, you.

You met Dan in the elevator at that event as a high school student, right? We got another one of our team members, Jay, he, his, his youth pastor trained in Sonlife deeply impacting him. And he had gone on a mission trips to Latin America with his, his youth ministry when he was in high school.

And as a result of that coming on our team and leading our Fusion trips, taking youth ministries back into Latin America to help build disciple-making youth ministries. For me personally, you know, as a high school student, You know that I didn't know it at the time, but my youth pastor had been equipped and was implementing Sonlife disciple-making training and is a senior in high school.

I was leading the charge among my peers in the youth ministry with us, wanting to wanting to share the gospel and reach people and grabbing people and throwing them in the car with me and heading to the mall to, to share Christ or you know, we did this. This beach trip every year at the end of the school year.

And you know, basically just a, a fun youth group time. And the, the spiritual extent of it was sitting on the beach in the morning and in a circle with someone playing the guitar and singing kumbaya or whatever shows you

how old I am. But you know, I said to, I said to my buddy we're, we're not just gonna go to the beach to have fun.

We're going to share Jesus with people. And as a result of doing that at the end of my junior year The senior year trip, wasn't just a beach trip. It was a beach evangelism trip. And that youth pastor Sonlife trained asked myself and my buddy Mike, if we would equip the entire youth group in how to share their faith and organize all of the evangelism for that beach trip.

And you know, Mike ended up becoming a Sonlife trained, equipped youth pastor trainer, and now helps to, to, to lead the, the, the global expansion of Sonlife and what's happening around the globe. So it's just incredible to trace those youth ministry roots. When, when you impact the life of a student and they become passionate about Christ and becoming a disciple who makes disciples they,

Josh Yates: Hm.

Doug Holliday: they will carry that passion with them for a lifetime.

Josh Yates: I know that. Cause I've been doing youth ministry all these years. You know, that because you love ministry, but let's just pause for a moment and unpack. What is it about youth ministry that makes us so strategic in fulfilling the great commission? know, what would you say to that, to somebody who's trying to just maybe hearing it for the first time, or maybe a youth pastor who is like, man, this is why I'm stepping to youth ministry.

You know, what are some things that are fueling that for you?

Doug Holliday: Yeah. You know, years ago I had heard, heard this statistic and I I don't think. Probably changed in the years since, but at that time almost 8 billion people on the planet. And the statistic was that over 50% of the almost 8 billion people on the planet are under 25 years of age. So think about that.

If we are not strategically focusing on the next generation we are missing a significant opportunity to fulfill the great commission in our lifetime. And then you take it even a step beyond that and understand that 90% of those who are going to put their faith in Christ are going to make that decision before they finish college.

By the age of 21, 90%, 85% who are going to trust Christ. They're going to make that decision before they graduate high school and 80% are going to make that decision to trust Christ by the time they leave middle school. So if we are not focusing on our middle school, high school, college students on equipping them to reach their peers, equipping them to become disciples who make disciples, who make disciples, because we know the most effective person to reach a student.

Is one of their peers, another student, if we're not, we're not having disciple-making youth ministries, then the likelihood of people trusting Christ once they get beyond those youth ministry, years, significantly decreases. It doesn't mean that it's impossible and we serve the God of the impossible.

But. Just from the simple view of the, the numbers, right. If we're not focusing on the next generation, we are missing our greatest opportunity to impact students for the cause of Christ. And you know, the single greatest mission field that we have in our country is. Inside of our middle schools, high schools and college campuses and equipping our students to be missionaries in their schools.

You know, you look at all of the challenges that, that. That students are facing and the challenges are great. The cultural pressures that they are facing, how few of, of, of those 25 and under actually have a a biblical worldview or a working knowledge of the Bible. The need for discipling to take place is.

And so,

Josh Yates: Hmm.

Doug Holliday: it was, it was early on as a youth pastor. I was only probably three years in, at the very first church that I served at Christ Community Church and in St. Charles, Illinois. And that's actually where I had connected with Dan Spader. He and his family moved out to the area and started attending the church, became a mentor of mine at that time.

But I had had been invited to preach one Sunday morning and it was a kind of a back to school message. And I dug through my, my files and I, I found the, the message, the notes, and just re reading that this morning before our time here on the podcast and reflecting and the challenges that students faced that.

There are, they're only more complex now. They were significant. Then they're still significant now, but they're only more complex and there's so much confusion. But here's, here's one thing that we know is that students are cause oriented. I was one of the points that I made 30 years ago. And I shared that message to, to our church.

Students are cause oriented and what better cause to, to get their hearts ignited by than the cause of Christ than, than reaching their generation than sharing Jesus with their friends. And you know, you look at. At students and how they can, they can be you know, they're big on being influencers, right?

We, we hear that word a lot being an influencer, but you think of the, the, the typical realm where that is used and some of the, the social media influencers and, essentially, it's a, it's a marketing ploy right there. They're an influencer. They have all these, these followers and they're, they're wearing a certain style or brand of clothes that, that they're trying to sell and they're getting paid to wear those clothes, or they have strategic, you know, placement of certain products in their video and trying to influence people with those things.

You know, and. The, the influence is, is about marketing, but there are students who, if their hearts would be captured and a flame would be, would be lit in their heart, they would use their influence, not for market, but for mission. And I think that's what I am believing. That's what I have seen among so many students.

At these evangelism disciple-making equipping events that, that were a part of Josh where, where a student's faith is, is lit a flame for Christ. And they,

Josh Yates: Hm.

Doug Holliday: they leave deeply impacted with a, a profound commitment to live for Jesus and to share Jesus with.

Josh Yates: Hm. Wow. I love that. Doug, just again, being cause oriented the greatest cause of the great commission we can encourage fan that flame, stoke that and see your transformation take place. And so let's take it down maybe to the ground level. Like what does this really mean for Sonlife if the historic roots we're talking about this passion is so strategic for, for younger younger students and younger leaders.

So what does it mean for us? When you envision being part of really transform the culture of youth ministry in north America, restoring it to the disciple making heart of Jesus. Like

Doug Holliday: Yeah, well, you know, let me say this about why I also see this as so strategic is. What we have found, and, and Josh, you would know this to be true from the interactions that you've had with church leaders, more, more senior leadership, you know, senior pastor executive pastor thinking the whole church is when we bring our disciple-making training in to the whole church.

There can, there can be initial excitement about that, but then as they begin to process how they're going to implement this and all of the complex systems that that involves, and, and how's this gonna happen across all of

our ministries and all of, all of our leaders and currently. Youth ministry is doing this children's ministries doing this.

We've got men's ministry, women's ministry, college ministry. We've got small groups. We, we we're dealing with staff, we're dealing with elders, we're dealing with deacons. You know, all the budgets, all the complexities of this. And if there is not initial and speedy traction, it can be very easy for senior leadership in a church to throw in the towel and to say,

Josh Yates: Hmm.

Doug Holliday: you know, it sounds great, but I don't know that this really works. And they revert back to the way they've always done things. You know, get back into those well-worn grooves and, and, and, and rots, but what happens? Yeah. We impact a youth ministry, which on that scale the systems are much less complex and the ability to implement on that level and to see traction and to see disciple-making fruit.

And it might take two years or three years or four years to really, really see things moving and gaining traction and seeing disciples made and multiple. But, but when that fruit is there, then that youth ministry within a church becomes proof positive that this is possible. And what we have seen historically time and time again, is that when we see a disciple-making student ministry in a church that is bearing fruit, And thriving that there is a great desire on the part of the leaders in that church to see what's happening in the youth ministry happen for the whole church.

And now they have proof that it is possible because they see it right in their own midst, and there's a deeper commitment. And so we find that the youth ministry then becomes a gateway and we have youth pastors inviting us in to bring this disciple-making training to their whole church. And, you know, we've just found historically, as we really look at it, that that's where we see the greatest impact on the church is when.

Josh Yates: Hm.

Doug Holliday: You see the fruit first among that youth ministry. And not only that, but as you're impacting those young leaders, they're going to grow up in that system and become the leaders of that church. And so you're laying the foundation for disciple-making there. And so how do we, how do we, you know, in that, you know, two, three year period of time, take a youth ministry that.

Isn't disciple-making focused based on the ministry and the model of Jesus. Maybe they're more focused on, on just the, the Sunday, Wednesday routine of programs and measuring their effectiveness by how many kids show up and you know, not really seeing disciple-making fruit. How do you take a ministry from there?

To the place where it's really thriving and students are impacting their, their peers, reaching their friends for Christ and, and a ministry is growing because of that. Not because of the personality of the youth pastor, but because of the purposeful, intentional equipping and the passion of students to live out the mission of Jesus.

And so. In, in this next season, our team, what we want to do is come alongside and intentionally invest to go deeper with a few you know, we we primarily offer training. Coaching and mentoring. We train for understanding, understanding these principles of disciple-making from the life of Christ.

We coach for implementation. Okay. These principles that you've gotten in the training, what does this look like in your ministry? But then we mentor, we come in close in relationship, we walk and we journey with you to help you actually multiply this in your ministry.

Josh Yates: Yeah,

Doug Holliday: we're, we're looking in this next season for everyone on our team to be identifying, you know, if you look at it this way from, from Jesus' ministry, we always like to go back to Jesus.

Right. And so, you know, he had the, the seventy. And you know, kind of this wider group that he was training, he had the 12 who he was journeying with and, and they were, they were getting additional coaching, but then he had the three who he was pouring into and pulling aside and raising them up, you know?

Peter and John to the primary leaders in the early church. And so, you know, who's our 70, who's our 12, who's our three. And so for everyone on our team to be identifying those, say three to five youth pastors, youth ministries that they are going to step in and journey intentionally get on that youth ministries, turf, interact with them.

What's going on on the ground and help them to begin to implement and to move from wherever they're at in that process to the next step. And you know, over over a, to a three-year period, we are confident, with that intentional investment in a few that we will see ministries raised up who can multiply disciple-making and truly transform the culture of youth ministry in north America, restoring it to the disciple-making heart of Jesus.

Just like what, what, what Sonlife saw back 40 years ago where Dan saw this fruit and all these other youth ministries around him were calling on him and saying, what can, can I grab coffee? Can I sit down with you? What are you doing? I mean, they're your students. This is different. If we invest all across north America in ministries, who can model that.

And we go deeper with the few who can model it like that. We are confident that they will multiply to other ministries around them within their sphere of influence.

Josh Yates: Yeah. Wow. That's that's encouraging. It's exciting. And when I hear, You know, obviously the beauty of the simplicity of that, that it is a relational movement and it's not coming in with curriculum. It's not coming in with an app it's not coming in with those are tools. Those are good things. I'm not saying those things can't be used.

I mean, we do have resources and tools and trainings. But the disciple-making is as a person. Jesus. And so what you're saying there is yeah, it's so true and it's, it's, it's encouraging to hear that impact. And, and so for us on this podcast, those were our listeners. As we move forward, one of the things we wanted to put up a little more of a concentrated effort towards working with.

The disciple making youth ministry, some practitioners, people who are in the trenches, people who are rustling with some of these, these concepts of what does a disciple-making look like and, and in today's world. And so for the next season here in our podcasts, going into 2022, we will be interviewing, having conversations with ministry leaders who are trying to.

The son's life. And so, Doug, I appreciate your time today. Any other final words of encouragement? Anything else that's on your heart that we didn't cover in this.

Doug Holliday: You know, I would just say that you know, Josh to our listeners my life is a life that was changed dramatically by a disciple-making youth ministry. You know, one of, one of the volunteer youth leaders in, in our ministry when I was a sophomore in high school, pulled me aside and said, Hey doc, I'd like to disciple you.

And, and he and I met one-on-one every week for the next two years. And

Josh Yates: Hm.

Doug Holliday: my life has changed because of the investment that he made. And I know it's, I know it's. It's not easy. It's not always glamorous. And

there's lots of challenges, lots of sticking points that you as ministry leaders face. But I just want you to know that it's worth it, that your commitment to the cause of Christ, your commitment to being an everyday disciple maker will bear eternal.

And it's worth it.

Josh Yates: Wow. That's thought. I think we'll, we'll wrap up with that. I think that's, that's important for us to remember. Worth it in the middle of the changes, the stress all the things we've had to work through with the pressures of COVID and ministry and that it is worth it. So thank you, Doug. And thank you guys for tuning in and we'll catch you. And on the next podcast,

Closing

Wayne: Well, I have to say that was not my favorite conversation, and that's only because I've had conversations with Doug where we each had an ice cream cone in our hand, and those are always great conversations, but I really did enjoy getting to hear from Doug getting to hear his heart and his passion for the ministry.

And one thing he said, he said that we should be about helping students be captured by the mission of Jesus. In youth ministry, it's sometimes easy to worry about the programming. Like what will, what will make a teenager wants to spend their time here? So we go through all that, but just to really focus on what Jesus did and sharing our heart and helping students know, learn about and love who Jesus is.

Right?

Josh Yates: Yeah. Uh, I love kind of renewed focus to come back to this historic roots of Sonlife and how it started with really training. Younger leaders, how to make disciples like Jesus. And that impacted me. My, my

Sonlife story was, was in 1992. One of my youth leaders said, Hey, Josh what are you doing on Thursday?

You joining me for this, this Sonlife training conference. And all I heard is I'm skipping school on Thursday, right. And spent the day. And it was Dan Spader walking through really Jesus equipped kingdom workers. And I thought that there was only two types of people, unbelievers and believers.

All of a sudden I was opened up to a whole new reality of what it means, actually train disciple makers. And so getting back to our historic roots for me is really exciting and thrilling and looking at the five phases, looking at the chronology of Jesus. And so maybe that's new terms for you, like.

Well, what's the five phases and while are talking about this and why does it matter? Well, Sonlife committed to looking at the life of Christ from a chronological approach. What did Jesus do the first year, second year, third year. And we're going to those phases or stages of developing his disciples. And so Sonlife uses that in our strategy training.

So if you want to join a cohort, But in the weeks and months to come, you know, Wayne, I think it'd be great for us to have some more conversations about what are those five phases and what's the implications for us in ministry. So if you liked this podcast, please share it. Feel free to shoot us an email at [podcast at Sonlife dot com](mailto:podcast@sonlife.com).

We'd love to hear from you, and here is our disciple making moment.

Disciple Making Moment

Val O'Brien: Hi everyone. I'm Val O'Brien area coordinator in Cleveland, Ohio. And this is my disciple-making moment.

I've been thinking about the importance of question asking in disciple-making. But we know this I'm not exactly to like breaking any new ground with this concept by saying like, Hey, we should ask questions.

You know, like this is a very common thing. That should be a part of how we interact with, with people. Asking questions, as we know is one of those. To make people to show people, not make people feel this way, but show them that we care about them, that we love them, that we're interested in their lives that we're invested in them.

So question asking is ministry leaders should just be a part of the fabric of who we are.

But, you know, I was looking at. And I was thinking about this in terms of him and Jesus, of course, we know asked a ton of questions. This is like something, again, we talk about all the time, but also I was noticing so many questions are asked of Jesus.

He cultivated this culture of question asking and answering this kind of open dialogue. That dialogue you would expect between like a rabbi in his disciples, this back and forth of question, asking the disciples, asking the rabbi, the rabbi, asking the disciples. But we see this extending far beyond just the disciples to all kinds of different things.

There was this culture. There was a sense that Jesus was approachable. You could come to him with hard questions, you had an audience with him, and he would engage in that. And are those the types of cultures that we are creating?

Both as individual people, people made in the image of God, hands and feet of Jesus as an individual. Do we have that type of culture around us.

And then as ministry leaders does that type of culture exist in the ministries that we lead. Now, one of the most helpful things I ever heard in this regard as a ministry leader, who is training his staff and who would tell them we don't answer questions, we answer people understanding that they're.

A story. There's a mindset. There's a human behind every single question that's being asked. Well, we engage the heart of the person as opposed to

just intellectually engaging their questions. And personally, I think that's huge for us as we answer questions. You know, most of you, it, it, especially if you work with students but even if you work with adults and especially if you've gone to seminary or Bible college or something like that, you probably know the answer to a lot of the questions that people are asking you, you know, the theological, the biblical.

Answer to it. And it could be really easy when someone asks us a question to want to just answer it. And we have a choice in that moment. We can either spike it and give them an impressive answer, or we can really engage the person in the questioner. For me, I know that. One of the things that I always wrestle with is people thinking that I'm smart.

It's just, it's just part of, you know, my, my mentality is I'm always afraid people are going to like realize that I'm not really that smart and all this stuff. So in my flesh when people ask me a question, when a student asked me a question that I know I am like ready to fire it at them. Cause it feeds a piece of my pride and maybe I'm not alone in that.

Maybe I am. That's not what. We never want to take someone's sincere question and use it to make us feel good, or make us feel smarter, make us feel important. We always want to take their question and make Jesus look brilliant, magnificent, amazing. Are we using questions to make us look good, press be able to spike it or to make it Jesus and his word look amazing and brilliant.

That's convicting for me. And then as a ministry, there's all kinds of ways. I know we can say from the stage, like, we want this to be a place where you can ask questions about blah, but are we really building a culture of that? Are we asking kids their questions? Are we sometimes even with students forcing them, I don't mean like forcing, forcing, but saying, Hey everyone on your way out, write down, one question that you have as a result of that.

And then we'll just, we'll just collect them at the end. And we'll just take a look at the kind of questions you ever. Hey, if your friend who doesn't know Jesus was sitting next to you, what question do you think that. It was a result of our talk tonight as a result of what we talked about. Why don't you write that down and leave it for us or, Hey, let's take, I want to take three questions as we end tonight.

What are three questions that can be anything that relates to, that can be a question you just think is good. It doesn't even have to be your question, but what, what do you think could be three questions as we, as we end tonight forcing them to do that in reassurance. I'd say, Hey, we're not afraid of your questions.

We want to know your questions. And we believe that God in his word give good answers to hard questions. So let's talk about them. So are we building a culture of question asking and answering as individuals and as ministry leaders? And then that way, when we get that, when that culture becomes a part of who we are, we are becoming like Jesus.