Call To Discipleship By Bonhoeffer Study Guide

A Call to Discipleship by Bonhoeffer: A Comprehensive Study Guide

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship* remains a profoundly influential text for Christians seeking a deeper understanding of their faith. This article serves as a comprehensive study guide to *Cost of Discipleship*, exploring its key themes, offering practical application strategies, and highlighting its enduring relevance in contemporary Christianity. This exploration will delve into the challenges of following Christ, examining Bonhoeffer's call to discipleship and providing tools for personal study and group discussion. We'll examine the book's structure, key concepts, and its continued impact on spiritual formation.

Understanding Bonhoeffer's Call to Discipleship

Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship* isn't a comfortable read; it's a challenging call to genuine discipleship, far removed from cheap grace and superficial faith. He directly confronts the complacency of a Christianity that has become comfortable and accommodated to the world. Central to his message is the understanding that following Jesus is not a passive acceptance of a set of beliefs but an active, costly commitment that demands radical transformation. This **Bonhoeffer discipleship** model requires a complete re-evaluation of our priorities and a willingness to embrace the cross.

Cheap Grace vs. Costly Grace

A significant portion of the book is dedicated to dismantling the concept of "cheap grace." Bonhoeffer defines cheap grace as grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus, grace without the church. It's a superficial, sentimental faith that doesn't demand sacrifice or change. In contrast, costly grace demands everything: it costs us our self-sufficiency, our comfort, and our adherence to worldly values. This is the true essence of Bonhoeffer's **call to discipleship**.

Following Jesus: A Life of Radical Obedience

Bonhoeffer stresses the necessity of obedience to Jesus' commands as the central marker of true discipleship. He emphasizes that faith isn't simply a matter of believing certain propositions but actively following Christ's example, even when it's difficult or unpopular. This necessitates a life of self-denial, characterized by humility, service, and a willingness to suffer for the sake of the gospel. This understanding of **Bonhoeffer's theology** is crucial for genuine spiritual growth.

Using a Bonhoeffer Study Guide: Practical Application

Effective engagement with *Cost of Discipleship* requires more than a passive read. To truly grasp Bonhoeffer's message, a structured approach is essential. This can involve individual study, group discussions, or a combination of both.

Here are some strategies for using a study guide:

- **Chapter-by-Chapter Analysis:** Break down the book into manageable sections, focusing on key themes, arguments, and examples within each chapter.
- **Journaling & Reflection:** Regularly journal your thoughts, reflections, and personal applications of Bonhoeffer's ideas. Consider how his challenges resonate with your own life and faith journey.
- **Group Discussion:** Participating in a small group or Bible study provides valuable opportunities for discussion, diverse perspectives, and mutual accountability.
- **Connecting to Scripture:** Identify biblical passages that support or challenge Bonhoeffer's arguments. This will deepen your understanding of both the text and the Bible.
- **Application to Daily Life:** Actively seek ways to apply Bonhoeffer's teachings to your daily life. This could involve challenging your own comfort zones, extending service to others, or confronting injustice.

Benefits of Studying Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*

Engaging with *Cost of Discipleship* offers numerous benefits for the serious Christian:

- **Deeper understanding of faith:** The book provides a profound challenge to superficial faith, prompting deeper reflection on the meaning and cost of discipleship.
- **Spiritual growth:** The book's challenging nature stimulates personal growth by confronting complacency and fostering a commitment to radical obedience.
- **Renewed commitment to Christ:** The book inspires a renewed focus on Christ's teachings and their implications for daily life.
- **Strength in the face of adversity:** Bonhoeffer's experience of persecution during the Nazi regime provides a

powerful example of faith under pressure.
- **Enhanced understanding of the church:** Bonhoeffer's critique of the church's complacency and his call for a more engaged and faithful community offer valuable insights.

Challenges and Criticisms

While *Cost of Discipleship* is highly influential, some critiques exist. Some argue that Bonhoeffer's emphasis on costly discipleship might be interpreted as overly austere or legalistic. Others point to the historical context of the book, written during a time of intense political and social upheaval, questioning the direct applicability of some points to modern life. However, the core message of following Christ faithfully, even when it is costly, continues to resonate. Understanding the historical context and engaging with constructive critiques enhances the value of the study.

Conclusion: Embracing the Challenge of Costly Grace

Cost of Discipleship remains a powerful and provocative text that challenges Christians to examine their faith and their commitment to following Christ. Bonhoeffer's call to discipleship is not a comfortable one, but it is an essential one. By engaging with this study guide, readers can gain a deeper understanding of Bonhoeffer’s theology, enhance their faith, and embark on a journey towards genuine discipleship, embracing the cost, and accepting the grace that awaits those who follow Jesus faithfully. The book is a timeless testament to the necessity of costly grace in a world that often prioritizes cheap substitutes.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: Is *Cost of Discipleship* only for experienced Christians?

A1: No, *Cost of Discipleship* is beneficial for Christians of all levels of faith maturity. While the book's challenges are profound, its message of genuine faith is applicable to everyone. Those new to their faith might find it especially insightful in understanding the commitments involved.

Q2: How long does it take to read and study *Cost of Discipleship*?

A2: The length of time depends on your reading pace and study method. A thorough study, including reflection and application, could take several weeks or even months.

Q3: What is the best way to study *Cost of Discipleship* in a group?

A3: Group studies can be highly effective. Choose a chapter or section for each meeting, allowing ample time for discussion and sharing personal reflections. Consider using questions for reflection or discussion prompts.

Q4: How does Bonhoeffer's context influence the book's message?

A4: Written under the shadow of Nazi Germany, Bonhoeffer's experience profoundly shaped his views on faith and discipleship. The cost of discipleship became very real and tangible for him. While the political climate differs from ours, the core message of costly discipleship remains relevant.

Q5: Are there other books that complement *Cost of Discipleship*?

A5: Yes. Other works by Bonhoeffer, such as *Letters and Papers from Prison*, *Life Together*, and *Ethics*, offer further insights into his theology and understanding of discipleship.

Q6: How can I apply Bonhoeffer's concept of "costly grace" to my daily life?

A6: Begin by identifying areas where your faith has become comfortable or complacent. Consider what sacrifices you're willing to make for your faith. Seek ways to serve others, confront injustice, and live a life that reflects Christ's teachings, even when it's difficult.

Q7: What are some common misconceptions about *Cost of Discipleship*?

A7: One common misconception is that it advocates for a harsh, legalistic approach to faith. Instead, it emphasizes radical love and obedience stemming from a deep understanding of grace. Another is that its message is solely applicable to a particular historical context, ignoring its enduring relevance for contemporary Christians.

Q8: What are some alternative study guides available for Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship*?

A8: While many study guides aren’t formally published, numerous online resources, including blog posts, sermon series, and discussion forums, offer alternative perspectives and insights into the book. Some Christian bookstores and publishers may also offer accompanying study materials specifically designed for group or individual study. Searching for "Bonhoeffer Cost of Discipleship study guide" online will yield various resources.

Unpacking Bonhoeffer's Call: A Deep Dive into Discipleship

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's legacy transcends the confines of theological scholarship. His life, tragically cut short by the Nazi

regime, echoes with a power that continues to inspire generations of Christians to embrace a radical, costly discipleship. His writings, particularly the posthumously released *Discipleship*, serve as a potent guide for navigating the complexities of following Christ in a world increasingly unwelcoming to faith. This article serves as a study aid to explore the core tenets of Bonhoeffer's challenging yet enriching call to discipleship.

The Cost of Discipleship: More Than Mere Belief

Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* isn't a soft introduction to Christianity. It's a unflinching examination of what it truly implies to be a follower of Jesus. He challenges the prevalent notion that faith is merely a private relationship with God, separate from the demands of daily life. For Bonhoeffer, discipleship is not a dormant state but an active, committed way of living that necessarily modifies every aspect of one's existence. He argues that a true disciple shares in Christ's suffering and rejects the allure of comfortable, self-centered existence.

One of the key ideas Bonhoeffer explores is the concept of "cheap grace". This is the kind of grace that doesn't demand anything from us, a grace that pardons without challenge, a grace that allows us unchanged. Bonhoeffer contrasts this with "costly grace," which challenges us to forsake self-interest and adopt a life of ministry to others, a life rooted in selflessness.

Following Jesus in a Secular World:

A unique element of Bonhoeffer's theology is his participation with the secular world. He didn't advocate for a separation from society but rather a robust participation in it, guided by the principles of the Gospel. He saw the Church's role not as a detached entity but as a transformative force within the texture of society. This outlook is particularly relevant in our increasingly secular time, where the lines between faith and culture are often blurred.

Bonhoeffer's emphasis on community is also critical. He believed that discipleship is not a solitary journey but a shared path undertaken within a nurturing community of believers. This community gives accountability, encouragement, and the capacity to persevere in the face of adversity. The significance of fellowship and mutual support is frequently emphasized throughout his work.

Practical Applications and Implementation Strategies:

This study guide can be used individually or in a group environment. For individual contemplation, readers can interact with each chapter through meditation, contemplation, and personal implementation of Bonhoeffer's teachings to their own lives.

Group sessions can foster deeper understanding through discussion, shared experiences, and reciprocal accountability. Group members can investigate specific passages, discuss their implications, and question one another to manifest a more radical discipleship.

Conclusion:

Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* is not a simple read. It's a exigent call to a life of radical faith, a life that requires sacrifice, dedication, and a willingness to oppose the comfortable norms of our society. Yet, within its pages lies a potent message of hope and transformation, a message that remains to motivate believers to live a more authentic and purposeful Christian life. By wrestling with Bonhoeffer's ideas, we can mature in our understanding of what it truly means to follow Christ and become more faithful followers.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

Q1: Is Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship* relevant today?

A1: Absolutely. While written in a different historical context, the core tenets of costly grace and radical discipleship remain profoundly relevant in a world grappling with similar spiritual and ethical dilemmas.

Q2: How can I apply Bonhoeffer's ideas to my daily life?

A2: Start by examining your own concept of grace. Are you living a life of comfortable, self-serving Christianity, or are you actively pursuing to embrace a costly discipleship marked by service and sacrifice? Look for ways to engage with your community and the wider world with a spirit of compassion.

Q3: What are some common misconceptions about Bonhoeffer's message?

A3: A common misconception is that Bonhoeffer advocated for social action at the detriment of personal piety. In reality, he saw these two aspects as inextricably linked. Another misconception is that he rejected all aspects of institutional Christianity; rather, he challenged its failings while seeking its reformation.

Q4: What resources are available to help me study Bonhoeffer's *Discipleship*?

A4: Many commentaries and study guides are available. Seeking out groups focusing on Bonhoeffer's work can also be extremely helpful.

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