

The Life and Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Lesson Two: Living in Christian Community
February 12, 2025

Opening Prayer

Brief Introductions

Watch the Video: Living in Community?

What are your initial thoughts about the film? What impacted you? Questions? Concerns? Insights?

The German National Church and Naziism

Bonhoeffer was a proud German; he just did not believe the church should be subject to the state. He believed the church should be free to interpret the Bible and preach as they saw fit. He disagreed with the aggression of the Nazi government and the oppression of German citizens, especially the Jews.

Bonhoeffer said that the church was to be separate from the state as the church is the conscience of the state.

- What do you think about that statement?
- What does this mean about the role of the church in relation to the state?
- How, if at all, is the church the conscience of the state today? What does that look like?

Pastors Emergency League September 1933

Written in part by Bonhoeffer in reaction to the Brown Synod. Over 6,000 of the 20,000 pastors in Germany eventually signed agreeing to the following:

1. Rededicate themselves to the Scriptures and previous doctrinal confessions
2. Protect the churches fidelity to Scripture and confessions
3. Lend financial aid to those being persecuted by the new laws or any kind of violence
4. Reject the Aryan Paragraph

Barmen Declaration May 1934

This document officially established the Confessing Church which broke off from the Reich Church. The signers were mostly from the Pastors Emergency League.

Note: Bonhoeffer was careful to point out this was not meant to be a leaving of the “official” German church, but that the Confessing Church was the “official” church. Also, no mention is made of the Jewish question in the declaration. The declaration had wide international approval from the ecumenical community. All signers of the Barmen Declaration were expelled from the

German National Church (Reich Church) and they all put themselves in danger for their lives as they were closely watched by the Nazi's.

The pastors for Confessing Church lost their state provided salaries and were forced to rely on donations to survive. They were also banned from the state run seminaries. They needed their own seminaries. Bonhoeffer was tapped to start the first seminary of the Confessing Church from the ground up. He was determined to create a different kind of seminary.

Finkenwald: Confessing Church Seminary 1935-1937

Bonhoeffer believed that seminaries in Germany were not turning out good pastors. They were too worried about academics and did not know how to nurture faith. Listen to Bonhoeffer's letter to Karl Barth (page 271 Metaxas)

Sermon on the Mount (see handout)

Read letter to his Brother Karl (pg 33)

Life Together at Finkenwald

- Princeton Theological Seminary 1997-2000
 - Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Theology, Pastoral Care
 - Question: Is this going to be on the test?
- Finkenwald 1935-1937
 - Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Theology, Pastoral Care
 - PLUS Worship, Scripture Meditation, Prayer, Singing, Confession...
 - Question: Do you love Jesus?
- Worship (pages 51 and 78)
 - Why is worship important for community?
 - Why do we worship?
- Scripture (pages 32 and 63)
 - Why is it important for us to learn God's Word?
 - Why is it even more important for pastors?
 - How do Scripture and prayers help us in good times and times of trouble?
- Mediation on Scriptures (pages 85-86)
 - How good are we at waiting?
 - Why is it hard for us to sit still and listen (meditate, pray, reflect...)?
- Prayer (pages 68 and 90)
 - Why should our prayer be for our needs, not just the prayers we say in worship?
 - How do you feel about people when you pray for them?

- Singing (page 65)
 - What does singing together in worship mean to you?
- Confession (page 111)
 - Take a moment and turn and confess to the person next to you...
 - Why would confessing to another person be difficult?
 - Why don't we confess to another person?
 - What does confessing to another do to our pride?
- Community (pages 98-100)
 - Are we good listeners today? Why is listening important?
 - How good are we at "active helpfulness" of others? Why is this hard for us?
 - Do we sometimes ignore the burdens of others?
- Justification (pages 94 and 96)

Cheap Grace vs. Costly Grace

"Justification by grace through faith"

Grace is the undeserved forgiveness given by God.

- Why is grace undeserved?
- What should be our response to receiving God's grace?

"Cheap Grace means justification of the sin without justification of the sinner."

"Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

- Where is Bonhoeffer seeing cheap grace in the church and in German society?
- Where do we see cheap grace today?

"Costly grace is the gospel that must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock."

"Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his son...and what cost God much, cannot be cheap for us."

- What does it mean to understand and live our costly grace?
- How did Bonhoeffer live his life with an understanding of costly grace?
- How are we doing living out costly grace today?

Christians are called to action.

What were those actions for Bonhoeffer?

What are those actions today?

Closing:

Martin Niemöller was a friend of Bonhoeffer and prominent Lutheran pastor in Germany. In the 1920s and early 1930s, he sympathized with many Nazi ideas and supported radically right-wing political movements. Later, Niemöller became an outspoken critic of Hitler's interference in the Protestant Church. He spent the last eight years of Nazi rule, from 1937 to 1945, in Nazi prisons and concentration camps. This famous quote is attributed to him:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

Closing Prayer