

## **“Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy, Part 3”**

### **Adult Education Hour**

**Sunday, October 29, 2023**

- I. Welcome
- II. Introduction and Prayer
- III. “Religionless Christianity” Video Clip 1 (20 minutes)
- IV. Small Group
  - A. “One week after passage of the Enabling Act, Hitler declared a boycott of Jewish stores across Germany.” It is easy for people to say what they would have done in a given situation—“Well, if I had been there . . .”—but say this act were instituted today, where you live. You were forbidden, by government, to shop at any market or department store owned by members of a specific people group. Would you, like Dietrich’s grandmother, defy the legislation and shop there anyway? Would you try to get others to join in the rebellion with you, or out of fear, would you meekly submit to the new statute?
  - B. There were some who wondered why Bonhoeffer didn’t “join the German Christians in order to work against them from within.” He refused, saying, “If you board the wrong train, it is no use running along the corridor in the opposite direction.” Do you agree, or do you think it could have been advantageous to join with the enemy and seek to destroy them from within? How could he have done this, had he chosen to? Had you been in his place, what would you have done? If you had chosen to join the opposition, what kinds of actions would you have taken to undermine the German church?
  - C. In 1939, all men born in 1906 and 1907 were ordered to register for the military. This presented a conundrum for Bonhoeffer. He couldn’t declare himself a conscientious objector. To do so would be risking his life. Further, he mused, it would give Germans the impression that the entire Confessing Church agreed with that stance, and would give Confessing pastors the impression that they, too, should refuse to take

up arms. On the other hand, fighting for Hitler's Germany seemed unconscionable.

We know what he finally decided, but this brings up the problem of war in present times. Is it wrong to fight in war? Does the command "Thou shalt not kill" apply to wartime? to self-defense? If not, should everyone be made to participate, if called upon?

What about the conscientious objector? Should his or her participation be mandatory if that individual is going to live in the nation at war?

V. Large Group

VI. Closing