

A SPOTLIGHT ON:

Ronald J. Sider



*Getting to know the
INFEMIT community*



North America
(Canada and
Philadelphia, USA)

Context



Biography

Ron Sider was born and raised in Canada. He earned a BA in European history from Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, where he first became involved with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. It was also where he met his wife, Arbutus Lichti. Together, they moved to the United States, where Ron went on to earn MA and PhD degrees from Yale University in New Haven, CT. While at Yale, Ron became more involved with InterVarsity's work, particularly in its integration of faith and social justice. Though he was set on becoming a history professor at a secular college, he accepted an invitation from Messiah College to start a campus in Philadelphia in collaboration with Temple University.

Biography

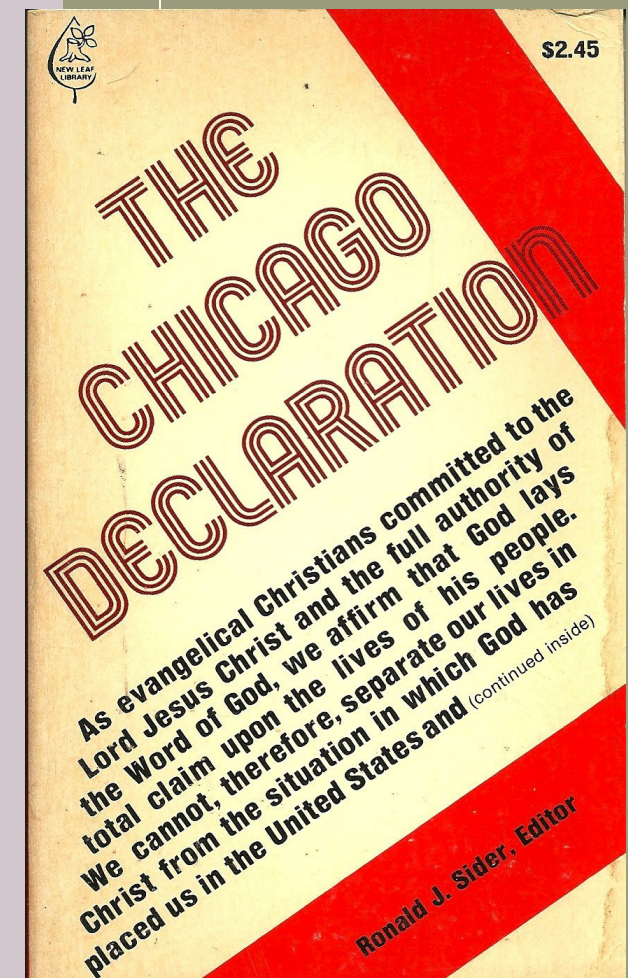
Influences and legacy

John Warwick
Montgomery



The lawyer, Christian apologist, and writer, John Warwick Montgomery, who taught history at Wilfrid Laurier, was an important influence on Ron's life. Ron was inspired by his outspoken belief that the resurrection of Christ was part of history. As influential as Montgomery was, however, Ron found his Mennonite roots to be rich with examples of holistic commitments to justice, evangelism, community, and speaking truth to power.

Ron continued his involvement with InterVarsity while at Messiah's Philadelphia campus. During this time, he drafted an article on the graduated tithe, which became the basis of Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger. As he started writing and involving himself in the social issues surrounding him, he was increasingly drawn to the idea of holistic ministry. Ron was the coordinator of a meeting of thoughtful evangelicals in Chicago in 1973. This meeting resulted in the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, which called for a rejection of racism, economic materialism, economic inequality, militarism, and sexism. This meeting and document sparked the beginning of Evangelicals for Social Action, now known as Christians for Social Action, (hereafter CSA). CSA became a legal entity in 1978.



It was God's plan to use Ron to open the hearts, minds, hands, and feet of people who solely cared about evangelism, to care about the poor...



Moral Minority by David R. Swartz

When *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* was published in 1977, Ron received all sorts of criticism along with affirmations. While many charged the book of detracting the evangelical world from its main purpose (evangelism), others praised it for igniting the evangelical social conscience. A voice for what historian David Swartz identified as "a moral minority," Ron provided a language for justice-oriented evangelicals to speak to their churches and communities about holistic ministry.

Christians for Social Action (CSA)

Christians for Social Action (CSA) "is a group of scholar-activists, stirring the imagination for a fuller expression of Christian faithfulness and a more just society." For five decades, Sider and CSA have faithfully engaged with the public sphere on topics of racial and economic inequity, education, politics, environmental stewardship, the role of the church, and more. The network addresses both global and local contexts, and encourages civil dialogue with people across the theological and political spectrums.



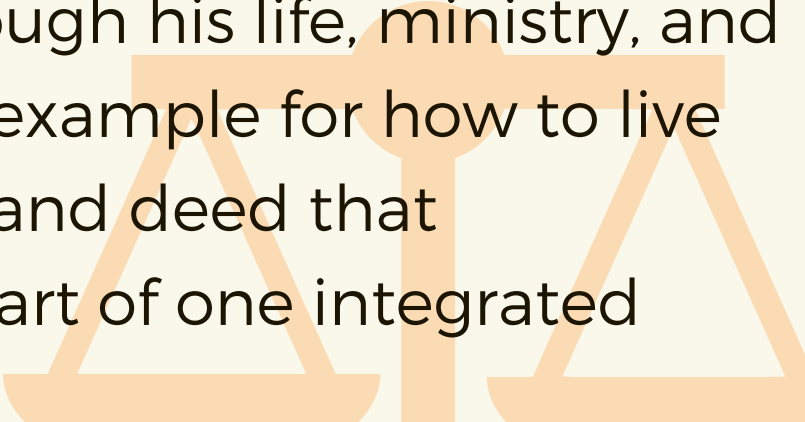
**CHRISTIANS for
SOCIAL ACTION**

[Learn more about CSA's history.](#)

Themes of his work

Holistic / Integral Mission

What is the balance between social justice and evangelism? There is a constant tension in the church between social activists who minimize the practice of evangelism and evangelists who do little to demonstrate the good news they proclaim. Through his life, ministry, and scholarship, Ron set an important example for how to live out this tension, affirming in word and deed that evangelism and social action are part of one integrated whole.



Ron also calls Christians to **engage the public square** - speaking truth to power, participating in politics, and responding to the question: "**What does Christian Witness look like?**" He believes that we, as Christ-followers, have an important call to speak to the mainstream of our societies.

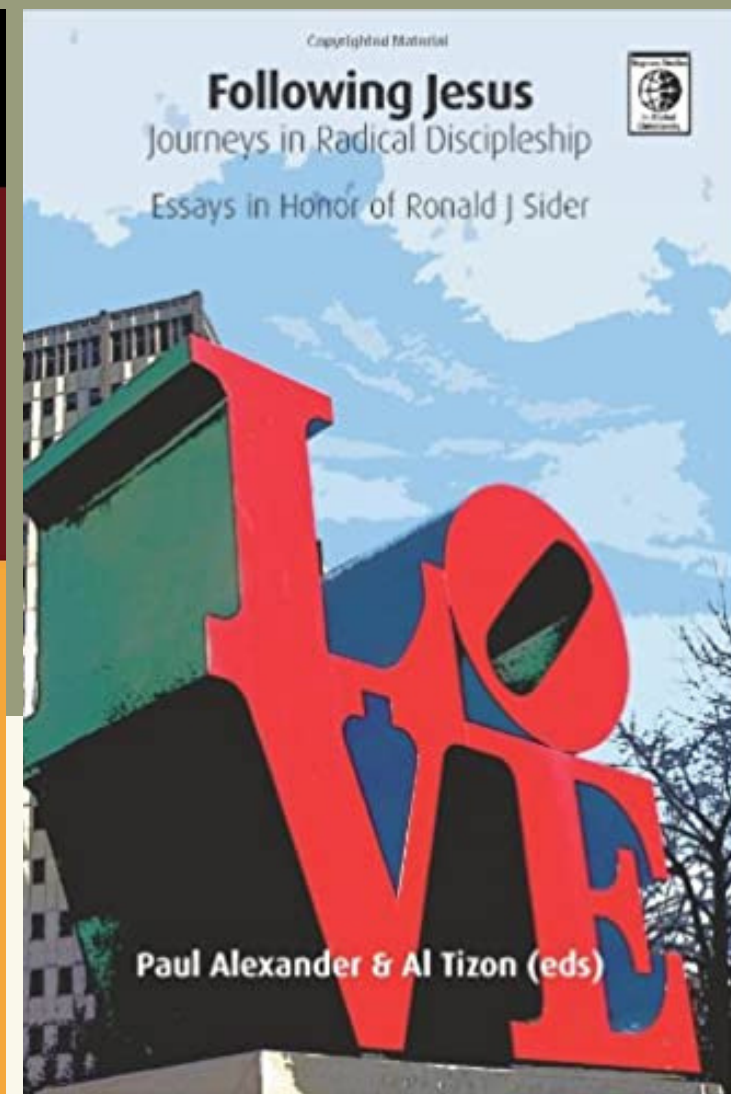
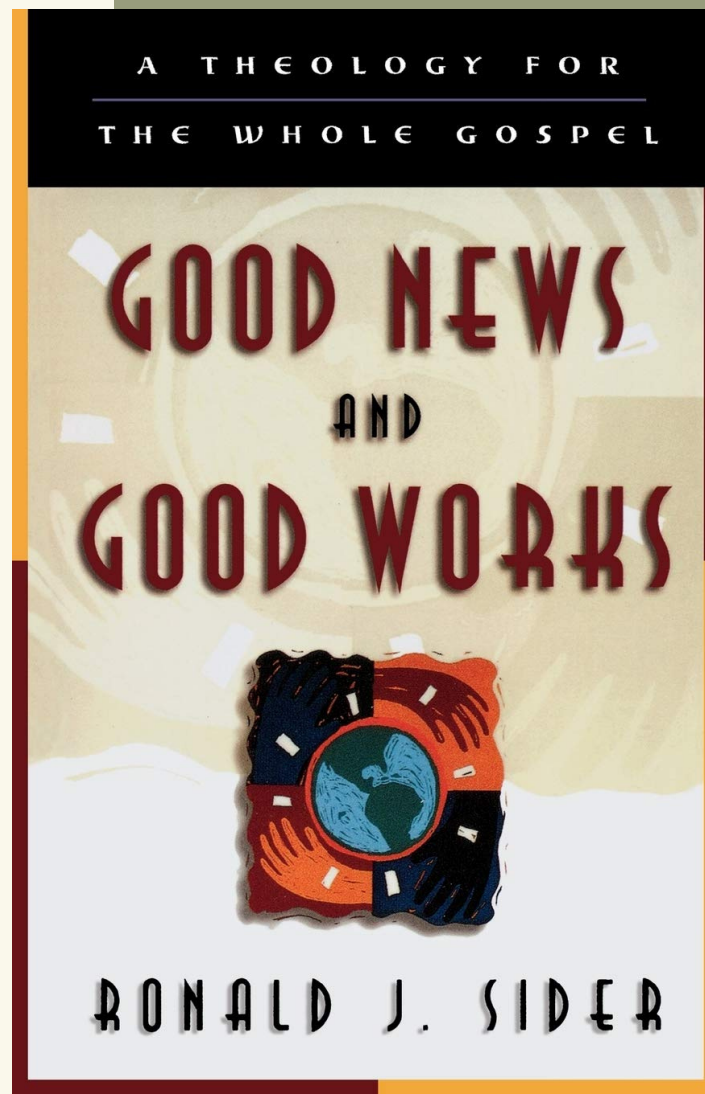
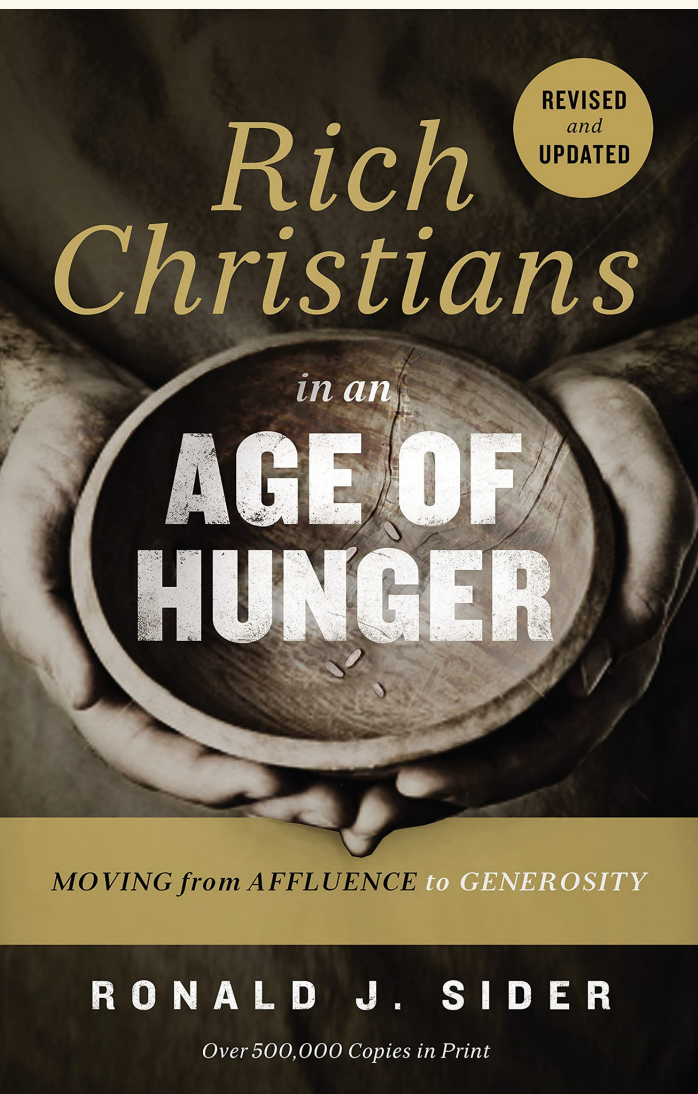
Holistic Ministry as a Framework, Not a To-Do List

In response to those who view holistic mission as a long to-do list, Al Tizon shares what Ron taught him:

"A lot of people say that holistic mission is unrealistic, asking, 'how do you expect us to do all those things?' Well, **one thing that I learned from Ron is that 'all of those things,' is just one thing**, it's one thing integrated as a whole. Being a faithful, radical follower of Jesus is one thing. It has many implications but it's just one thing- love your spouse, love your kids, be a church person, and contribute to the shaping of God's people in a particular place, and then look out in your neighborhood, community, country, and world. It is a frame that acts as a trajectory for living."

START HERE:

THE ESSENTIAL READER



Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity (6th edition - 2015).

Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel

Following Jesus: Journeys in Radical Discipleship

LEARN MORE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

READ:

- [Completely Pro Life: Building a Consistent Stance on Abortion, The Family, Nuclear Weapons, The Poor](#)
- [I am Not A Social Activist](#)
- [God's Invitation to Peace and Justice](#)
- [Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook- chapter 56: Leading Evangelicals for Social Action](#)
- [The Chicago Declaration](#)

WATCH/LISTEN:

- [Thinking and Acting Biblically About Politics](#)
- [2019 ASM: Living with Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger](#)

GET CONNECTED:

- [Ron Sider's blog](#)
- [Christians for Social Action](#)



SOURCE:

To learn about Ron's influence, we turned to Networking Team member Al Tizon. Al recalls first learning from Ron through his writings as well as through his participation in CSA's college chapter at Vanguard University of Southern California. He then joined CSA to lead the holistic ministry initiative and later as co-president of CSA when Ron retired. Al's own life has been marked by a commitment to holistic ministry. Former Executive Minister of Serve Globally, the international ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church, Al is also the author of several books developing holistic mission, particularly Transformation after Lausanne (Regnum, 2008) and Whole & Reconciled: Gospel, Church, and Mission in a Fractured World (Baker Academic, 2018).

