

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

THE CHURCH UNDER NAZI RULE

This segment comes from **EPISODE 4: POWER + HUMILITY**.

The church's record of holding power - from Emperor Constantine in the 4th century onwards - has involved some terrible acts of coercion, exploitation, and abuse. Yet Jesus set an example of selfless service, and started a "humility revolution" that fundamentally transformed the West and the way we think about leadership and power. This segment looks at how Christians in Germany responded to Nazi rule, and asks the questions: What has it looked like when Christians have desired power for their own benefit? and, What has it looked like when they've chosen to forsake power for the good of others?



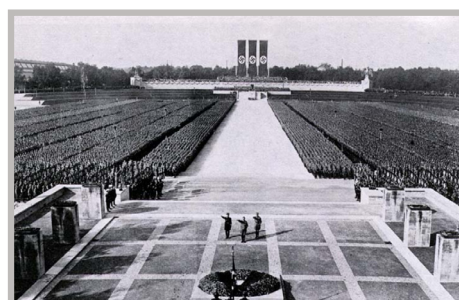
THEME QUESTIONS

1. Do you think Christians/the church are overall more concerned with gaining and maintaining power, or with humbly serving others? What reasons do you have for your answer?
2. Do you associate Jesus Christ more with power or with humility?



ENGAGE

1. Discuss the following questions:
 - a. Have you ever felt that you or a group that you were a part of was being persecuted? How did you feel?
 - b. What's the bravest thing you have ever done? Why did you make the decision to do it, instead of taking the easier/safer/less scary option?
2. Brainstorm what you know about the Nazis. Identify as many things as you can about the Nazis and their regime.
3. Look at the following images of life under the Nazis. How do they make you feel?



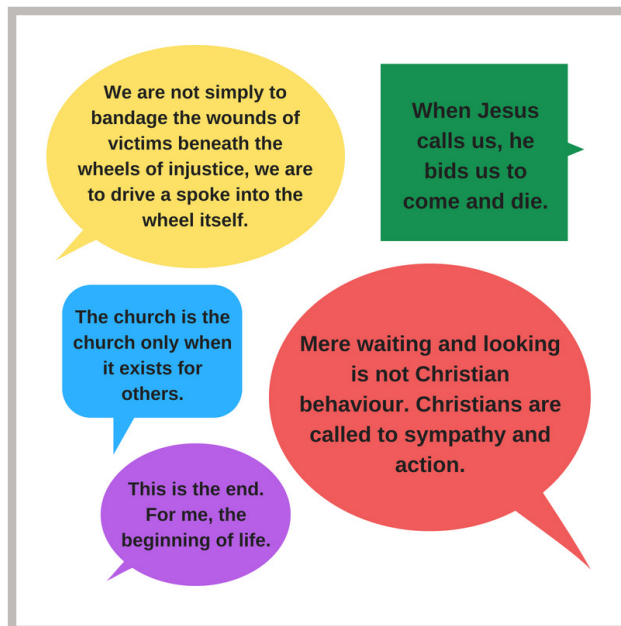
4. Imagine that you are in Nazi Germany. Some of your neighbours have been removed from their house and you don't know what happened to them. Write a letter to a friend explaining what has happened and how you intend to respond. You may like to evaluate a range of options and explain why you chose one course of action.

UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE



WATCH the segment: “The church under Nazi rule” (cpx.video/naazi)

1. How did the majority of church leaders in Germany respond to the Nazi leadership? What does the video suggest was their motivation?
2. There was a movement of Christians who stood against the Nazis. They were called the Confessing Church. Why did they give themselves this name, and what were their reasons for resisting the Nazis?
3. List three key events in the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
4. In small groups, read one of the following quotes by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and discuss:



- a. What do you think he meant?
- b. What does this show us about Bonhoeffer and his faith?

Afterwards, share your responses with the rest of the class.

5. In what ways did Bonhoeffer follow the life and teachings of Jesus?
6. How do you think things might have been different if more Christian leaders had stood up to the power of the Nazis, to the point of laying down their lives for those who were suffering?

BIBLE FOCUS

READ Mark 10:35-45.

1. Choose three students to creatively reenact what happens in this story.
2. In the ancient world, to sit at the left or right hand of a ruler was a position of authority and implied some participation in the experience of rule. What do you think the disciples imagined it would be like to “sit at Jesus’ left and right hand”?
3. Jesus asks whether they are willing to share in the events that Jesus is about to experience (v.38)? Why do you think they are willing to agree?
4. What is the model of “greatness” that Jesus outlines in v.41-45?
5. Jesus says he has come to give his life as a ransom for many. What do you think he is talking about?

READ Luke 9:33-34.

1. What do you think Jesus means by this?
2. What is your reaction to this teaching?

APPLY

1. Jesus presents leadership as an act of servanthood. What do you think of the model espoused by him and followed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church?
2. Can you think of any examples (other than the church under Nazism) of when Christians have ignored or failed to stand against evil and injustice in order to maintain their power and comfort?

3. Simon Smart says that Bonhoeffer was characterised by “sacrifice, service, affinity with the victims, courage, and above all, humility”. Share an individual or organisation who you think embodies these values. How close are you to following their example?

 **EXTEND**

1. Research another Christian who was involved some way in resisting the Nazis, such as Martin Niemoller, Sophie Scholl, or Corrie Ten Boom. Write a one page summary of some of the key events of their life, and how their Christian faith shaped their actions.