

Rethinking Radical: A Challenge from C.T. Studd

"We don't need any more books, seminars, or conferences. What we need are examples." Matt, a rising college freshman, has spoken for a generation that is tired of being entertained by Christian celebrities and challenged to "go" by executive pastors who stay.

As I thought about Matt's statement and the desire of a generation to live "Radical," I thought immediately of Charles Thomas Studd. He was born in England in 1860. His father, Edward Studd, had made his fortune in India. C.T. Studd was handsome, rich, and athletic. He attended Cambridge University, one of the most prestigious universities of his day. Studd had a passion for Cricket (that's a sport, not an insect) and became what others have referred to as the "Michael Jordan of Cricket." Studd was claimed by some then and today as the greatest player to have ever played the game.

However, after hearing an influential missionary from China speak, Studd, along with 6 others made a commitment to go. They gave up promising careers and their fame, and walked away from the "Great British Dream." For several months, the "Cambridge Seven," as they became known, travelled from campus to campus across Britain challenging students to give their all for the glory of God. Their testimony and their lives rang with authenticity and awakened the church to His global cause.

C.T. Studd spent his life as a missionary mobilizing the church to "Come." Once he said, *"There are more than twice as many Christian 'officers' at home among the peaceful Britain's 40 million evangelized inhabitants, than the whole number of forces fighting at the front among 1.2 billion unreached! And yet such call themselves soldiers of Christ."*

What might C.T. Studd say today to our Christian "officers" at home? What might C.T. Studd say to David Platt about being "Radical?"

David, your book is good, but it's not really that radical. Your call to finish the Great Commission rings hollow to a generation looking for examples. Follow me. Resign from your church. Rally six of your friends in similar positions as yourself. All of you go and spend your life among an unreached people group until you have learned their language and learned their culture, and planted the Church there. This generation may be moved, but never mobilized by your books. It will take 'reckless sacrifice and heroism in the foremost trenches.'

I think at this point in the C.T. Studd challenge, Adoniram Judson would be stirred from beyond the grave and the words he spoke in 1832 would echo down from Heaven, *"First, let it be a missionary life. That is, come out for life, and not a limited term. (What would he think of our generation's short-term mission strategies?) Do not fancy that you have a true missionary spirit, while you are intending all along to leave your people group soon after acquiring their language. Leave them?! For what? To spend the rest of your days in enjoying the ease and plenty of your native land?"*

Francis Chan hinted at the C.T. Studd challenge when he resigned his mega-church last year to "seek God's direction and serve for a few months in a developing country." Now he's back and the message that is heard louder than his words or books is that, "Crazy love doesn't mean following Christ long-term to the unreached."

....But what would happen if all these mega-church pastors resigned? Who would lead their churches? Thousands of applications would flood their church offices within weeks! Who would rally the church to

go if these important voices left? Ion Keith Falconer served as a missionary to Arabia from 1885-1888. (He died after only 3 years on the field, just in case you are wondering why he served short-term.) He had attended the commissioning service of the "Cambridge Seven," and followed them in their radical experiment for life. He said, *"Perhaps you think you are meant to remain at home and encourage others to go. You think that by sending money, sitting on committees, speaking at meetings, and praying for missions, you will be doing the most you can to spread the Gospel abroad. Not so! By going yourself, (He was not talking about a short-term trip.), you will produce a tenfold more powerful effect. You can give and pray for missions wherever you are. You can send descriptive letters to the missionary meeting which will be more effective than second-hand quotes gathered from others."*

One final word from C.T. Studd... *"Dear David and friends... Hundreds may go as a result of your books, songs, and conferences, but if you will follow my example and go-- for life-- a whole generation will follow you. They are waiting for an example."*

C.T. Speer
imb missionary
Southeast Asia

P.S. This may be the first time in history that the majority of our 'mission heroes' are not missionaries. Where are the voices from the field that compel a generation to come? Where are those with blood on their faces that challenge a generation to join the fight? They are serving quietly and faithfully among the unreached and hard to reach.