



## DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

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*Gracious God, in every age you have sent men and women who have given their lives in witness to your love and truth. Inspire us with the memory of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose faithfulness led to the way of the cross, and give us courage to bear full witness with our lives to your Son's victory over sin and death, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1906 and was raised in a home that valued education. He earned a doctorate in theology in 1927 from the University of Berlin at the age of twenty-one. Bonhoeffer also studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City from 1930 to 1931. While in New York, he began attending the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, where he enjoyed both sound theological doctrine and rich examples of Christian life lived for the sake of the world. As the Nazi party was gaining notoriety and power in Germany, many of Bonhoeffer's friends urged him to stay in the United States rather than return to Germany, but he opted to go home.

Upon his return to Germany, Bonhoeffer accepted a position as lecturer in systematic theology at the University of Berlin. He also began teaching confirmation classes for adolescent males in a Berlin slum. When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer became a leading spokesman for the center of Protestant resistance to the Nazis, the Confessing Church. He spoke out not just about Hitler's dictatorship but also against his program of genocide and the Jewish Holocaust. Bonhoeffer helped organize the underground seminary of the Confessing Church.

In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer notes, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

In 1939, Bonhoeffer's brother-in-law introduced him to a group planning to overthrow Hitler. Because of this affiliation, in April, 1943, just after becoming engaged to be married, Bonhoeffer was arrested and taken to prison. Later he was moved to a concentration camp at Flossenbürg. On April 9, 1945, just days before the American army would liberate Flossenbürg, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged at the age of thirty-nine.

Pastor, theologian, poet, and courageous truth-teller: Bonhoeffer's passion for living his faith fueled his political stance and cost him his life. Through his prolific writings, he continues to serve as a prophetic and inspiring voice for the Church.

— BETH LEWIS