Dallas Willard:

...A clear understanding of good and evil. And not just what it is but how it's achieved. And that's the classical conception of philosophy. See if you were to say that Plato and Aristotle they'd say Yeah what anything else new? But now we've been in a period for a long while in the western world where it's assumed that education has really nothing to do. With good and evil. And it's especially so today of course unless it's some political kind of thing. So that's the main focus now that involves J.P. I believe understanding the soul. And. Its relation to the body. The eternal destiny of the self how can that be. What does it amount to. What does it mean to. Be a person who's going to live forever. What are you going to be doing. Will it. Last year. Kind of funny I had two two conferences in the row in which in the discussion times a lady got up and in both cases they were ministers' wives and said I don't want to go to heaven. The idea of heaven just oppresses me.

But see they were thinking about kind of being warehoused somewhere and. Just kind of sat on a shelf here now for eternity. Is that what it's about? But that's all they could think of. And this is one of the functions that we can do perform as thoughtful Christians. And philosophers and scholars is to help people with their imagination of what this is going to be like. In this issue. Like Jesus says, you're never going to taste death if you believe in me. Well many people come up it's just like their Mind hitting a blank wall. What's that going to be like? Well. Well. What do
you think it's going to be like? Use. Your imagination. What do you think it will be like to walk through the moment when your body expires? And not experience death. What would you. What would your experience be like? Work that out.

Now a lot a lot of good people in the past have worked on this. Fascinating thing to think about but see you can't answer that question unless you got in your mind the idea of a self, which is capable of any kind of survival. So these issues about the nature of substance the unity of the self and so on very big stuff very big stuff. And one of the reasons why we're kind of staggering today as a Christian community is that we have moved into an era where we can't draw on the capital of past investments. In the intellectual life. And we just don't have anything to run on. We got to redo it and of course there are also other challenges that people didn't have in the past that we have to go on. So it's a very big very big order I think JP. This gentleman here and then. Kloss. And who else. Forming a line. OK.

Speaker 2:

I have two questions. The first one is um quoting you; you don't want to shut yourself off entirely from others. And I've heard you speak several times [inaudible] but I'm a little troubled by not hearing very much about the rigorous discipline of fellowship or friendship and I don't mean [inaudible] and what that would look like in our culture um is that the role of a psychologist now, I don't think that [inaudible]. The second question would be if you could give us guidance um in terms of areas of study like for example psychology. What might psychologists of you brand what might he study, what fields would he tap in order to try to understand spiritual formation better? [Inaudible]
Dallas Willard:

Yes. Perhaps perhaps they won't want to speak on this. This is an extremely difficult question. Let me address the first one, which isn't so difficult at least from my point of view. I think that the primary needs are not in the direction of friendship and spiritual direction. I do think that fellowship submission and confession. Those are things that I have on my official list. When I do the whole thing fellowship submission and confession. And you may want to there you may want to just look at the sections in my book uh that deal with those. I think when we are converted we are placed. In a in the body of Christ. Often it looks pretty thin but it's much thicker than it looks and we need to be faithful to the context of our confession and that may be a church. Um maybe a family. Maybe something more like what you have here at Biola.

I don't know how far I should go into my own views about what the church is but they don't exactly correspond to the idea that every congregation you might find on any corner is a church. I tend to think that the church is the local people of Christ in a location. And we are in very bad trouble here because actually our congregations tend to fragment the body rather than bring it together. A lot of stuff to say there but I do think we want to be faithful even if it is just one or two persons that we are in touch with as confessing Christians. We want to be faithful in our fellowship with them. I'm not much on spiritual direction. I am not much because I think that people. Should look for their direction to the Scripture and to the presence of Christ with them. Jesus said don't call anyone Father don't call anyone. Teacher. On Earth. In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. I think those are very important teachings.
Now I believe that it is possible that we will have friends who will be tremendously helpful to us. But generally speaking we should expect that in our fellowship where the word is spoken and we are listening God will meet with us and direct us. That's my view. Now then, there are special needs for counselors and therapists. Very like your point earlier about what do you do before you come to the or even while you're in spiritual disciplines. Many times, we need people with special training to help us with special problems. And so I would encourage that and I encourage any fellowship to be alert to these kinds of needs and to guide and direct people. As best they can to those that can help them. I think that was the first question. Second question is extremely difficult. Where would you go to read psychologists who would be helpful? With spiritual formation. [Inaudible comment] Study. Yeah. Okay well I think maybe I'll get a little better hold on that now. Two things. One is. You. It's hard for one to understand how much good work was done in past centuries.

To help us understand these things. Often it is in language that is hard to appropriate. But in fact it is very subtle and powerful psychological observations about the spiritual life. See the spiritual life is something that's going to happen in your soul and your body and in your surroundings. So it isn't that psychology is one thing and religion is another. So take something for example like Theresa's Interior Castle. It's a it's about the soul. The castle is the human soul. And it is full of wonderfully accurate and helpful observations about the specific processes that go into. Spiritual Growth spiritual temptations spiritual failure and so on. And I mean that's just one example. A different kind of work is that you find in the writing of people like Madame Gayo and Theni long. Madame Gail is perhaps the source of the. Term spirituality as it's come to be used in the modern period though it was used at first with reference to her in a degrading sense kind of like Methodist was used of the Methodists. But.
Now you can come up into the 19th century name comes to mind a fella named Upton, Totted Bowden College. Psychology of religion Upton is his name. I think he has a book called the interior life. Gary you got anybody you want to mention here? You probably got the book in your rucksack there. This guy back there knows more about his literature than anybody else I know practically. So. You may want to talk to him afterwards seriously. Now then on the psychological side. Well. Bill and others probably should speak about this but I found some people helpful in this. I remember a time when reading Carl Rogers was very helpful. And partly I think because he he focused on the situation on relationships and how they changed very concrete.

I still don't think he has much in the way of a theory about it all but that may be best. But he was good at descriptions. You can learn a lot from Freud about. The dynamics. Of your conscious life. You may not like to learn some of it. He's he's pretty threatening but he's quite deep. And when you put the teachings of someone like Freud alongside of classical theological teachings about original sin and the nature of the soul and all of that it's often quite illuminating. So I don't that's a very bad answer. Anyone here want to answer this question. [Inaudible comment] Yes. Introduce Bill to the group.

Speaker 3:

Um Professor Roth is a professor of Global [inaudible] University and a therapist and uh he's done an awful lot of thinking about the spirit- of the psychological aspect of this and so I just Richard I want to hook you up with Bill and for 85 bucks he will [audience bursts into laughter, inaudible comments]
Dallas Willard:

And the fellow on the back is Gary Weiner. And he's extremely knowledgeable about this a lot of this literature I have never read but he tells me about it. But this is there is a sea of good teaching in this that's already been done. We need to bring it up to date. So we we're living in a period where we've essentially counted on being preached at as the way you get spiritual growth. And uh if the people don't grow it's the preachers fault, the teacher's fault. Preach being preached at is not a good way of growing spiritually. But sometimes it's helpful. So it's a lot of stuff to look into. Kloss I think you were- [inaudible comment] Yes please.

Speaker 4:

It's important to realize that psychology is basically applied philosophy and psychologists stand on the shoulders of philosophers and don't think now that [inaudible] I find the existential psychologists helpful in [inaudible] and I would recommend James Bugental my personal interaction is he's no friend of the faith but he's written two books one is called the search for authenticity which put together four years of graduate school [inaudible] and he's also written another book called the process of psycho-therapy. I'll get that, that bibliographic data the book is very difficult to get it's sold by a small bookstore in Palo Alto [inaudible] what he does is teach how David's prayer search me oh God know my heart and anxieties could become a reality for individuals such that Jesus would come to prayer [inaudible] My patients you get into this modality seem to get better quicker patients [inaudible] spiritual disciplines though it's not a,
Dallas Willard:

What's the name again?

Speaker 4:

James Bugental, the search for authenticity. I think the second book is the process of psychotherapy there's one particular chapter that I think is the best description of how to make that end prayer of Psalm 139 real in your life and it's written by [inaudible] he's a contemporary of [inaudible]

Announcer:

I think we got to wrap up here uh Kloss did you have more [inaudible]

[Inaudible question asked]

Dallas Willard:

Well we're not going to be living under the same conditions in the next life as this one to begin with. The clear indication of scripture to me is that the progress we make in this life is of eternal significance. It isn't as if somehow. We all have this set track to go through and whatever we don't get through before our bodies die we'll get through afterwards. But rather that. What we do now. Determines significantly what we will do in the afterlife. And if you wonder let me just
tie that to Matthew 25. And ask you to think about it as applying to you individually. Matthew 25 21.

The one who received the five talents came and brought other five saying Lord delivers unto me five talents behold I have gained besides them five talents more his Lord said Well-done thou good and faithful servant thou hast been faithful over few things I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy- Now once you get the idea that actually. What you are going to be doing after you're dead. This is real life. You know it's just not which shelf you're going to get to rest on for eternity. This takes on I think considerable significance again verse 34 then shall the king say unto them at the right hand come you blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. So I think there's actually a very great difference. It isn't as if. Everyone who makes it in. Is the same. And also there's this uh another thing to be said.

It isn't as somehow we're missing things. If we enter a life of spiritual discipline. It's rather that it is our gain. Even now. It is not that. It's terribly expensive you know to be a disciplined person and follow Christ. That's the picture that's often presented. But it isn't that way at all. I mean it's this is where the good life begins. Is in discipleship to Jesus Christ. And someone who says well I'll just do it later. Hasn't understood. They haven't understood they're still thinking in terms of. Something other than discipleship to Christ as being good. But unfortunately we're deprived of it because God doesn't want us to have it. So it's to be a disciple of Christ to live in spiritual disciplines now is the best way to live. And that's why we don't put it off. Why should we put off what is good well it's because we don't understand it in that way obviously. OK thank you very much. Blessings on you all. Lord be with you.
Announcer:

Can you give us a preview of your next book?

Dallas Willard:

The next book on religion is called the Kingdom Among Us, Jesus as Gospel for like and Christian discipleship. [Inaudible] It is designed to provide a presentation of the gospel that makes sense precisely this life and discipleship.

Announcer:

Thank you for coming.

[Bustling sound of talking and moving about]