

The Bonhoeffer Project

Devoted to Creating Disciple Makers

Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously said, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” You may know him best for his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer was a professor, a pastor, a spy, and finally, a martyr. He believed that unless one followed Christ in a serious fashion, it was to cheapen the grace of God. The project is not a building with a staff. It is an idea, something patterned after Bonhoeffer's Grand Experiment. From 1935-1940, he trained pastors in an illegal seminary. The students were instructed first and foremost in discipleship. The idea is simple: eight to ten people would spend a year together studying, discussing, and doing discipleship. It will begin in January and meet ten times at a once a month pace in 2015 (taking some time off around Christmas and Easter). Participants will read, discuss, debate, plan, strategize, and do a bit of life together.

The Goal

The goal of the Bonhoeffer Project is to encourage each participant to become a disciple making leader. Once that decision has been made, then to provide the participant with the knowledge necessary to carry out a plan for making disciples who also will make disciples. The Bonhoeffer Project firmly believes that this is best done in a community of like-minded persons—that is why the project itself is a community.

The Plan

Making disciples requires intentionality. William Law in his book, *A Call to a Holy and Devout Life*, made this point: the reason people don't change behavior is that they never really intend to do so. The intention to make disciples requires a plan, if you have no plan, you don't really intend to do it. The Bonhoeffer Project helps each participant craft a plan that is biblically sound and a good fit for their ministry context. Each of the ten gatherings will focus on a specific subject that then is followed by a monthly project.

Sessions 1 & 2: The Gospel

The question that will be asked is, what does the gospel you preach naturally lead to? There are many gospels that are taught in North America and they each have a DNA and each creates a product. Each participant will work through a curriculum provided by the Bonhoeffer Project. The project will be for each participant to craft a gospel suitable for his or her context.

Session 3: The Call To Discipleship

Everyone called to salvation is called to discipleship, no exceptions, no excuses. This belief underlies much of the work and discussion that will take place. The challenge is to rebuild and reteach the gospel in such a way that it naturally leads to discipleship. The present reality is that only a portion of congregational members believes that they are called to a life of serious discipleship. The project will focus on how to communicate and lead others through the redefinition and general call to follow Jesus.

Session 4: The Nature and Scope of Salvation

What does it mean to *be saved*? As Dallas Willard once concluded, “Simply put, as now generally understood, being saved—and hence being a Christian—has no conceptual or practical connection with such a transformation.” This subject will review the comprehensive nature of salvation, and detail the salvation vocabulary such as faith, belief, grace, repentance, conversion, justification, sanctification, etc. The purpose is to make sure we know what they mean and how this impacts a leader’s teaching. The project will be connected to the grand sweep of salvation that reaches into all of life and to personal transformation.

Sessions 5 & 6: The Holy Spirit and Change

This subject will examine the biblical material on how people change. It will break down the working parts of the human being and how the will, mind, soul, spirit, and body work together to develop a heart for God. Various traditions and streams will be discussed and how spiritual formation, discipleship, and sanctification intersect. Dr. Michael Wilkins states that discipleship and spiritual formation are

different sides to the same coin—and that coin is sanctification. The project will help guide the participants to a plan for those they lead in light of the biblical realities.

Session 7: Ways and Means

C.S. Lewis wrote, “The problem in the world is not just bad people doing bad things, it is good people doing good things badly.” This area is primarily a focus on how Jesus went about making disciples. A neglected area of studies concerning Jesus is how he trained and prepared his key followers. A template for Jesus’ ways and means will be identified and each participant will be able to develop those same principles in their work. The project will be to craft a plan to learn from and emulate Jesus’ methods.

Session 8: The Church

Jesus’ command was to “make disciples,” not to start churches. But if you make disciples, churches are the result. They are the result because they are needed. The church is for discipleship and disciples are the church’s gift to the world. Disciples are the delivery system for spreading God’s good news to the world. The church takes them in, loves them, equips them, and sends them back into the world to be the salt and light. The church is evaluated by its success in preparing and sending mature Christ-like people into the world. The project will be to understand the dynamic of how leadership relates to this and how a plan can be implemented.

Session 9: The Pastor/Leader

The biblical role of the pastoral/leader is examined from scripture. The way in which a leader’s work is radically separated from the most common forms of measuring success. The development of a disciple making leader’s DNA is covered as well as dangerous distractions that spiritual leader’s face. The development of the leader’s soul will be a major part of the community’s work. Four essential roles will also be presented and discussed. The project will be to decide if the leader desires and is willing to commit to learning how to be a disciple making pastor/leader.

Session 10: The End

The main thesis of the Bonhoeffer Project is that all who are called to salvation are called to discipleship—no exceptions, no excuses. It is at this point that the thesis is connected to expected results. If the church did everything that Christ commanded and it filled the earth with Christlike disciples, what difference would it make? Would it trigger the return of Christ? Would it improve the quality of life on earth? Would a larger number of people enter heaven? Just how critical is it that we do better at making disciples? The project is to struggle with the urgency and importance of our obedience to Christ's command. What really is at stake?

Information

Begins:

January 2015: Local: Long Beach CA

February 2015: Web Community

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