

Life Together

March 14, 2019

by Ben Purves

Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer is this March's book for "Theology Thursday."

Theology Thursday: Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Thursday, March 21, 7:00-8:00pm

Occoquan Bible Church

Downstairs in the Gathering Place

As our church family is seeking to grow deeper in community and gospel fellowship, this book is a great way to continue the conversation we have been having this year. This classic work is rich with practical wisdom and insight for seeking and pursuing Christian community.

What is "Theology Thursday"?

"Theology Thursday" is our bi-monthly Men's Ministry gathering for discussion of theology and ministry books. Men, if you would like to grow in theology and doctrine, and learn more about the theology behind our ministry areas, come join us! Previous books include Love Thy Body by Nancy Pearcey, Discipling by Mark Dever, The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman, The Whole Christ by Sinclair Ferguson, and Christ from Beginning to End by Trent Hunter and Stephen Wellum.

Why Read 'Life Together'?

While "doing life together" is a cliché, this book is not. It is a contemplative exploration of Christian community, and a compelling vision for fellowship in the body of Christ. In the years leading up to World War II, Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught and lived at an underground seminary at Finkenwalde, Germany, and much of the content of this book is drawn from those years of life shared together in their "community house."

Bonhoeffer doesn't reduce Christian community to a social experience, but roots any understanding of Christian community in the gospel. "Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through Jesus Christ"(p. 21).

He casts a vision for experiencing community in the scriptures, singing, prayer, and mealtimes, and then turns to consider the importance of solitude and fellowship with the Lord. Finally, he closes the book with a contemplation on ministry to one another, including confession, and the Lord's Table.

A Sampling of Excerpts from Life Together

"It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God that any day may be taken from us, that the time that still separates us from utter loneliness may be brief indeed. Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of

living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren."

"He who looks upon his brother should know that he will be eternally united with him in Jesus Christ. Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ."

"The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us."

"Into the community you were called, the call was not meant for you alone; in the community of the called you bear your cross, you struggle, you pray. You are not alone, even in death, and on the Last Day you will be only one member of the great congregation of Jesus Christ. If you scorn the fellowship of the brethren, you reject the call of Jesus Christ, and thus your solitude can only be hurtful to you."

"Has the fellowship served to make the individual free, strong, and mature, or has it made him weak and dependent? Has it taken him by the hand for a while in order that he may learn again to walk by himself, or has it made him uneasy and unsure? This is one of the most searching and critical questions that can be put to any Christian fellowship."

"It is the fellowship of the Cross to experience the burden of the other. If one does not experience it, the fellowship he belongs to is not Christian. If any member refuses to bear that burden, he denies the law of Christ."

"In confession the break-through to community takes place. Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation."

I invite you to read Life Together, consider how you might grow deeper in community with your brothers and sisters in our church family, and join us for discussion on March 21.

I look forward to our discussion as we consider our life together in Christ!

Pastor Ben