



DISCIPLE

Week 02: The Call to the Church

Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Ephesians 2:14-22 then ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in these passages?

Beginning the Conversation

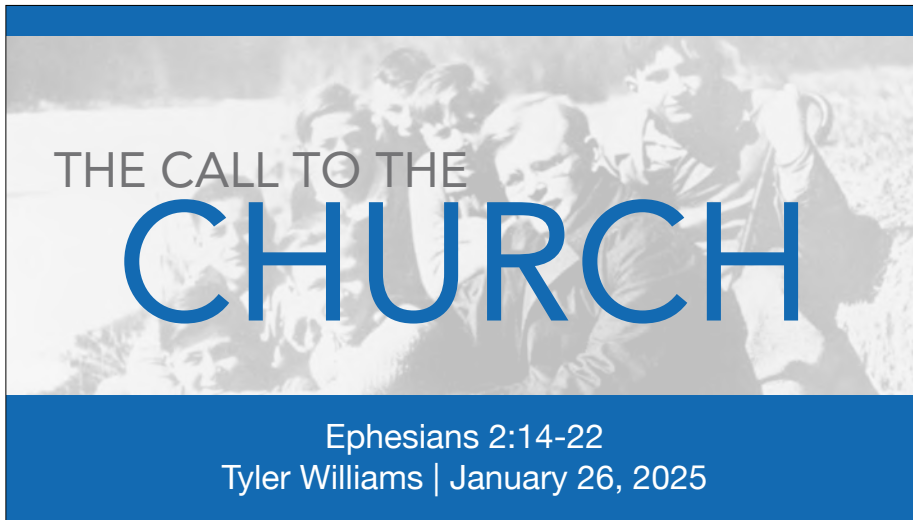
1. How essential do you see the church — the community of faith — to your faith? Do you think of your relationship with Jesus primarily in individualistic ways or communal ways?
2. Bonhoeffer understood the church-community as fundamentally essential for Christ followers, and our discipleship was designed to be lived out together in and as the church-community. Do you think Bonhoeffer goes too far, or is he on to something? Discuss.

Digging Deeper

1. Bonhoeffer's motto: "Christ existing as church-community" (*Sanctorum Communio*, 141), emphasises the presence of Christ in and through the church. Does this way of looking at church change your perspective? Howso?
2. The Scriptures highlight how we personally encounter God through other Christ followers (see Romans 10:14 and 2Corinthians 5). How have you encountered God through others?
3. Christ mediates not only our relationship with God the Father (read 1Tim 2:5; Heb 9:15), but also our relationships with one another. As Paul says, "He is our Peace" (Eph 2:14). While the vertical mediatorial role of Jesus is well understood among Christians, the horizontal role of Jesus seems far less emphasized. What does it mean that Jesus mediates relationships between one another?
4. The most significant biblical metaphor for the church is "the body of Christ." Read Eph 1:22-23, 4:15-16; Rom 12:5, 12; 1Cor 12:13-127; Col 1:18. What are some of the many implications of this metaphor for how we live life together as God's people?
5. Bonhoeffer maintains that an "idealistic" vision of church will inevitably lead to disappointment and disillusionment. Rather, we should have a realistic vision of the church that recognizes its faults as well as the reality that we experience Jesus in the midst of it. How can your view of church be more "real"?

Living it Out

1. Bonhoeffer saw the church both as a spiritual reality as well as an all-too human reality. As part of living life together, he encouraged Christ followers to practice gratitude and thanksgiving for the church, prayer for others in the church, confession and forgiveness with one another, and above all love and care for one another. Commit yourself to be thankful for pray for your church.
2. The Apostle Paul most often refers to the relationship between Christ followers as a sibling relationship: we are "brother and sisters in Christ." How does thinking of others in your church as spiritual "sisters or brothers in Christ" change the way you think about your relationship with them? How can you recall this in your relationships regularly?



THE CALL TO THE
CHURCH

Ephesians 2:14-22
Tyler Williams | January 26, 2025

The Call to Follow

Jesus' call to follow is an deeply personal decision that we each have to make.

This call to discipleship, although unmistakably addressed to the individual, *places that individual within a community — the church.*

Our discipleship is designed to be *lived out together in and as the church-community.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a disciple with a faith and life centred on Jesus Christ.

- An uncompromising discipleship
- Lived out in and as the church
- For the good of the world



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Bonhoeffer & the Church

For Bonhoeffer, the Church is a revelation of God, a gift of grace, a reality that has been established by God's grace in Jesus Christ.

- “Christian community is not an ideal, but a divine reality.... Christian community is not an ideal we have to realize, but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we participate” (*Life Together*, 35, 38).

Bonhoeffer & the Church

“In Christ God loves human beings and opens the divine heart; and in giving God's own self to sinful human beings **God renews them** at the same time and thus **makes the new community possible and real**; this means that God's love wills community” (*Sanctorum Communio*, 173).

Bonhoeffer & the Church

- *Sanctorum Communio* (1927) and *Act and Being* (1930).
- Visiting churches/training programs.
- Finkenwalde Seminary (1935-37).
- *Discipleship* (1937) & *Life Together* (1939).



Bonhoeffer & the Church



“Christian community means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. There is not Christian community that is more than this, and none that is less than this... We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ” (*Life Together*, 31).

Bonhoeffer & the Church

“Christ existing as church-community” (*Sanctorum Communio*, 141).

- “The church is the presence of Christ in the same way that Christ is the presence of God” (SC, 140).
- “The Spirit is only in the church-community, and the church-community is only in the Spirit” (SC, 161).

Bonhoeffer & the Church

“The ‘church’ is, therefore, not a human community to which Christ then comes or not, nor is it a gathering of such persons as those who (as individuals) seek Christ or think they have Christ and now wish to cultivate this common ‘possession.’ The church is rather the community of faith created by and founded upon Christ in which Christ is revealed... as the new human, or rather, as the new humanity itself” (*Act and Being*, 112).

1.

As Disciples of Christ, we need each other for the sake of Christ.

- We personally encounter God through other Christ followers (Romans 10:14; 2Corinthians 5).
- We need our brothers and sisters in Christ as the bearers and proclaimers of the divine word of forgiveness and grace.
- We really do need each other!

“The community of faith and the community of love belong together. They show the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the congregation, which are both rooted in the love of God. *Faith establishes unity; love establishes community*” (Gerhard Müller and Albrecht Schönherr, “Afterword,” *Life Together*, 138).

2. As Disciples of Christ, we come to others only *through* Jesus Christ.

- Christ opened up the way to God (1Tim 2:5; Heb 9:15) *and* to one another: “He is our Peace” (Eph 2:14).
- Christ mediates not only our relationship with God the Father, but also our relationships with one another.
- “No human way leads from person to person.... Christ stands between them. *The way to one’s neighbour leads only through Christ*” (*Discipleship*, 96).

“He is our Peace” (Eph 2:14-22)



“He is our Peace” (Eph 2:14)

Reconciliation in Christ

- He is our Peace
- He made the two groups One
- He destroyed the Barrier
- He set aside/nullified the Law

Accomplished
“through the
cross, by which
he put to death
their hostility”
(Eph 2:16)

“One New Humanity” (Eph 2:15)

“His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity” (2:15).

- Create/Recreate (*ktizo* κτιζω) – to bring into existence.
- In himself/in Christ – in Christ humanity is renewed, restored, re-imaged.
- The result: “One New Humanity.”

“One New Humanity” (Eph 2:15)



“One New Humanity” (Eph 2:15)

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

“Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all” (Colossians 3:11).

“Christ opened up the way to God and to one another. Now Christians can live with each other in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one. But they can continue to do so only through Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one; only through him are we bound together. He remains the one and only mediator throughout eternity” (*Life Together*, 33).

3. As Disciples of Christ, we are incorporated into the body of Christ.

- “And God... appointed him to be head over everything for the church, **which is his body**, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph 1:22-23, 4:15-16; Rom 12:5, 12; 1Cor 12:13-127; Col 1:18).
- All Christ followers are incorporated into the body of Christ, we are now “brothers and sisters” by virtue of the mediatorial role of Jesus.

The Church as Body of Christ

- Inclusive not Exclusive — For all who accept Jesus Christ's call and follow him in lives of discipleship.
- Ecumenical, not Sectarian — The visible, local church needs to understand itself as part of the “one holy universal apostolic church” (Nicene Creed). This leads to a focus on essentials, not disputable matters (Romans 14-15).

The Church as Body of Christ

- Loving and forgiving — The church-community needs to model the love, forgiveness, and reconciliation that we have experienced in Christ vertically with God, horizontally with one another.

Disappointment with Church?

Bonhoeffer's Church: *Not Ideal, But Real*

- An “idealistic” vision of church will inevitably lead to disappointment and disillusionment.
- A healthy “real” view of the church will see it as authentic community made up of sinners save by grace, all works in process, following Christ our mediator.

Invitation

The church-community is
created by God the Father,
established by Christ,
energized and sustained by the Holy Spirit.