

THE CONNECTION NEWSletter



A Letter from the Pastor

Dear Church,

As I considered what I should write in this article, the first one of the year, it came to me that I should write concerning one of my own struggles. You see, when I first came to Christ as a teenager, I had a burning desire to see my family and friends make that same decision for themselves. I knew that I could not make this most important decision for them, but they had to choose for themselves to either believe or not! But the one thing that I remember vividly about that time in my life was the deep seated desire to share this amazing gift with everyone around me. It burned in my heart because I knew that without Christ, the ones I loved the most, would spend an eternity apart from the grace of God!

We read in the first part of Acts that Jesus was about to ascend into Heaven and the apostles wanted to know if this was the time for Jesus to bring forth His kingdom. Jesus answered the apostles with the following:

“He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:7-8 (NIV)

David Platt, Senior Pastor of the Church at Brook Hills, released his new book in 2010. The book is titled, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*. He wrote the following words that have affected me profoundly and I want to share them with you:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian struggling to follow Christ in the midst of Nazi rule, penned one of the great Christian books of the twentieth century. In it he wrote that the first call every Christian experiences is “the call to

*abandon the attachments of this world.” The theme of the book is summarized in one potent sentence: “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” Bonhoeffer aptly entitled his book *The Cost of Discipleship*.*

Based on what we have heard from Jesus in the Gospels, we would have to agree that the cost of discipleship is great. But I wonder if the cost of nondiscipleship is even greater.

The price is certainly high for people who don’t know Christ and who live in a world where Christians shrink back from self-denying faith and settle into self-indulging faith. While Christians choose to spend their lives fulfilling the American dream instead of giving their lives to proclaiming the kingdom of God, literally billions in need of the gospel remain in the dark.

Have we come to the place where we can say that we have forsaken everything to follow hard after Jesus? God’s Word states that if we are going to be followers of Christ, we first must die to self! Bonhoeffer wrote, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” If we are going to be the church that God intends for us to be then we must heed the words of Christ to total abandonment of our earthly attachments. Just like Jesus told the “Rich Young Ruler” he had to go and sell all he had to follow Christ, we must! Sounds radical and it is radical, but what is the cost to those around us if we are not willing to follow Him completely? Who is watching your life to see the reality of God as a testimony of His presence in you and the world?

May God Bless You and Keep You,

Pastor Richard

