

## Spiritual Disciplines in the Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To plan how to train to face the challenges in this life.

**Icebreaker:** What was the highlight of your Thanksgiving?

### Discussion

**Read:**

**Romans 3:10-18**

<sup>10</sup> As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;

<sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.

<sup>12</sup> All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one.

<sup>13</sup> Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit.

The poison of vipers is on their lips.

<sup>14</sup> Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

<sup>15</sup> Their feet are swift to shed blood;

<sup>16</sup> ruin and misery mark their ways,

<sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they do not know.

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

**Read:**

**Dallas Willard**

“This ever-present readiness (to do evil) fills common humanity and lies about us like a highly flammable material ready to explode at the slightest provocation...

There is a ‘real presence’ of evil scarcely beneath the surface of every human action and transaction.”

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1. Why do you think we need to be woken up by the Bible about our readiness to do evil?

**Leader Note:**

- If we are naïve to evil outside or inside us, we'll easily get swept along.
- We tend to want to do what comes easily or naturally...but selfishness is what tends to come easily.
- If humanity is this sick, then it drives us to the solution God has provided in Jesus.
- We tend to think the world is good and operating as it should, but our lives are taking place in war time.

**Read:**

[Galatians 1:3-4](#)

<sup>3</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship](#)

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

2. How does Bonhoeffer challenge us to see what God wants to save us from and what he gives us grace for?

**Read:**

[1 Timothy 4:7b-8](#)

<sup>7</sup> ...train yourself to be godly. <sup>8</sup> For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

3. How is physical training a good analogy for our part in growing in godliness?
4. Bonhoeffer saw the training the Nazi soldiers were doing "for a kingdom of hardness and cruelty." He wrote a line, "You have to be stronger than these tormentors you find everywhere today." What are some of the existing or

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potential challenges (in the culture or your own heart) that you need to train to face?

5. What would it look like to train yourself and train together to face these challenges?

## **Leader Note:**

- Habit of reading, meditating on, and memorizing God's word.
- Habit of praying to God prayers of thanks, surrender, what we are worried about
- Habit of being honest with each other
- Why committing to be at small group matters

5. What else did you find challenging or encouraging about the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer?

## **Sharing and Prayer:**

Pray for each other in light of the challenges you shared. Have each person pray for the person on their left.

Close by having each person pray a stanza of this prayer Bonhoeffer wrote to pray every morning with his fellow prisoners in the Nazi prison camp:

"O God, early in the morning I cry to you.  
Help me to pray  
And to concentrate my thoughts on you;  
I can't do this alone.

In me there's darkness,  
But with you there's light;  
I'm lonely, but you don't leave me;  
I'm feeble in heart, but with you there's help;  
I'm restless, but with you there's peace.

In me there's bitterness, but with you there's patience;  
I don't understand your ways,  
But you know the way for me.

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O Heavenly Father,  
I praise and thank you  
For rest in the night;  
I praise and thank you for this new day;  
I praise and thank you for all your goodness  
and faithfulness throughout my life.

You have granted me many blessings;  
Now let me also accept what's hard from your hand.  
You will lay on me no more than I can bear.

You make all things work together for good for your children.  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
You were poor and in distress, a captive and forsaken as I am.  
You know all man's troubles;  
You abide with me when all men fail me;  
You remember and seek me;  
It's your will that I should know you and turn to you.

Lord, I hear your call and follow;  
Help me.

O Holy Spirit,  
Give me faith that will protect me  
from despair, from passions, and from vice;  
Give me such love for God and men  
as will blot out all hatred and bitterness;  
Give me the hope that will deliver me  
from fear and faint-heartedness.

Amen."