

Cost, sacrifice and choice

By Kevin Jackson, Major –

You'll find a different sort of book review here. Two books: one a classic of the Christian faith and the other a new work yet to be released. As an avid reader, I scour the bookshelves of bookstores, browse through Amazon and receive recommendations from friends and colleagues on current works worth my time to read. My "to-read" list includes no less than 100 books.



Yet, some classics simply deserve placement on every person of faith's reading list. *The Cost of Discipleship* (Touchstone, 1995) by Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one of those reads.

In a day when Christianity in North America is often about praise and worship, individualistic introspection, and a "what's in it for me type of faith," a book like Bonhoeffer's can be a demanding, challenging and uncomfortable thesis. It was first published in 1937 during the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany. Against this background, Bonhoeffer's theology of costly discipleship developed, which ultimately led to his death. He posits the challenge for the modern day believer in the relationship between us and the teachings of Jesus. For Bonhoeffer, personal sacrifice is the central tenant, if not the crux to Christian faith. In plain language, he states that there is cost to following in the footsteps of Jesus. Bonhoeffer never sugarcoats any aspect of the life of the believer.

So what is its merit in a culture that focuses on lighting and sound systems in our chapels, coffee shop bible studies and where the cost of discipleship correlates to the price of trendy Christian T-shirts. This isn't meant as a value judgment, rather as an observation on our contemporary culture of faith. I frequent coffee shops with fellow believers, enjoy good acoustics at church and even have a few of those T-shirts in my dresser drawer. Yet, how do we reconcile the current life of faith experienced in North America and the call to personal sacrifice and costly grace of which Bonhoeffer writes.

He warns of the tendency of the individual to lean toward "cheap grace"—a form of faith that demands little or nothing from the individual. He affirms that Christ calls us to give our all for him and his cause. Bonhoeffer's words ring true as he was a martyr for the cause of Christ during World War II.

Countless readers profited from reading and applying *The Cost of Discipleship* in their lives. This book isn't for the timid or weak-hearted individual looking for 21st century spiritual therapy and self-affirming

Pabulum. Yet, if you truly seek to follow in the challenging footsteps of Jesus, Bonhoeffer gives the reader a no-holds-barred guide to what his understanding of being a Christ-follower looks like.

While standing in a parking lot several months ago, Commissioner James Knaggs approached me and said he wanted to see a book written on the cost of discipleship as it relates to The Salvation Army in recent years. The result of that short dialogue began the development and writing of a book which considers if there is a cost to discipleship in the present age. *Cost: Personal Sacrifice and the Choice to Follow* (Frontier Press, 2014), written by me, approaches this topic with real life application. It includes extensive and detailed interviews with individuals who experienced true cost in their lives as they endeavored to serve the cause of Christ. Most importantly, the work documents conversations regarding those who paid the ultimate cost in their discipleship with the giving of their lives.

The story of the aid provided to victims and first responders on 9/11 and the days that followed ranks among our finest hours. Yet, who were those faithful Salvationists who responded to the call to serve during 9/11 and what cost was involved in their discipleship? *Cost: Personal Sacrifice and the Choice to Follow* also shares the stories of Salvationists who gave their lives in service to God's Kingdom: a young officer who worked himself to death during the relief effort during Hurricane Katrina or an officer brutally murdered as he went about the work of The Salvation Army on Christmas Eve.

Cost: Personal Sacrifice and the Choice to Follow demonstrates Bonhoeffer's assertion that there still is a cost to discipleship and will seek to share what that cost looks like today.