

First Annual Summer Seminar Series

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Profile in Ministry

Session One: May 25, 2011

Introducing Bonhoeffer

- I. Welcome, Introductions and Comments
 - a. Welcome
 - b. Introductions
 - i. Andrew Marais – Board Chair, the Christ Center
 - ii. Teri Edwards – Director, the Christ Center
 - iii. Darrin Crow – Seminar facilitator
 1. Christ Center Board
 2. Pastor, HEART of Junction
 3. Student Minister, Christian Challenge of Colorado Mesa University
 4. Professor (World Views, Ethics, Biblical Literature), Colorado Christian University
 5. And, I read the Metaxas book
 - c. Texts
 - i. Bonhoeffer, by Eric Metaxas
 - ii. The Cost of Discipleship, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
 - d. Website: summerseminarseries.wordpress.com
 - i. Blog format
 - ii. Comments wanted!
 - iii. Wider discussion
 - e. Session outlines, extra resources
 - f. Seminar expectations
 - i. Feel free to interject – but respect the presentation/discussion format
 - ii. This is an academic pursuit – civil discussion
 - iii. This is a reflective pursuit – honesty and transparency
 - iv. This is a spiritual pursuit – bending towards truth
 - g. Restrooms are down the hall...
- II. Bonhoeffer: A brief biography
 - a. Early Life
 - b. Theological roots
 - c. Germany
 - d. Hitler, Nazis, the Church and the Jewish Question
 - e. Imprisonment
 - f. Death
 - g. Bonhoeffer today

III. Three Mega Themes from Bonhoeffer's Life and Teaching

a. Costly Grace

- i. 1927: Student
- ii. 1930: Debater
- iii. 1931: Teacher
- iv. 1933: Activist
- v. 1934: Leader of Confessional Church Movement
- vi. 1935: Seminary Professor
- vii. 1937: Author of *Discipleship*
- viii. 1939: Double Agent
- ix. 1943: Prisoner
- x. 1944: Prison Theologian
- xi. 1945: Martyr

b. Christ must be at the Center

- i. **Christ**: "Christ's manger stands on the earth, his cross is rammed into the earth, his grave is dug into the earth." - Albrecht Schoenherr quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *The Message of a Life*, *Christian Century* (27 Nov. 1985), p. 1091.
- ii. **Discipleship**: "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth which has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son. ... There is trust in God, but no following of Christ." - *The Cost of Discipleship*.
- iii. **Spiritual Disciplines**: "... a new kind of monasticism . . . a life of uncompromising adherence to the Sermon on the Mount in imitation of Christ." - *Gesammelte Schriften, III*, p. 25, as cited in Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, p. 380.
 1. Simple Prayer
 2. Common Worship
 3. Everyday Work
 4. Christian Service

c. Christ-like Action, or "Living in this world"

- i. **Obedience**: "It is therefore impossible to define the boundary between resistance and submission on abstract principles: but both of them must exist, and both must be practiced. Faith demands this elasticity of behavior." - *Letters and Paper from Prison*, enlarged ed., pp. 217-18.

- ii. **Church purity**: "The church is the church only when it exists for others. To make a start, it should give away all its property to those in need. The clergy must live solely on the free-will offerings of their congregations, or possibly engage in some secular calling. The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving. It must tell men [and women] of every calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others.... It must not under-estimate the importance of human example (which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus and is so important in Paul's teachings); it is not abstract argument, but example, that gives its word emphasis and power." – *Outline for a Book*, August, 1944.
- iii. **The world**: "Jesus is there only for others. . . . Our relation to God is not a 'religious' relationship . . . but our relation to God is a new life in 'existence for others,' through participation in the being of Jesus. . . . The church is the church only when it exists for others." - *Letters and Papers from Prison*, enlarged ed., pp. 380-83.

IV. Break

- V. Discussion: **Four dimensions** of a spiritual life that lead to **three basic freedoms** - 1) freedom from "ingrained habits of sin," 2) freedom from "cowering inaction and irresponsibility," and 3) freedom from "fear of a monstrously demonic and immensely powerful nation-state." (All four points Translated from *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 403-4, as cited in *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), pp. 542-43.

- a. **Discipline**

If you set out to seek freedom, then learn above all discipline of soul and senses, so that your passions and your limbs might not lead you confusedly hither and yon. Chaste be your spirit and body, subject to your own will, and obedient to seek out the goal that they have been given. No one discovers the secret of freedom but through self-control.

- i. *We live in an age where freedom and convenience often come with a price (freedom from the kitchen = McD's = obesity, freedom from limitations of travel = planes, trains and automobiles = pollution, etc...). Do you think we are in danger of seeking freedom from "the discipline of soul and sense?" Does it matter?*
- ii. *What do you see being taught by the church today re: self-control? How do you think Bonhoeffer might view what is being taught to/by Christians today? What are the bests and worsts?*

b. **Action**

Dare to do what is just, not what fancy may call for;
Lose no time with what may be, but boldly grasp what is real.
The world of thought is escape; freedom comes only through action.
Step out beyond anxious waiting and into the storm of events,
carried only by God's command and by your own faith;
then will freedom exultantly cry out to welcome your spirit.

- i. *Is the American church paralyzed or active in the "storm of events?" What are our bests and worsts?*
- ii. *If Bonhoeffer were pastoring a church in Grand Junction today, what do you think that church would be known for?*

c. **Suffering**

Wondrous transformation! Your strong and active hands are tied now. Powerless, alone, you see the end of your action.
Still, you take a deep breath and lay your struggle for justice, quietly and in faith, into a mightier hand.
Just for one blissful moment, you tasted the sweetness of freedom, then you handed it over to God, that he might make it whole.

- i. *How is the concept of suffering taught as a dimension of the spiritual life in American churches today? Again, what are our bests and worsts?*
- ii. *Think - Christ on the Cross. Think - "Here I Am!" Think - Surrender. Think - "I want to share in His sufferings."*

d. **Death**

Come now, highest moment on the road to freedom eternal,
Death, put down the ponderous chains and demolish the walls of our mortal bodies, the walls of our blinded souls,
that we might finally see what mortals have kept us from seeing.
Freedom, how long we have sought you through discipline, action, and suffering.
Dying, now we behold your face in the countenance of God.

- i. *Death as a dimension of the spiritual life? Can we even handle death as a metaphor - "Die to self?" Do we learn in church that death is freedom? How do we embrace it - bests and worsts?*
- ii. *Do you think if lived like we really believed, that our concept of death might be changed? Does Bonhoeffer simply fool himself?*