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Bonhoeffer and Thanksgiving



November 29, 2024  by **Thomas Lemmer**

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In my law enforcement leadership [training courses](#), I encourage officers and policing executives to embrace the power of truth. In life there is suffering, and evil is real. Suffering has many causes, but it is worst when it is the result of intentional acts – evil. Bonhoeffer knew, preached, and acted based upon this fundamental reality. He directly witnessed and resisted the worst evils of the twentieth century.



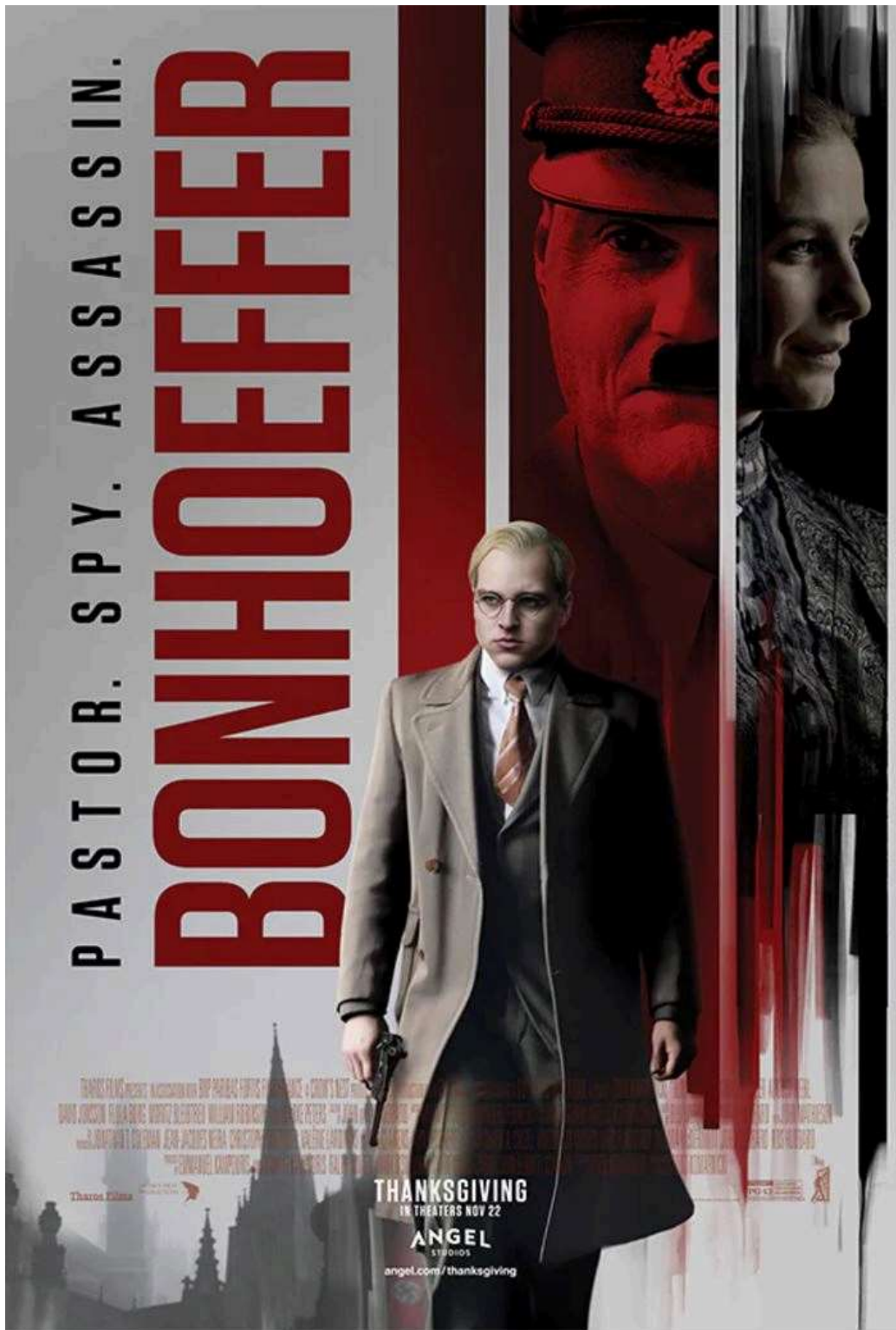
In 1942 he wrote *“After Ten Years,”* providing guidance to his fellow Germans on the moral response to the evils of Nazi rule. In essence, to ignore evil is to be complicit. Such is a powerful truth. We must remain thankful to all who have the courage to speak and act against evil, even when by doing so they themselves will suffer and they risk all that they have.

Two Questions

Here is a question for all of us: Regarding evil, should the avoidance of suffering be our highest objective? On the obligation to seek a higher good, Bonhoeffer instructed: *“The ultimately responsible question is not how I extricate myself heroically from a situation, but how a coming generation is going to go on living.”* He further instructed: *“It is infinitely easier to suffer through putting one’s bodily life at stake than to suffer through the spirit.”*

Here is a *“cops ask questions”* question: If a people cannot withstand the mildest criticisms, how likely are they to stand against true evil?

Like the film *Will*, [which we also recommend](#), the Bonhoeffer film is often gritty and challenging. Bonhoeffer was hanged on 9 April 1945 in an SS concentration camp for his anti-Nazi activities and his connection to an effort to assassinate Hitler. He died a martyr’s death – with his honor and faith intact. As it has been written: *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today”* (Genesis 50:20, ESV).



Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Spy, Assassin – Angel Studios, 2024.

Some Insight from the Director

Todd Komarnicki is the director of the Bonhoeffer film. He understands the fundamental truth about evil – and our responsibilities in the face of evil. Relative to why this film is needed today, [Komarnicki wrote](#):

“Political courage has essentially disappeared in 2023. We live in a time where to open your mouth, let alone your heart, will unleash a trap door beneath our feet. Twitter hasn’t made us bolder with our opinions, but has

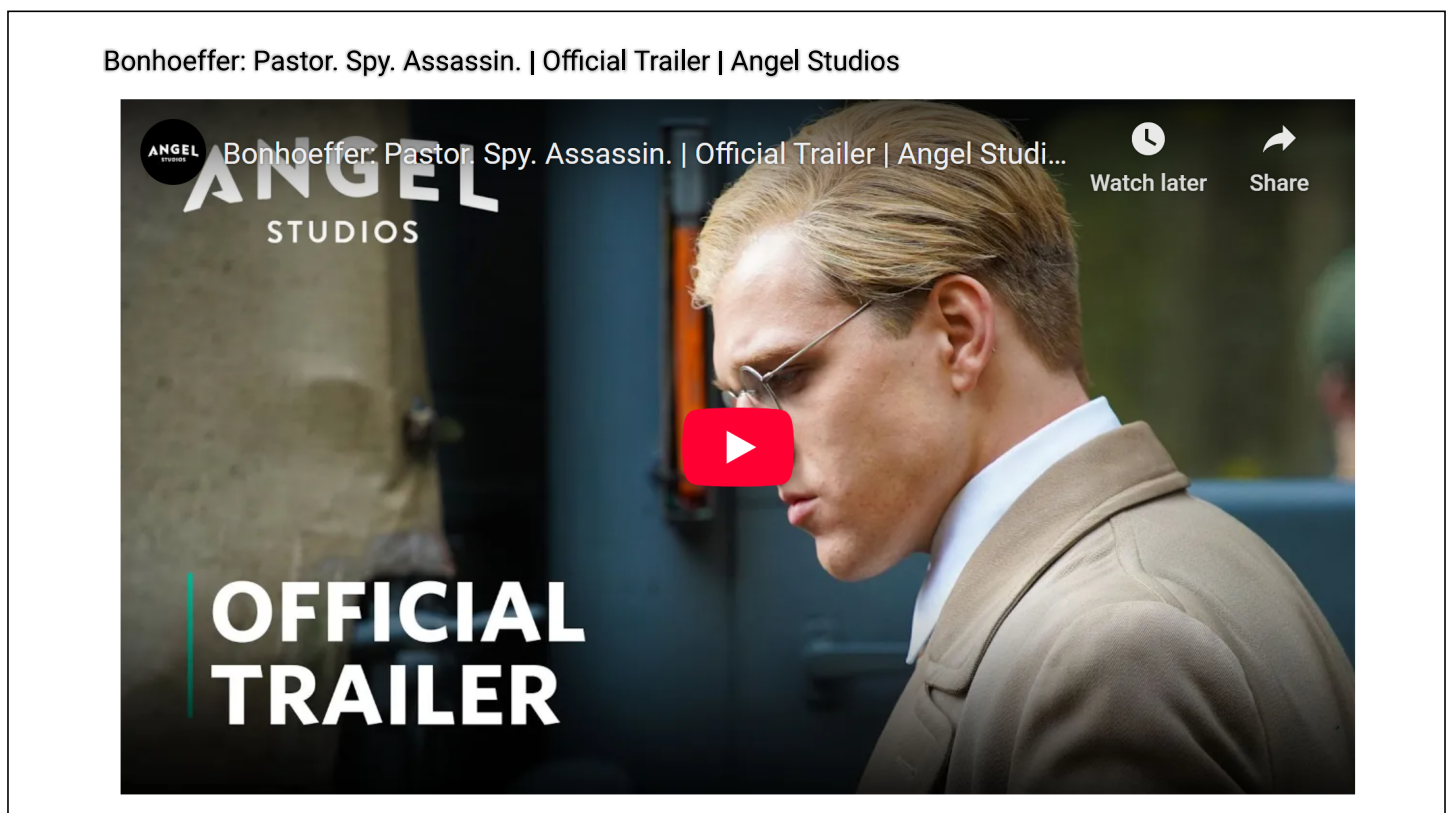
caused us to shape them to fit our notion of the crowd. We love to pile on, but we dare not stand out. There has never been a better time to show the world that courage is not a luxury, or a fad, it is a necessity if society is to keep from destroying itself."

Thanksgiving Matters

Being grateful for what we have is appropriate on Thanksgiving Day – and every day. We live in a time where the word *privilege* has been used to divide us as a people. The division has created confusion for many. Clarity on this point can be found in the truth of another word. *Blessing*. We are blessed as a people. Among our blessings is the life and example provided to us by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

This film on his life is two hours and 13 minutes in length. The truth it brings forward is timeless and essential. The command to do good applies to all of us. The obligation to seek out and directly confront evil rests first with the leaders of our churches and everyone who has sworn the [oath](#) as a police officer.

See the film, and be grateful for the opportunity to live courageously. We must be a people that will always stand firmly against true evil. When we do so, we honor the sacrifices of all the martyrs that have come before us.



Special Thanks to Secure 1776. This article originally appeared [here](#).

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Thomas Lemmer is a consultant, researcher, analyst, author, and instructor. He has been active in the field of public safety for over 40 years. He has extensive experience as a state-certified law enforcement officer, including within key supervisory and police executive roles. Lemmer served for more than 34 years with the Chicago Police Department (CPD), rising to the rank of deputy chief. During his career, Lemmer has served in both ethnically diverse and predominately minority communities, as well as within college, military, public transportation, and public housing settings. Lemmer is the founder of Secure 1776. You can find out more information at: www.secure1776.us



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