

Discipleship According to Bonhoeffer: Learning to Follow Jesus from the Life, Martyrdom and Writing of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Syllabus
(Last Updated: January 12, 2021)

GTW Winter 2021
January 6 - March 17, 2021
Wednesdays, 6:30 – 7:30
First Pres Colorado Springs
Rev. Michael Thornton
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Class Support:

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Class Description: Few twentieth-century theologians have left a global legacy to the Christian witness like that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Here we study the life, martyrdom and writing of a disciple who embodied so many of the highest ideals of true discipleship. A disciple knows that Christian grace is a costly grace. A disciple knows that the call of Christ includes sharp, loving obedience. A disciple knows that to walk faithfully with Christ in the here and now, a world crippled by the fall, requires sacrificial action, sometimes sacrificial action unto death. A disciple knows that life with God is communal, not only with the triune God, but also with God's people within context of the watching world. Bonhoeffer willingly and joyfully engaged in the dismantling of the Third Reich, including an assassination plot against Hitler. Throughout the final four weeks of this course we will study what Bonhoeffer learned about Christian Ethics.

Structure of Class:

Part 1 (30-45 mins): Teaching

Each participant will sign in to our all-class 30-45 minute video call using the video conference platform, Go2Meeting. This is where the main teaching is delivered each week. Check your email for unique login credentials every week.

Part 2 (20-30 mins): Small Group Discussion

Immediately following the all-class connection and teaching (Part 1), each participant signs off of the all-class call and joins their small group in a new video call for small group discussion, prayer and fellowship. A leader for each small group is identified to lead this time. Small groups are responsible to lead and manage their own small group video call.

How to Join a Small Group:

Email Ina Meyer, Program Manager for Discipleship, to be placed in a small group:

imeyer@firstprescos.org (Note: Small Groups will begin during Week 2, January 13th.)

*We need volunteers to facilitate our small groups! Please email Ina with your interest to serve.

Information for Small Group Facilitators:

Thank you for volunteering to lead your small group! As the small group facilitator, you establish your own separate video call. Although you can choose your own parameters, the assumption is that most groups will meet for 20-30 minutes immediately after the all-class video call ends. You will be provided with a list of discussion questions prior to each session.

Step 1: Determine what platform you prefer to use to facilitate your small group time together.

Step 2: Create a group email thread using the information Ina provides you with. Send an initial email greeting to your group. In this email, recommend your platform of choice and ask the group if everyone is comfortable using that platform. Confirm the platform, time, duration and frequency.

Step 3: Lead the successful launch and facilitation of your small group week-to-week (this can mean simply identifying a sub for any evening you need to miss).

Course Teaching Schedule:

January 6 Introduction to the Life, Martyrdom and Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Suggested Reading:

1 Peter 1 & Psalm 84

Forward, Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2 of *"Bonhoeffer"* by Metaxas.

January 13 Grace: How ought the Christian understand the grace of God in Christ?

Suggested Reading:

1 Peter 2 & Psalm 23

Chapter 1, "Costly Grace" in *Discipleship*.

Chapter 2, "The Call to Discipleship" in *Discipleship*.

January 20

No Class This Week

Suggestion: Watch *"Bonhoeffer"* directed by Martin Doblmeier, 2003.

To view this documentary on Amazon (free for Prime users), [CLICK HERE](#).

January 27 The Sermon of the Mount: The Call to Faithfulness before God

Suggested Reading:

Matthew 5 – 7

Chapter 6, "The Sermon on the Mount" in *Discipleship*.

- February 3 Baptism: Understanding themes of Union, Conformity, Death and Life
Suggested Reading:
1 Peter 3 & Psalm 22
Chapter 9, "Baptism" in *Discipleship*.
- February 10 Life Together: The Communal Nature of Discipleship
Suggested Reading:
1 Peter 4 & Psalm 17
Chapter 1, "Community" in *Life Together*.
- February 17 **No Class This Week**
Ash Wednesday
- February 24 Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Ethics and Bonhoeffer's Journey Therein
(Walking as a Vicar of Christ in a Fallen World)
Suggested Reading:
1 Peter 5 and Psalm 139
Chapter 1, "Morality and Ethics" in *Responsible Conduct* (Douma).
Chapter 2, "The Definition of Christian Ethics" in *Responsible Conduct* (Douma).
Chapter 1, "Christ, Reality, and Good. Christ, Church, and World" in *Ethics*.
Chapter 2, "Ethics as Formation" in *Ethics*.
Chapter 13, "The Concrete Commandment and the Divine Mandates" in *Ethics*.
- March 3 Ethics: Identity (Life in Participatory Relationship)
Suggested Reading:
2 Peter 1 and Psalm 47
Chapter 3, "Heritage and Decay" in *Ethics*.
Chapter 5, "Discipleship and the Individual" in *Discipleship*.
Chapter 3, "The Day Alone" in *Life Together*.
Letter 159, "To Eberhard Bethge: June 6, 1944" in *Letters and Papers From Prison*.
(also refer back to previously assigned reading: "The Sermon on the Mount" in *Discipleship*)
(also refer back to previously assigned reading: Chapter 2, "Ethics as Formation" in *Ethics*)
- March 10 Ethics: Freedom (Entering into the Reconciliatory Work of Christ)
Suggested Reading:
2 Peter 2 and Psalm 25
Chapter 5, "Ultimate and Penultimate Things" in *Ethics*.

March 17 Ethics: Responsibility (Preparing the Way of the Kingdom of God)
 (through “Vicarious Representative Action”)
 Suggested Reading:
 2 Peter 3 and Psalm 147
 Chapter 6, “Natural Life” in *Ethics*.
 Chapter 7, “History and Good [1]” in *Ethics*.
 Chapter 8, “History and Good [2]” in *Ethics*.
 Letter 178, “To Eberhard Bethge: July 21, 1944” in *Letters and Papers From Prison*.
 (also refer back to previously assigned reading: Chapter 2, “Ethics as Formation” in *Ethics*)

Resource List:

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Discipleship: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works—Reader’s Edition*. Trans. B. Green and R. Krauss. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.

_____. *Ethics*. Trans. R. Krauss and C. West.

_____. *Letters and Papers From Prison*. Trans. I. Best, L. Dahill, R. Krauss, N. Lukens, B. Rumscheidt, and M. Rumscheidt.

_____. *Life Together*. Trans. D. Bloesch.

Douma, J. *Responsible Conduct: Principles of Christian Ethics*; translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman, Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003.

Metaxas, Eric. *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010.

Niebuhr, Richard H. *Christ and Culture*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1951.

Robertson, Edwin. *The Shame and the Sacrifice: The Life and Martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, New York: Macmillan, 1988.