

## Thoughts and Clarifications on *Radical*

High Pointe is thrilled you have committed to read *Radical*. Our hope and prayer is for this book to bring a new perspective and challenge you to a deeper level of devotion. We are providing the following explanations and clarifications to insure there is proper understanding of theology and to combat any feelings of defeat. David Platt challenges the reader and we in no way want to water that down, we simply want to clarify to avoid confusion. *In addition to this resource and the help of your core group leader, there are remarks in the front cover of your book.*

### Chapter 1

The theme of this chapter (and the book in general) is letting go of Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves and focus on the central message of Christianity; abandoning ourselves. The scripture passages cited contain sobering descriptions of the cost of discipleship. We need to embrace this and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us and bring conviction, comfort, and strength. While not taking anything away from the magnitude of the challenge, there are, however, some potential areas of confusion:

*Church in America contrasted with an Asian church* – On pages 6-7 Platt contrasts the relative wealth and comfort of his church in America with a church he had visited in an Asian country that actively persecutes Christians. He suggests that the reason for the contrast is “we had missed what is radical about our faith and replaced it with what is comfortable.” This, however, is not the only possible reason for a contrast. The wealth and freedom we enjoy in America are a result of God’s providence. These blessings should cause us to prayerfully consider how to best use them to benefit God’s kingdom. Platt arrives at this conclusion *belatedly*, on pages 214 – 215, with the paragraph beginning, “I also fear that in addressing unbiblical foundations ...” *Please read this paragraph after page 7 to get a more complete perspective on this contrast.*

*Pages 10-11: “Give up everything you have, carry a cross, and hate your family. This sounds a lot different than ‘Admit, believe, confess, and pray a prayer after me.’”* Two aspects of this warrant clarification.

*Hate your family* – The word “hate” in Luke 14:26 is a comparative term, not an absolute one. Jesus uses our devotion to our family as an example; even our love for our families must pale compared to our devotion to Christ. The point of this passage is to highlight the supreme importance of devotion to Christ, not to minimize any human relationships.

*This sounds a lot different from ‘Admit, believe, confess, and pray a prayer after me.’* Jesus said, “any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33). We agree with Platt that Jesus is saying that the cost of discipleship is everything we have. Platt’s comments in italics above, however seem to suggest that devotion to Christ is a prerequisite to being saved, and that simply praying a “sinner’s prayer” without a total commitment to Christ’s Lordship is ineffective. But we must remember that once we are justified (made right before God because of the substitutionary death of Christ), God lives in us and nurtures our devotion to Christ as we continually submit to him. “For it is God who works in you (you group of Christ-followers) to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)

*Can I really be that devoted?* – Page 8 summarizes the cost of discipleship with, “Plainly put, a relationship with Jesus requires total, superior, and exclusive devotion.” This is indeed a high bar, and the Lord is worthy of nothing less. Yet in our experience, we see that sometimes we sin or fail to live up to what God wants for us. What is the status of our salvation when that happens, and what should our response be?

Our response should be godly sorrow and repentance. The apostle Peter was there when Jesus gave his challenging talk in Luke 14 about the cost of discipleship, yet in Luke 22 he denied Christ. He responded with heart-felt sorrow in Luke 22:62 and Jesus reinstated his call to ministry after He rose from the dead in John 21. Peter went on to be the key leader of the early church. Christ followers, who would necessarily be led by the Spirit, are made righteous before God because of Christ’s death. Paul goes on to say that “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1) Our salvation is secure in and because of Christ alone. Sanctification is a lifelong process and we needn’t get discouraged when we have set backs.

### Chapter 2

*Page 29 – “In some sense, God also hates sinners. ... What happened to ‘God hates the sin and loves the sinner?’ Well, the Bible happened to it.”* He is correct, but this could be misunderstood as vindictiveness on God’s part. Psalm 5:5 shows God’s hatred of wrong doers. But notice that even this verse is focused on the behavior of doing wrong as the identity of the person. God “hates” (is the enemy of, finds completely odious) those who do wrong. Romans 5:10, in fact the entire context of Romans, further clarifies that this predicament is a result of our failure and God’s righteousness, not God’s vindictiveness. Importantly, it is God who did the reconciling. And we know He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Yes, God is the Righteous Judge, and we are (were) by nature objects of wrath (Romans 2:5, but 1 Thess. 5:9). But the Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). So while God hates sin and cannot have any association with sin, He has gone to extraordinary lengths to rescue sinners. His

persistent, sacrificial seeking of sinners must be held in mind at the same time we are thinking that “God hates sinners,” or we will risk totally mischaracterizing God.

### **Chapter 3** – no additional comments

### **Chapter 4**

Some aspects of this chapter are summarized in the half-page insert in each book. On page 64 Platt is reminding the reader that Jesus commands us to go and take the gospel to the ends of the earth. He writes, “...I propose that anything less than radical devotion to this purpose is unbiblical Christianity.” We would all agree that God calls us to go and our purpose is certainly to declare the gospel to the nations (1 Peter 2:9). However, it’s important to acknowledge that the definition of ‘radical devotion’ is subjective and unique to each individual. We shouldn’t assume that Biblical Christianity = going around the world, but it certainly could. The author’s comments are strong and meant to cause reflection, but should be considered with the direction of the Holy Spirit.

### **Chapter 5** – no additional comments

### **Chapter 6**

There is a constant tension between American wealth and the world of poverty. God has called us to care for the poor and is one reflection of a Christ centered life. However Platt seems to elevate this action above other evidences of God’s work in one’s life. On page 110 he writes, “If there is no sign of caring for the poor in our lives, then there is a reason to at least question whether Christ is in our hearts.” This is a fair question, but we must be careful to remember that sanctification (being made more like Christ) is a lifelong process. We don’t instantly arrive. Taking a snapshot of one’s devotion is subjective to their place on the journey of faith. This is why Paul referenced our need to ‘work out’ our salvation (Philippians 2:12). As we live out our salvation day to day, we become more and more like Christ resulting in feeding the poor, caring for the orphans and widows (James 1:27) and other manifestations of the Spirit of God in us.

### **Chapter 7**

This is a chapter that should be read in one sitting if at all possible. Platt makes good points, but there are some potentially unclear statements unaddressed for a few pages.

Page 145 – Platt’s response to the question, “*Isn’t that good enough?*” is correct but not as strong as it could be. He uses the word “credit” twice when referring to idolatrous efforts of remote peoples. In so doing, it could be misunderstood that he believes we are in a position to gain credits and negotiate with God. He reveals the proper perspective in pages 147-149: “*They are ultimately condemned for rejecting God.*”

Page 147 – what about the person in the remote village in Africa? Does God really leave some behind? This is a deep theological question that brings many different opinions. It is important to be reminded that God is omniscient. He knows who will hear the gospel; who will receive and who will reject. We certainly have a mission to spread the Good News but must lean into God’s sovereignty and trust that He is just and good.

Page 149 – “*But don’t forget, people are not ultimately condemned for not believing in Jesus, they are ultimately condemned for rejecting God.*” Platt may seem to be differentiating between Jesus and God. However, he is saying that the consequence of not being able to believe in Jesus is to not be reconciled to God.

Page 152 – Platt resolves the questions raised by stating that God made a way to salvation for the lost: Jesus.

### **Chapters 8 and 9** – no additional comments