

Christian Education
Week 1: January 3, 2024

Life Together
Chapter 1: Community

Opening

- Why is living in Christian Community a gift and privilege, instead of something to be taken for granted?
- Why is the scattering of Christians throughout the world Christendom's promise and curse?
- Why is the physical longing for the presence of other Christians godly?
- What is to be the response who have the privilege of living in Christian community?

Through and In Jesus Christ

- What does Bonhoeffer mean when he says "a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ"?
- How is it that the Christ in my heart is weaker than the Christ in your word?
- What does he mean when he says "a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ"?
- Why is it important that "in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity"?
- Why does community through and in Jesus Christ dismiss once and for all "something more"?

Not an Ideal but a Divine Reality

- Why is God's act of shattering our wish dream (ideal) of Christian Community an act of God's grace?
- What does visionary dreaming do to the dreamer and to the Christian community?
- How does the unity of the true Christian community being founded on Christ alone alter this picture?
- Why is the practice of giving thanks for little things important to Christian community?
- Why would a pastor be tempted to become an accuser of the brethren and what habit should the pastor practice instead of complaint?

A Spiritual not a Human Reality

Spiritual Community	Human Community
Basis: clear, manifest Word of God in Jesus Christ	Basis: dark, turbid urges and desires of human mind
Essence: light	Essence: darkness
Fellowship: those who are called by Christ	Fellowship: devout souls
Burns: bright love of brotherly service; <i>agape</i>	Glows: dark love of good and evil desire, <i>eros</i>
There is: ordered, brotherly service	There is: disordered desire for pleasure
There is: humble subjection to the brethren	There is: humble yet haughty subjection of a brother to one's own desire
There: the Word of God alone rules	There: rules, along with the Word, the man who is finished with exceptional powers, experience, and magical, suggestive capacities
There: God's Word alone is binding	There: besides the Word, men bind others to themselves
There: all power, honour, and dominion are surrendered to the Holy Spirit	There: spheres of power and influence of a personal nature are sought and cultivated

- What does Bonhoeffer mean when he says that in spiritual community there is never immediate relationship to one another?
- What would be the problem with that immediacy?
- What are the two marks that differentiate spiritual and human love?
- Why is it essential that Jesus Christ stands between me and the object of my love?
- How will life together under the Word remain healthy?

The Day's Beginning

- How does Bonhoeffer's theology of the morning belonging to Christians change the way you think about your day?
- Why is it important that the day for the Christian community begins in worship and not the worries of the day?
- What do you think about Bonhoeffer's idea that the structure of morning worship remains the same while the content of worship is adaptable to each individual Christian community?

The Secret of the Psalter

- Why must churches find their way back to the Psalter?
- How is it that the Psalms can be both the Word of God and our prayer to God?
- How is it that we may pray the Psalms that are beyond our own experiences?
- Why does praying as a fellowship come from an understanding of the Psalms?

Reading the Scriptures

- Why is a verse for the day not Holy Scripture?
- In your own understanding why is it that contemporary Christians resist reading larger portions of Scripture?
- How does this type of reading of Scripture place us within the historical setting of God's saving work in Jesus Christ?

Singing the New Song

- How does the new song the church sings relate to the song of heaven?
- How does singing unite our voices and why is this important?
- What are the threats to unison and why are they dangerous?

Saying Our Prayers Together

- What is the significance of common prayer?
- Why must all comment and criticism cease when a person prays for the congregation?
- Why should the one person bear the burden of praying for the community over time?
- What should be done if the person does not feel like praying on a particular day?

The Fellowship of the Table

- Why is the bread of eternal life sought before the bread of the temporal life?
- Why is the table fellowship festive?
- Why is it an obligation?

The Day's Work

- Why should prayer and work not be hindered by each other?
- Why is prayer not higher than work?
- How does work lead to the unity of the day?
- How does prayer prepare for our work?

Noonday and Evening

- What does he mean when he says that God feeds us at the noonday as a gift?
- Why is it ideal to do the evening devotional right before our evening rest?
- What is the significance of the evening prayer?
- What role does asking for and extending forgiveness to the community members play in the life of the community?
- Why is the prayer for preservation through the night important?

Christian Education
Week 3: January 17, 2024

Life Together
Chapter 3: The Day Alone

Opening

- What is the problem with the person seeking community to avoid being with themselves?

Solitude and Silence

- What is the significance of Bonhoeffer's theology of "aleness"?
- How is aleness balanced by being in community?
- Why is silence the mark of solitude?
- What does Christian silence mean?
- What should we expect from silence?

Meditation

- Why do we need a time of personal, not just corporate, meditation?
- What should be our Scripture practice during this time of personal meditation?
- What should we expect in meditation?
- What is the promise of meditation?

Prayer

- What does this time of personal prayer entail?
- What should we do with "distractions" during this time of personal prayer?

Intercession

- What is intercessory prayer?
- On who's behalf should we intercede?
- How do we intercede on behalf of our brothers and sisters?
- How is it that intercession (along with meditation and prayer) is a duty but is a joy?
- Is there a difference between legalism and orderliness? If so, what?

The Test of Meditation

- How is it that being in the unChristian world is a test of our meditation and of our community?
- What is Bonhoeffer's theology of the body when it comes to positive and negative realities in the members?

Opening

- Why must every Christian community face the seed of danger that is “positioning” of members?

The Ministry of Holding One's Tongue

- Why does the discipline of not verbally expressing our thoughts along these lines lead to the eradication of the danger from our midst?
- What results from holding the tongue regarding our relationship with each other and God?
- Why must everyone have a duty to perform on behalf of the community?
- How does God's mercy lead us to desire to serve the community?

The Ministry of Meekness

- What does it mean to “live by the forgiveness of [our] sins”? And, how does living this way impact our vying for position in the community?
- Why shouldn't we resent suffering injustice?
- Why is it important that each member view themselves as the greatest of sinners?

The Ministry of Listening

- Why is listening the first service we perform for the community?
- Why is speaking before listening death for the community?
- What kind of listening is required in Christian community?

The Ministry of Helpfulness

- How does helpfulness with trivial matters aid in putting aside a desire to be greatest in the community?
- Why are interruptions said to be signposts from God along our way of discipleship?
- What replaces the monastic vow for the evangelical church?

The Ministry of Bearing

- What does it mean to bear each others burdens?
- How do we share in the bearing of the cross as we bear with each other in the community?
- In what way does our ministry of bearing others create freedom for our brothers and sisters?
- What does Bonhoeffer mean when he speaks of bearing the other in their sin?
- Why are we not to judge another in their sin?

The Ministry of Proclaiming

- Why are we to speak to each other the full consolation of God?
- Where is the tension between remaining silent and speaking in the community?
- Why would we be reluctant to confront a brother or sister? Why would remaining silent be wrong?
- On what basis may we confront each other with the word of God's rebuke?
- How would failure to engage this part of the ministry of proclamation lead to the death of the community?

The Ministry of Authority

- Why would we desire a dynamic, charismatic type of leader?
- What type should be allowed authority over the community?
- How would that authority be lived out within the community?

Opening

- Why, if we are alone with our sin, are we utterly alone?
- What does Bonhoeffer mean when he says that the pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner?
- How does the gospel of Christ relate to my status as a sinner, and how is the community related to this?

Breaking Through to Community

- Why is the practice of confession within the body necessary?
- How is it that confession to one member of the body restores us to the whole fellowship?
- Why does this practice lead us to never be alone anywhere again?

Breaking Through to the Cross

- What is pride and how does the practice of confession defeat it in ourselves and in our community?
- In what ways are the practice of confession, the truth of the cross, and our baptisms related?

Breaking Through to New Life

- How is the practice of confession related to entering the new life?

Breaking Through to Certainty

- What is Bonhoeffer's point when he observes that it is easier for us to confess to holy God rather than our sinful brothers and sisters?
- How could we be confessing to ourselves and giving ourselves false absolution?
- Why is it that the word through our brother or sister breaks the circle of self-deception?
- Why is self-examination and particular confession important?
- Why isn't the practice of confession a divine law?

To Whom Confess?

- What makes us qualified to hear someone else's confession and speak words of absolution in Jesus's name?
- Notice the two things to avoid in hearing a confession: condemnation and licence; what does that leave us with?

Two Dangers

- How could being the sole person to hear confessions lead to a desire to dominate the community? What is the remedy?
- How can confession become a pious work and why would this be problematic? What is the remedy?

The Joyful Sacrament

- Why must we be reconciled to our brothers and sisters prior to enjoying the sacrament of communion?
- How are confession and communion related?
- Why is communion the highest practice/sacrament of the Christian community?