



heart and arranged for the right people at the right time to be placed in my path. The Christian author C.S. Lewis was particularly instrumental in grabbing my attention and making sense of all things. Before long I found myself attending church services, meeting wonderful Christian friends, and reading the Bible on my own for the first time. I was finally ready to declare my faith and tell my Lord I was “all in” for joining his Church and serving his kingdom.

My coming to faith was swift and powerful. I had never felt so free, peaceful, and convinced of an ultimate truth in my life. I could sense that God had a different plan for my life than the one I was pursuing as an agricultural commodity trader. To the surprise of my colleagues and superiors at work, I announced I was leaving my job to live in Costa Rica, study Spanish, and help missionaries plant new churches in the capital city of San Jose. Initially, their jaws dropped with deep curiosity and uncertainty. But eventually they embraced me warmly, understood my new calling, and wished me well.



The amazing part of the story is that after being in Costa Rica for two years, I returned to the Chicago area to attend Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. While pursuing my Master of Divinity degree, I decided to intern at my old home church – the one I had decided to leave in eighth grade! The congregation could not have been more welcoming, embracing, and laughing a little, too, exclaiming, “Danny McNerney is back in town,” and finally ready to declare his faith and join the church – after all these years! As I mentioned earlier, the Lord had given me the complete freedom to walk away from his loving care during my confirmation years, in my effort at the time to find a greater purpose in life than serving him and his kingdom. However, in the end, I discovered that his truth, presence, and grace were greater treasures than anything else I had discovered in my life, or ever hoped to find.

Deciding to follow Jesus is not an easy deal for any of us; it requires all our hearts, trust, and devotion. As humans we love to be in control and hold back whatever we can to maintain independence and autonomy. Trusting our lives to someone else usually elicits all kinds of fears and hesitations requiring a lot of contemplation and evaluation. God knows this about us. That is why he can be both patient and persistent at the same time. But, in the



end, he wants our total trust and commitment in a relationship which will never let us down. Being half- committed, leaving our options open all the time, never works. When it comes to God, we need to be fully committed or get out of the way. This same dynamic took place between Jesus and his disciples after a couple of years teaching them harder and more demanding truths about his kingdom. In fact, after learning what it actually meant to follow their Lord, many of his disciples left; only the very committed decided to stay. In his Gospel, the Apostle John tells us, “Many of Jesus’ disciples said, ‘This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it.’ Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining so he said to them, ‘Does this offend you? Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But some of you do not believe me...’ At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, ‘Are you also going to leave?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.’” (John 6:60- 64b,66,67)

Too many people in our world today think that the meaning of life is serving and promoting oneself – no matter the cost. Self-absorption and self-promotion are at an all-time high in our world today. The new, modern tools we possess to manipulate perception and truth are enormous and frightening. Jesus asked his followers to do the opposite – serve others and God above their themselves. He instructed his followers to be quiet and humble and consider others better than themselves, to wash one another's feet, and care lovingly for each other's needs. The Apostle Paul put it best when he wrote, "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too." (Philippians 2: 3,4).

At the start of this exciting new year, what activities, attitudes, and service opportunities are calling you to be less self-absorbed and more aware of the needs of others? Are you tired of thinking endlessly about your own self? Self- preoccupation has a very high price called loneliness; the more we serve ourselves above others and God, the greater the risk we run of sinking into despair, fear, and emptiness. There are numerous Christian organizations and churches in your area which are organizing service projects to serve the hungry, homeless, traumatized, and imprisoned. Overseas trips to serve people in great need are always available, too. By serving others and God before yourself, your soul will be fed in ways the world can never provide.

Is now the time to stop running or wandering from the love of God? He only has your best interests in mind. God wants to care for you, protect you from the evil forces in the world, and give infinite meaning to your soul. He wants to help you discover your true self and calling in life that results in a glorious eternal life with him. He is waiting patiently for you to open the door of your heart to his love.

As Jesus told the church in Laodicea through the Apostle John, "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." (Revelation 3:20)

He is standing at the door and would love for you to open it today. If you do, your life will never be the same.