# Unit 10: Do we find humanness in Sacrifice and Salvation?

## Overview



Figure 10.1 **[Find original source and check for copyright].** From <http://thequotes.in/the-only-bond-worth-anything-between-human-beings-is-their-humanness-jesse-owens/>

You’ve already been thinking about the meaning of humanness, and in this unit, you will have time to take your inquiry further. Is your humanness (your ‘being human”) about your capacity to transform the lives of others and to be transformed, perhaps through acts of sacrifice? Are you “more human” because of what you do for others? Or by humanness, do you focus on your limitations, your sinful nature, and your need for salvation? And do you even need to experience sacrifice and salvation in order to find the good life? Can you find the good life without sacrificing anything?

## Prompts

Unit 10 will look at two kinds of prompts:

1: The life and teachings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

2: A current event of your choice

## Learning Outcomes

Through practicing inquiry in this unit, you will:

* Examine and evaluate the meaning of sacrifice, salvation, and humanness
* Question the kinds of connections that exist or do not exist between sacrifice, salvation, becoming human, and living the good life
* Examine the life of one historic figure and revered leader for lessons about sacrifice, salvation, humanness, and the good life
* Analyze a current event for what it can show you further about the relationships between sacrifice, salvation, humanness, and the good life
* Value the perspectives of past and present as found in the two prompts
* Reflect on the nature and character of God in relation to questions of humanness

## Activity Checklist

Here is a checklist of learning activities you will benefit from in completing this unit. You may find it useful for planning your work.

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| 🗹 | **Activities** |
|  | Activity 10.1: Journal in response to the questions. |
|  | Activity 10.2: Watch [this brief introductory video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KCply-HqWM) about Bonhoeffer. Read the summary of Bonhoeffer’s life and the context for his work, *The Cost of Discipleship.* |
|  | Activity 10.3: Read the excerpts and respond in your learning journal. |
|  | Activity 10.4: As a group, choose a current event or news story to focus on as your next prompt. Find out some details of the event and discuss together using the Template for Group Discussion. Post the completed template as a record of your discussion. |

**Assessment**

Here is the assessment for Unit 10.

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| **Group discussion:** Do we find humanness in Sacrifice and Salvation? | 2% |
| **Experiential learning report #2**: Choose a second experience to engage in from the perspective of the good life. Summarize your experience and present ways in which it addresses the big question. | 15% |

## Prompt 1: The Life and Teachings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Sometimes it is helpful to look to real stories and testimonies to gain insight into the meaning of life. Perhaps on special occasions, such as a birthday, you are stirred to note how much a person impacts you, the kinds of things she does, the lessons you’ve learned from her. In this unit, we will focus on the life of one man, a well-known and well-quoted man who lived and died in Nazi Germany. What do his words and actions model for you? Since we cannot read an entire book in the scope of this course, this lesson will present several quotations for your consideration. You are welcome to get a copy of *The Cost of Discipleship* and continue learning from Bonhoeffer.

### Learning Activities

#### Activity 10.1: Journal Reflection

Begin by journaling for approximately 5 minutes in response to these questions:

* What does sacrifice mean? Consider examples in your own life – when you have sacrificed something or when someone has sacrificed for you.
* Is salvation a synonym or do you see a distinction?

#### Activity 102: Who Is Dietrich Bonhoeffer?

To get a sense of who Bonhoeffer was and how his story informs his teachings, watch this [brief video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KCply-HqWM).

To gain more background on Bonhoeffer’s life and teachings, read the following summary.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

* 1906-1945 (lived through World War I and World War II)
* Grew up in an educated, liberal family with little interest in religion
* Became interested in theology at age 14 and pursued formal education at the University of Berlin as well as Union Theological Seminary in New York
* As Hitler’s influence grew, Bonhoeffer opposed him. He became involved in plots to overthrow Hitler and his socialist movement.
* Was a member of The Confessing Church, a group of other pastors and theologians who disagreed with the “nazification” of the German evangelical church (support of Aryan rights and anti-Semitism)

**His Sacrifice**

* He went to America to lecture, but felt compelled to return to Germany.
* "I have made a mistake in coming to America. I must live through this difficult period in our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people.”
* In 1943, he was arrested for his attempts to rescue Jews and to provide information to foreign contacts about Jewish deportations. On April 9, 1945, he was hanged along with other resisters.

***The Cost of Discipleship***

* Published 1937
* Calls Christians to reject being comfortable
* Used writing and teaching as a quiet weapon against Hitler and Nazi oppression
* Later joined the Secret Service but instead of spying on each community he visited, he tried to protect the Jews in those communities

#### Activity 10.3: Excerpt Readings and Reflection

Read each quote/excerpt below and discuss the questions in your learning journal.

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| **Excerpt #1**  “Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating. By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which others are just as entitled to as we are.” |

*Questions:*

* What does this reveal about humanness?
* How are grace and love related to sacrifice?

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| **Excerpt #2**  “Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'Ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.” |

*Questions:*

* What does the idea of “costly grace” show you about humanness?
* Discuss your thoughts on this quote in light of Bonhoeffer’s life choices.

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| **Excerpt #3**  “Not hero worship, but intimacy with Christ.” |

*Questions:*

* What do we sacrifice when we admire our heroes?
* Why does Bonhoeffer set up this contrast?

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| **Excerpt #4**  “No sacrifice which a lover would make for his beloved is too great for us to make for our enemy.” |

*Questions:*

* What is the relationship between sacrifice and reconciliation?
* What does it mean to sacrifice for our enemy?

**Further often quoted thoughts from Bonhoeffer:**

“We must learn to regard people less in light of what they do or omit to do, and more in the light of what they suffer.”

“Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.”

“The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.”

*Questions:*

* Do these words contribute further to your definition of salvation, sacrifice, and/or humanness? Discuss your reflections.
* Can you think of how we might apply these principles to any modern-day situations?

As you meet with your group this week, share your thoughts with your group. Discuss:

* Do we find humanness in sacrifice and salvation?
* How does Bonhoeffer’s life and message help you answer this question?
* In your own life, what has helped you to experience your own humanity the most?

*Note that as with all of the first lesson prompts, you will* ***not be graded*** *on these discussions. This prompt will help you explore the topics and will be instrumental in completing the final project.*

## Prompt 2: Current Event of your Choice

It may seem that tales of sacrifice are rich in the historical context, especially in times of war. However, acts of salvation and sacrifice are happening all around us if we only pause to look for them. Sadly, we can also see stories of loss, fear, victimization, and seeming helplessness, and we may wonder how any good can come of such things. Where is the good life in times of suffering?

### Learning Activities

#### Activity 10.4: Group Discussion

As a group, choose a current event or news story to focus on as your next prompt. The news story should help you to think more about the concepts of sacrifice and salvation as we see them (or maybe as we see the opposite) happening in the world around us. The story can be local or international. It can be about a major event or a smaller story. Find out some details of the event by skimming news reports, viewing photos, videos, or other documentation of the event. Discuss together using the Template for Group Discussion as your guide. Post the completed template as a record of your discussion.

## Assessment

### Group Discussion: Do we find humanness in Sacrifice and Salvation?

After completing this unit, including the learning activities, post the link to your Google Doc as a record of your group’s discussion of Prompt 2.

### Experiential Learning Report #2 (15%)

In week 4 you handed in your first experiential learning report based on your chosen activity. Now, choose a second experience to engage in from the perspective of the good life. Summarize your experience and present ways in which it addresses the big question.

## Unit 10 Summary

When we think of a hero, we often think of someone who sacrifices – maybe even their lives -- to save someone else. Bonhoeffer was willing to do this. When we give of ourselves for the good of others, as he did, is it loss or gain? Can we only experience the good life after we have offered what we have in sacrifice? Or can we only experience the good life once we have allowed others to sacrifice for us?

## References

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (n.d.). Christianity Today. Retrieved from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/martyrs/dietrich-bonhoeffer.html>

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (n.d.). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Retrieved from [https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008205#](https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008205)