

Sunrise Community Church

Growing in Grace Study

Wednesday, July 31, 2013

Quotes from *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Importance of Community

“It is not simply to be taken for granted that the Christian has the privilege of living among other Christians. Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. At the end all his disciples deserted him. On the Cross he was utterly alone, surrounded by evildoers and mockers...So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes.” 17

“The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.” 19

“The believer feels no shame, as though he were still living too much in the flesh, when he yearns for the physical presence of other Christians.” 19

“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. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity.” 26

“He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.” 27

“Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.” 30

On Reading Scripture in the Public Gathering

“Consecutive reading of Biblical books forces everyone who wants to hear to put himself, or to allow himself to be found, where God has acted once and for all for the salvation of men. We become a part of what once took place for our salvation. Forgetting and losing ourselves, we, too, pass through the Red Sea, through the desert, across the Jordan into the Promised Land.” 53

“A complete reversal occurs...It is in fact more important for us to know what God did to Israel, to His Son Jesus Christ, than to seek what God intends for us today. The fact that Jesus Christ died is more important than the fact that I shall die and the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead is the sole ground of my hope that I, too, shall be raised on the

Last Day. Our salvation is 'external to ourselves.' I find no salvation in my life history, but only in the history of Jesus Christ." 54

When We're Not Together: Work and Solitude

"Prayer is entitled to its time. But the bulk of the day belongs to work. And only where each receives its own specific due will it become clear that both belong inseparably together. Without the burden and labor of the day, prayer is not prayer, and without prayer work is not work. This only the Christian knows." 70

"The prayer of the morning will determine the day. Wasted time, which we are ashamed of, temptations that beset us, weakness and listlessness in our work, disorder and indiscipline in our thinking and our relations with other people very frequently have their cause in neglect of morning prayer." 71

"Even routine mechanical work will be performed more patiently when it is done with knowledge of God and His command." 71

"Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. He will only do harm to himself and to the community. Alone you stood before God when he called you; alone you had to answer that call; alone you had to struggle and pray; and alone you will die and give an account to God."

"Let him who is not in community beware of being alone...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." 77

Prayer and Community

"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." 86

"Intercession means no 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." 86

"We are members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. Every member serves the whole body, either to its health or to its destruction. This is no mere theory; it is a spiritual reality. And the Christian community has often experienced its effects with disturbing clarity, sometimes destructively and sometimes fortunately." 89

Ministry

“Self-justification and judging others go together, as justification by grace and serving others go together.” 91

“Often we combat our evil thoughts most effectively if we absolutely refuse to allow them to be expressed in words.” 91

“I can never know beforehand how God’s image should appear in others. That image always manifests a completely new and unique form that comes solely from God’s free and sovereign creation.” 93

“He who would learn to serve must first learn to think little of himself.” 94

“Christians, especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.” 97

“Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and for his own follies.” 98

Confession and Community

“The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everybody must conceal his sin from himself and from the fellowship. We dare not be sinners. Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is that we are sinners!” 110

“The Cross of Jesus Christ destroys all pride. We cannot find the Cross of Jesus if we shrink from going to the place where it is to be found, namely, the public death of the sinner.” 114