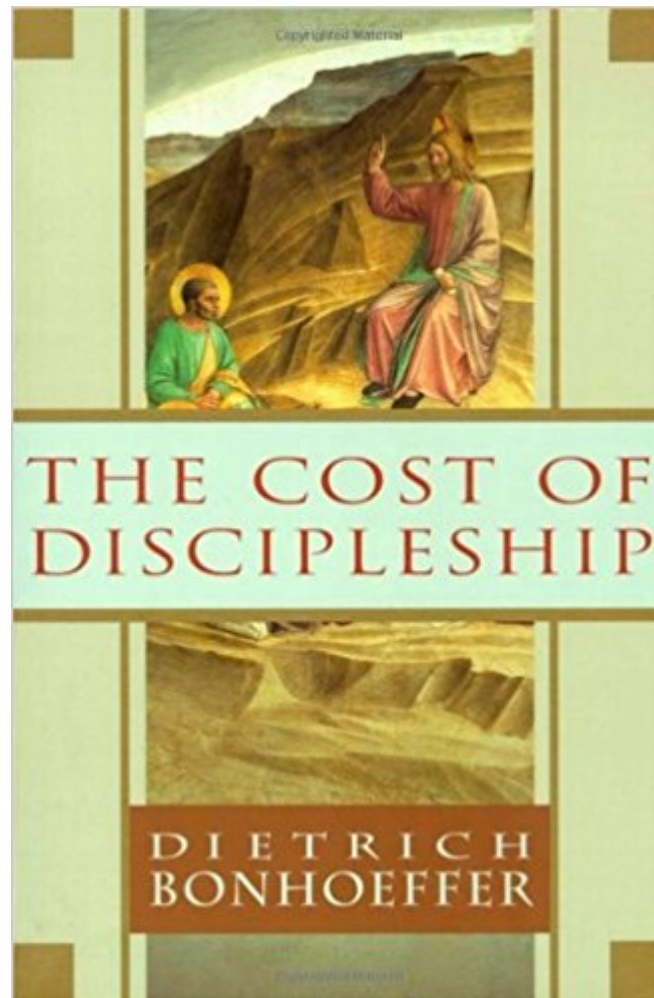


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The Cost Of Discipleship



Synopsis

One of the most important theologians of the twentieth century illuminates the relationship between ourselves and the teachings of Jesus. What can the call to discipleship, the adherence to the word of Jesus, mean today to the businessman, the soldier, the laborer, or the aristocrat? What did Jesus mean to say to us? What is his will for us today? Drawing on the Sermon on the Mount, Dietrich Bonhoeffer answers these timeless questions by providing a seminal reading of the dichotomy between "cheap grace" and "costly grace." "Cheap grace," Bonhoeffer wrote, "is the grace we bestow on ourselves...grace without discipleship....Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock....It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life." *The Cost of Discipleship* is a compelling statement of the demands of sacrifice and ethical consistency from a man whose life and thought were exemplary articulations of a new type of leadership inspired by the Gospel, and imbued with the spirit of Christian humanism and a creative sense of civic duty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I recently took a seminary class that dealt with traditions in Christian devotion, and one of the assignments was to pick a classic Christian book and do a report on it. I chose "Cost of Discipleship" because I had wanted to read it for some time. Much has been said about the book's power, and I desired to experience that for myself. After finishing it, I can see why "Cost of Discipleship" has challenged so many in their walk with Christ. The book's major theme centers on what it really means to be a disciple of Christ. This is summed up by Bonhoeffer's statement that

Christ calls us to "come and die." Christ wants all of us - nothing is to be held back. One is either a disciple of Christ, or they are not. There is no middle ground. The true disciple is dying to his or her life as a whole, and their old life is being replaced with the life of Christ. "Cost of Discipleship" is soaked in Scripture, and that is one of its main strengths. This is not surprising, since reading the Bible actually contributed to Bonhoeffer's personal conversion and commitment to Christ.

Bonhoeffer constantly refers to Biblical passages to make his points, and he does not resort to storytelling or even personal anecdotes. One can sense his deep love for the Bible and for Christ throughout the book. Another strength is Bonhoeffer's conveyance of how imperative commitment to Christ really is. Bonhoeffer was an early foe of Adolph Hitler, and this book was published while he was being persecuted by the Nazis. Therefore, he wrote as one who has stood for Christ in tough times, and he knew that Christ is one's only hope. Indeed, he eventually gave his life for his faith, and by all Christian and secular accounts glorified God to the very end.

"And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God." These words of Aeschylus echoed through me time and time again as I read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Cost of Discipleship". This was not an easy book to read. I do not think it was meant to be easy. Bonhoeffer was a person of limitless courage and faith. Born 1906 in Breslau, Germany to a prosperous family Bonhoeffer studied theology and completed his doctoral thesis when he was 21. He rose to some measure of fame in the 1930s by virtue of his writings and radio sermons. The rise of Adolph Hitler ran parallel to Bonhoeffer's own rise and it was opposition to the evils of Nazi-ism that compelled Bonhoeffer to put his words into actions, actions that cost him his life. As is set out in the introductory memoir in this edition, Bonhoeffer understood immediately that Hitler and his national socialist ideology represented a grave threat to Germans, to Christianity, and to western civilization. In a radio address he gave in February, 1933 Bonhoeffer denounced Hitler and denounced his fellow Germans for accepting a corrupt and inhumane leader and system as its idol. Although Bonhoeffer spent a great deal of time living in England, safe from harm, he understood that he could not in good conscience "participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people." Bonhoeffer returned to Germany in 1939 to take up the struggle against Nazi-ism. He had to have known that his return would lead to his death but he knew he could not do otherwise. He was called and he obeyed that call without question.

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