

**Essay from the bold pastor
#224 - RIP Concepcion Picciotto -**

Concepcion Picciotto passed away on January 25th at the age of 80. Starting in 1981, she had stood in front of the White House in protest of nuclear arms for 35 years, until her death. A U.S. newspaper reported her protest as the “longest-running act of political protest.” An immigrant from Spain, she had lost custody of her foster child due to a divorce, and while in depths of her despair, met an American peace activist. That’s when she decided to join him in protest, saying that although she couldn’t do much for her child, she can stop the world from destruction. Their “protest” consisted of a beach umbrella under which they sat, and a signboard with photographs of people and places affected by nuclear weapons. They were there most of the time except on occasions such as bathing at a supporter’s house. Even after her partner had passed in 2009, Picciotto stayed there by herself until her death.

I actually met her about 20 years ago, while on a cross-country tour of the United States with my wife on a motorcycle. The area surrounding the protest consists of federal buildings such as the U.S. Congress and the FBI, as well as the Smithsonian museums. There’s not much trees or shade, and the ground is made of concrete. Despite the summer heat, she kept calling out to the tourists of the need for disarmament. As someone from the only country who has suffered the destruction of atomic bomb, it made me glad to see her efforts. It amazes me that she kept that effort up for another 20 years after I saw her. Steven Leeper, the former chairman of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, says that Picciotto was doing the work that we all should have been doing all along. Leeper has handed Picciotto a letter of appreciation from the city of Hiroshima while on a trip to Washington D.C.

“You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus, himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’.”
Acts 20:34-35

These are the words of Paul, one of the disciples of Jesus who wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven New Testament books, and they are from a farewell statement to his friends shortly before his martyrdom. He is also the one who developed the vast network of churches in West Asia. He had a separate trade for making a living, so much of his work for the church was as a volunteer. But he was quite a violent man in his youth. And like Concepcion and Paul and many others, people that come seeking for the church often are going through life’s struggles, such as a broken family or a job loss. The church is not by any means an assembly of all excellent people. It is a place where believers come together, and while acknowledging their powerlessness, still do our best to do God’s work to make this a better world for our loved ones.

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