

TIPS FOR THE DISCUSSION LEADER

**for *BONHOFFER*, documentary on the life of Dietrich Bonhoffer
showing on PBS, February 10, 2006, 10 p.m. EST
and available on DVD and VHS from Journey Films (www.journeyfilms.com)**

When you convene your group for discussion, keep the following in mind. The suggestions are meant to ensure a relaxed setting, a discussion that is interesting for all participants and a process that respects the way adults engage a subject.

1. Don't plan on too large a group. This discourages individual participation. If there are more than 20 or 30 people interested in participating, consider scheduling two groups and ask people to commit to one group or the other so you can ensure a balance in numbers.
2. Don't plan on too long a session. Somewhere between 30 minutes and an hour is adequate for full, considered discussion. Announce the intended length of the discussion session.
3. Prepare the group by ensuring they have seen the film and read the selected article. This may require printing out the article for those who don't use the internet themselves.
4. Prepare the room before the group assembles. Placing the chairs in a large circle so that all members can see each other without turning around in their seats creates a setting more conducive to participation.
5. Start on time and re-announce the length of time you have set aside for discussion.
6. Begin with a prayer or other natural form of expression for your group.
7. Ask that each member of the group identify himself or herself briefly.

8. Sum up the objective content of the film. You might say something like:

The documentary tells the story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a young German theologian and pacifist who lived in the first part of the 20th Century. As a young pastor, Bonhoeffer helped organize the Confessing Church, Germany's only true organized challenge to the Nazi state. He was a prolific writer and an acclaimed preacher. He came to New York on a teaching fellowship and taught Sunday school in the famed African-American Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. When Bonhoeffer returned to Germany in 1932 he brought with him a new awareness of racial prejudice and became one of the first clear voices to challenge the Christian churches to stand with the Jews in their moment of need.

Just before he was exposed as a resistor to the Nazis, Bonhoeffer proposed marriage to the young Maria von Weidmeyer. He was imprisoned before they could marry. Three weeks before the end of World War II the 39-year old Bonhoeffer was executed. In the end, Bonhoeffer paid with his life for his beliefs.

9. Ask if there are any questions about the outline of the film. You may not be able to answer any and all questions. Others in the group may be able to help with that. Perhaps someone will ask a question no one can answer. If so, the group should be comfortable with that fact.
10. Remind the group that the discussion will be guided somewhat by the selected article but it need not be limited to that.
11. Begin the discussion by reading the questions in the order they appear.
12. During the discussion, let each person respond completely without interruption.
13. Avoid giving your own opinion on what others are saying. As discussion leader, your task is to keep the discussion flowing and on topic.
14. You may consider having someone copy onto newsprint the key group responses to the film.
15. In closing the discussion, thank everyone for their participation.
16. Close with a prayer or other natural expression of your group.