

# Bonhoeffer's Life Together WAF Series

## Session 4: The Day with Others

September 23, 2015

### IV. *Life Together* Chapter 3 – The Day Alone

#### A. Solitude

1. "Let him who cannot be alone beware of community....Let him who is not in community beware of being alone." (p. 77)
2. "only as we are within the fellowship can we be alone, and only he that is alone can live in the fellowship. Only in the fellowship do we learn to be rightly alone and only in aloneness do we learn to live rightly in fellowship....both begin at the same time with the call of Jesus Christ." (pp. 77-78)
3. "The day together will be unfruitful without the day alone, both for the fellowship and for the individual." (p. 78)
4. Best if certain times are set aside for personal devotion – the early morning is best for many people (p. 87)
5. "Blessed is he who is alone in the strength of the fellowship and blessed is he who keeps the fellowship in the strength of aloneness. But the strength of aloneness and the strength of the fellowship is solely the strength of the Word of God, which is addressed to the individual in fellowship." (p. 89)
6. Being Alone in a World of Temptations
  - a. Solitude can be a time of testing
  - b. Has the fellowship adequately equipped the individual to be faithful when alone?
  - c. The fellowship is invisibly present with the individual. (p. 88) "We are members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. (p. 89)
  - d. "Is the Word of God close to him as a comfort and strength? Or does he misuse his aloneness contrary to the fellowship, the Word, and the prayer?" (p. 88)
  - e. Individual sins, no matter how personal or secret harm the fellowship. (metaphor of an unknown ailment)

#### B. Silence

1. "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak." (Ecclesiastes 3:7)
2. Silence as humble listening and contemplation – not failure to speak when a word is needed
3. Silence is focused on the Word
  - a. "Silence is the simple stillness of the individual under the Word of God. We are silent before hearing the Word, as a child is quiet when he enters his father's room. We are silent after hearing the Word because the Word is still speaking and dwelling within us. We are silent at the beginning of the day because God should have the first word, and we are silent before going to sleep because the last word also belongs to God. We keep silence solely for the sake of the Word, and therefore not in order to show disregard for the Word but rather to honor and receive it....Silence is nothing else but waiting for God's Word and coming from God's Word with a blessing." (p. 79)
  - b. "let none expect from silence anything but a direct encounter with the Word of God, for the sake of which he has entered into silence." (pp. 80-81)

#### C. Three Purposes for Being Alone Each Day

1. Meditation on Scripture
  - a. Shorter passages than in corporate devotions, possibly one passage, possibly repeated each day through the week
  - b. The text has something particular to say to you on this day for our Christian life – God's Word to us
  - c. No other purpose than waiting to hear God's Word to us – not sermon prep or Bible study

- d. Not necessary to discover something new in a passage – perhaps pondering something familiar anew
  - e. “Above all, it is not necessary that we should have any unexpected, extraordinary experiences in meditation. This can happen, but if it does not, it is not a sign that the meditation period has been useless.” (p. 83)
2. Personal Prayer (Supplication)
- a. Guided by the Word of Scripture
  - b. “Prayer means nothing else but the readiness and willingness to receive and appropriate the Word, and, what is more, to accept it in one’s personal situation, particular tasks, decisions, sins, and temptations. What can never enter the corporate prayer of the fellowship may here be silently made known to God. According to a word of Scripture we pray for the clarification of our day, for preservation from sin, for growth in sanctification, for faithfulness and strength in our work.” (p. 85)
  - c. “It is one of the particular difficulties of meditation that our thoughts are likely to wander on go their own way, toward other persons or to some events in our life....When this happens it is often a help not to snatch back our thoughts convulsively, but quite calmly to incorporate into our prayer the people and events to which our thoughts keep straying and thus in all patience return to the starting point of the meditation.” (p. 85)
3. Intercessions
- a. Opportunity to fulfill promises you have made to pray for others
  - b. “A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. I can no longer condemn or hate a brother for whom I pray, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, that hitherto may have been strange and intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the countenance of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner. This is a happy discovery for the Christian who begins to pray for others. There is no dislike, no personal tension, no estrangement that cannot be overcome by intercession as far as our side is concerned. Intercessory prayer is the purifying bath into which the individual and the fellowship must enter every day.” (p. 86)
  - c. “Intercession means nothing more than to bring our brother into the presence of God, to see him under the Cross of Jesus as a poor human being and sinner in need of grace.” (p. 86)
  - d. “intercession is not general and vague but very concrete: a matter of definite persons and definite difficulties and therefore definite petitions.” (p. 86) – requires knowledge of the person and difficulties!