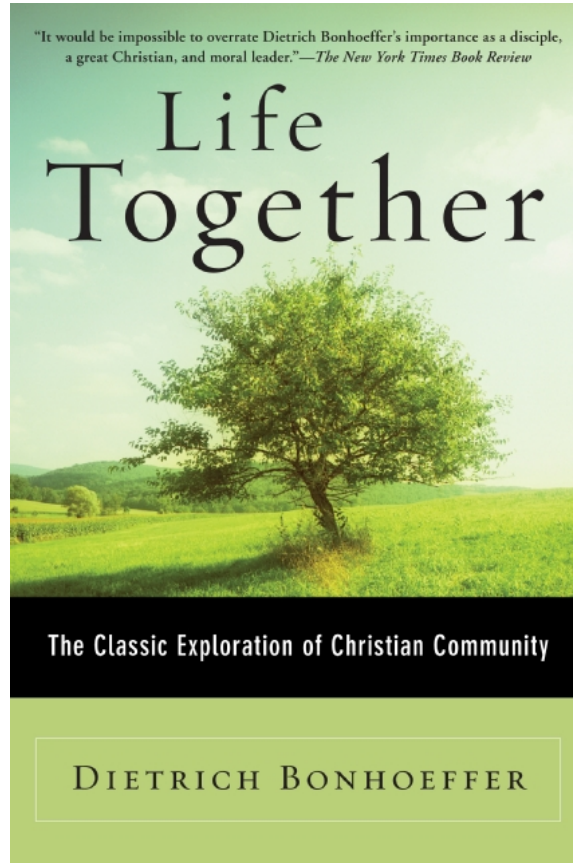


Living Love(d) Together Bible Study

Based on Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Companion Parent Resource



—LIVE LOVE(D)

By: Dr. Dave Rueter, DCE and fellow parent
Youth & Family Ministry Facilitator
Pacific Southwest District, LCMS

Living Love[d] Together Bible Study – Companion Parent Resource

Introduction to Parent Resources

Why resources for parents? You might be asking yourself why the Gathering planners have taken the time to develop resources like this Bible study for parents to use individually or in groups. If you are, good question! Research on faith development in teens is nearly unanimous in pointing to the role of the parent(s) as the most fundamental of all roles. Pastors, DCE's, and other youth leaders spend a few hours a week with your son or daughter. We at the Gathering have the privilege of connecting just once every 3 years. As parents, you impact and shape their lives on a daily basis. We have developed this and other parent resources to equip and support you as you LiveLove[d] as a family in your home, community, and church. This is our way of walking beside you before and following the Gathering as you live the love of Christ as you fulfill your role as parent.

An Intro Living Love[d] Together

In the coming weeks or months, your son or daughter will hopefully be working through the Living Love[d] Together Bible Studies (www.lcmgathering.com/communitylife) based on the wonderful classic by Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Life Together*. For those of you who are able, I would certainly recommend that you pick up a copy of the book (amazon.com has is for \$7.60 as of this writing). For those of you for whom it is not realistic to add the reading of such a book to your already busy schedule, please take the time to peruse this resource to help you to get a general understanding of Bonhoeffer's understanding of our life together in Christ.

The Life of Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer would have likely had a truly prolific career as a theologian and church leader had he not been born in Breslau, Germany in 1906. As a young leader of the Confessing Church (the Christian church in Nazi Germany that resisted the attempts by the state to dictate church teaching), Bonhoeffer not only was called upon to provide pastoral leadership and training to a church under immense pressure, he also sought to reconcile God's call for the Christian to respect and obey the authority of the state, with a state truly bent on a path of evil. Ultimately, this led Bonhoeffer to participate in a plot to assassinate Hitler, for which he was arrested, imprisoned, and finally executed in the Flossenbürg concentration camp, just fourteen days before its liberation by the 2nd U.S. Cavalry.

In the midst of these pressures (and prior to his arrest), Bonhoeffer took to the training of 25 young men for pastoral ministry in the Confessing Church. *Life Together* is drawn from his work as part of the Confessing Church's illegal underground seminary.

Read 1 Peter 4:12-19

Like Bonhoeffer, Peter knew that the Christian life would not be devoid of suffering. Consider for a moment what suffering you have had to endure in your own life.

What suffering can you see in the life of your son or daughter? What hope can you offer from this passage?

Verse 19. Trust in our faithful God and continue to do good.

Community

Consider for a moment the types of community that your son or daughter is a part of. What groups, teams, etc. do they find connection to others?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

If each of us, including youth, is a part of the community of the Body of Christ, that is the local church, how can you as a parent support and uplift their participation in the Body?

As parents we can encourage our sons and daughter by giving them a chance to explore their gifts that make them a unique part of the Body of Christ. We can also help them to connect with others who can do the same.

How can the way in which we speak of other Christians in our community (including, but not exclusively, in our own churches) help to connect youth to the community found in the Body of Christ?

Putting the best construction on the actions of others and remembering that in all things we, ourselves and our children included, are sinners in need of forgiveness. We can uplift our church leaders as well as the youth in our congregations in front of each other. When we look to build each other up, we encourage both young and old alike in the unity we share through baptismal grace.

Worship

In worship, we hear and speak the Word of God and receive the strengthening of faith through His sacraments. Through worship, God draws our hearts and minds away from thoughts bent inward on ourselves and calls us to Him and outward to His people. God provides for his people in very tangible ways. These gifts often make noticeable differences in the lives of young people. Research from the National Study of Youth and Religion found that “the 40 percent of youth with a parent attending worship services at least once a week are significantly more likely than those with parents who do not attend to report that their mothers encourage their fathers and avoid screaming at them when angry”¹

Findings such as this and other research point to the reality that the worshiping community within the family is of critical importance in the future worship life of your son or daughter. In my own study of confirmation² strongly pointed to the influence that parents have in shaping the behavior of their children through worship and other connections to the life of the local church.

¹ See Report 5 from the National Study of Youth & Religion:

<http://www.youthandreligion.org/sites/youthandreligion.org/files/imported/publications/docs/family-report2.pdf>

² <http://www.worldcat.org/title/analysis-of-confirmation-instruction-and-student-congregational-connectedness-in-the-lutheran-church-missouri-synod/oclc/746035510>

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

As Lutherans, we traditionally value worshipping together across generations. How can you and a parent stir up love and good works in your family through worship?

It is important to note here the connection between love and good works. Through worship we receive the love of God, demonstrated in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and lived out in the ongoing mission of the church. Through experiencing this love we are drawn beyond ourselves and respond with love for one another through good works empowered by the Holy Spirit. We take part in this as a family each Sunday as we gather together with other families and offer praise, thanksgiving, and adoration to our Lord.

Alone

Being the parent of a teenager can be a lonely affair. Some of you may have children that only a few short years ago sought comfort curled up on you lap and now find it hard to even publicly acknowledge you. Some may encounter the pervading cultural message to our young people that parent are clueless and just do not understand what they are going through.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-10

Why would it be a mistake to despair when your son or daughter pushes away from you?

The teenage years are a lonely time for teens as well as parents. While we mourn the loss of the relationship we once had, we are called by God to persevere. We ought not allow the devil to cast doubt into our hearts. God remains faithful. He has seen many parents through these years, and He can see you through them as well.

How can you instead seek to proactively build up your relationship with your son or daughter in this possibly difficult time of life?

When you are pushed away by your son or daughter, take this as an opportunity to do what they least expect. Focus on listening to them and seeking to understand their loneliness rather than focusing on what you feel you have lost as a parent in your relationship with them. By thinking “big picture” you can keep in mind that your goal should be the formation of an adult with a strong self-actualized faith of their own. Pushing you may be an essential piece of that growth process.

Service

In the prior parental resource on vocation I noted that “We live love[d] and live out that love serving God as we serve our children.” It is truly a holy vocation that we as parents fulfill as we seek to love and care for our children, even and perhaps, especially, as they become teenagers.

One area of service focused upon in the youth Bible study involves the bearing of one another’s burdens.

Read Ephesians 4:1-2

Bearing the burden of a teenager certainly can be a patience testing endeavor at times. Yet this is part of the service to which we as parents have been called.

How does God's love enable us to bear the burdens of our teens?

Through Christ's love we are able to see our teens as Christ sees them. We therefore love them in some measure as He loves them.

How are we able to use the service of listening to aid in our service of burden bearing?

Parents of teens are called by Christ to listen beyond our own needs and remain attuned to the needs of their children, just as when they were little. As teens, this can become challenging. However, relying upon the strength of Christ, you, as parents, are enabled to develop the patience necessary to walk with your teens, even when they would rather not let anyone know that they need you around, aiding them and uniting with them as you bear with them their burdens.

Confession

Nobody really likes to admit that they are wrong. This can be especially true within the family, though this ought to be the one place where everybody is most comfortable admitting their own faults. Like it or not, all children figure out that their parents are not the superheroes they once believed them to be. Our choice as parents then becomes: Do we embrace that reality or do we seek to deny our own faults before our children?

I know that the last statement may come off as sort of harsh, but stick with me a moment as I hash this thought out. How can we build the character in young people to admit their wrongs if they do not see this in action? Simply put, we cannot. Teenagers know that their parents make mistakes. I truly believe from all my years of youth ministry, lasting respect and character development requires parents to admit when they have failed and to seek forgiveness from their teens for two key reasons: 1) Because we are called by God to confess; and 2) So that by offering forgiveness to their parents, teens are able to truly understand their own need to confess and receive absolution.

Read Psalm 32:1-5

How can the practice of confession and absolution in the home teach your son or daughter the necessity of confession as well as the freedom of absolution?

Sin separates. Sin separates each of us from God and also from one another. By teaching confession as a natural and normal part of life, teens are taught the freeing experience of God's grace. By receiving His grace, they are given the opportunity to enjoy more fully a relationship with God and one another.

Life together as parent and child is an excellent context for your son or daughter to experience Christ's forgiveness. You may use this basic liturgy of confession and absolution:

Parent: *For all those times and in all those ways that I have sinned as your parent, I seek your forgiveness, for I am deeply sorry for them.*

Child: *Just as Christ forgives you so I to forgive you and remember your sins no more.*

Child: *For all those times and in all those ways that I have sinned as your child, I seek your forgiveness, for I am deeply sorry for them.*

Parent: *Just as Christ forgives you so I to forgive you and remember your sins no more.*

Parent: *May we both live love[d] together each day ever mindful of the forgiveness that is our in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Conclusion

Living love[d] life together is not simple task. Yet this is a task to which God has called us as parents. The fortunate thing is that He has not left us to our own devices to figure this out. He has empowered us with His love through His Holy Spirit and gifted us with the church for support as we seek to live out love in life together as a family.

Closing Prayer

Gracious Heavenly Father,
Having called us together as a family, empower us through your Spirit to live out Your love in our home. Aid us in seeing our sons and daughters with Your eyes. Help us to form character in their hearts through humility formed in ours. May our home truly be a part of the body of Christ, living out your love in all that we say and do. In the name of Your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.