Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Harper & Row ©1954. Translated by John W. Doberstein

**Introduction by translator**

Born February 4, 1906; Died April 9, 1945 Concentration Camp in Flossenburg. Executed by special order of Heinrich Himmler. 7

World = the sphere of concrete responsibility given to us by and in Jesus Christ. 8

What it means to live with Christ (two books: Life Together and The Cost of Discipleship) 11

**Chapter 1: Community**

Life together under the Word. Ps 133:1 How pleasant it is… 17

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. 17

So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes. 17

So between the death of Christ and the Last Day it is only by a gracious anticipation of the last things that Christians are privileged to live in visible fellowship with other Christians. It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in the world to share God’s Word and sacrament. Not all Christians receive this blessing. The imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely… 18

It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian [siblings]. 20

Every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. 27

God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. 27

Even when sin and misunderstanding burden the communal life, is not the sinning brother still a brother, with whom I, too, stand under the Word of Christ? Will not his sin be a constant occasion of me to give thanks that both of us may live in the forgiving love of God in Jesus Christ? Thus the very hour of disillusionment with my brother becomes incomparably salutary because it so thoroughly teaches me that neither of us can live by our words an deeds, but only by that one Word and Deed which really binds us together – the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. 28

On thankfulness:

We pray for the big things and forget to give thanks for the ordinary, small (and yet really not small) gifts. 29

A pastor should not complain about his congregation, certainly never to other people, but also not to God. A congregation has not been entrusted to him in order that he should become its accuser before God and men. 29

The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our fellowship is in Jesus Christ alone, the more serenely shall we think of our fellowship and pray and hope for it. 30

**Chapter 2: The Day with Others**

But every common devotion should include the *word of Scripture, the hymns of the Church, and the prayer of the fellowship*. 44

Actually, however, this difficulty [Psalms that are incomprehensible and difficult] indicates the point at which we get our first glimpse of the secret of the Psalter. A psalm that we cannot utter as a prayer, that makes us falter and horrifies us, is a hint to us that here Someone else is praying, not we; that the One who is here protesting his innocence, who is invoking God’s judgment, who has come to such infinite depths of suffering, is none other than Jesus Christ himself. He it is who is praying here, not only here but in the whole Psalter. 45

The Psalter is the great school of prayer… [F]irst, …prayer… means praying according to the Word of God, on the basis of promises…. Second, we learn from the prayer of the psalms what we should pray…. Third, the psalms teach us to pray as a fellowship. 47-48

Holy Scripture is more than a watchword. It is also more than “light for today.” It is God’s revealed Word for all… for all times. Holy Scripture does not consist of individual passages; it is a unit and is intended to be used as such. 50-51

As a whole the Scriptures are God’s revealing Word. Only in the infiniteness of its inner relationship, in the connection of Old and New Testaments, of promise and fulfillment, sacrifice and law, law and gospel, cross and resurrection, faith and obedience, having and hoping, will the full witness of Jesus Christ the Lord be perceived. 51

The fact that Jesus Christ died is more important than the fact that *I* shall die, and the fact the 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

The heart sings because it is overflowing with Christ. That is why all singing in the church is a spiritual performance. Surrender to the Word, incorporation in the community, great humility, and much discipline- these are the prerequisites of all singing together. 58

{only wants unison singing} There is the bass or the alto who must call everybody’s attention to his astonishing range and therefore sings every hymn an octave lower. There is the solo voice that goes swaggering, swelling, blaring, and tremulant from a full chest and drowns out everything else to the glory of its own fine organ. 60

It is not you that sings, it is the Church that is singing, and you, as a member of the Church, may share in its song. 61

It is in fact the most normal thing in the common Christian life to pray together. 62

The Scriptures speak of three kinds of table fellowship that Jesus keeps with his own: daily fellowship at table, the table fellowship of the Lord’s Supper, and the final table fellowship in the Kingdom of God. But in all three the one thing that counts is that “their eyes were opened, and they knew him.” (Luke24:31) 66

…both [prayer and work] belong inseparably together. Without the burden and labor of the day, prayer is not prayer, and without prayer work is not work. 70 *not work life balance, try work prayer balance!*

**Chapter 3: The Day Alone**

*Let him who cannot be alone beware of community.* He will only do harm to himself and to the community…. You cannot escape from yourself; for God has singled you out. If you refuse to be alone you are rejecting Christ’s call to you, and you can have no part in the community for those who are called. 77

The reverse is true: *Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.* 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. 77

Right speech comes out of silence, and right silence comes out of speech. 78

As there are definite hours in the Christian’s day for the Word, particularly the time of common worship and prayer, so the day also need definite times of silence, silence under the Word and silence that comes out of the Word. 78-79

After a time of quiet we meet others in a different and fresh way. 80

..in our personal meditation we confine ourselves to a brief selected text, which possible my not be changed for a whole week. 82

…we read God’s Word as God’s Word to us. We do not ask what this text has to say to other people. 82

…the most promising method of prayer is to allow oneself to be guided by the word of the Scriptures, to pray on the basis of a word of Scripture. In this way we shall not become the victims of our own emptiness. 84

A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses. 86

I can no longer hate or condemn 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. 86

Who can really be faithful in great things if he has not learned to be faithful in the things of daily life? 87

**Chapter 4: Ministry**

In a Christian community everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain. Only when even the smallest link is securely interlocked is the chain unbreakable. 94

[Ministers] forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking. 97

We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions. 99

As Christ bore and received us as sinners so we in his fellowship may bear and receive sinners into the fellowship of Jesus Christ through the forgiving of sins. 102

**Chapter 5: Confession and Communion**

But it is the grace of the Gospel, which is so hard for the pious to understand, that it confronts us with the truth and says: you are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come, as the sinner that you are, to God who loves you. He wants you as you are; He does not want anything from you, a sacrifice, a work; He wants you alone. 110-111

In confession the light of the Gospel breaks into the darkness and seclusion of the heart. The sin must be brought into the light. The unexpressed must be openly spoken and acknowledged. 112

In confession occurs the break-through to the Cross. 113

It is nothing else but our fellowship with Jesus Christ that leads us to the ignominious dying that comes in confession, in order that we my in truth share in his Cross. The Cross of Jesus Christ destroy all pride. 114

In confession the break-through to new life occurs. 115

Confession is conversion… Christ has made a new beginning with us. 115

Confession is discipleship. Life with Jesus Christ and his community has begun. 115

Confession is the renewal of the joy of baptism. 115

As the members of the congregation are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord so will they be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and his community is complete. The life of Christians together under the Word has reached its perfection in the sacrament. 122

**P.S. Apparently Bonhoeffer didn’t like harmony singing… only unison!**

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