

# The Larger Self and the Disciplines

By Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard:

The discussion of spiritual formation generally the what I was able to do last evening about the parts of the inner self and their formation there's so much more that might be said. And it may be that. If this is interesting to you that these will be things that you can pick up and write on and teach on. Certainly we need we need people who are devoted to understanding and communicating and developing and applying all of these things. The article that I've handed out is mainly designed to counteract the idea that you can just do the disciplines and that's all there is to it when you study that you'll see that I emphasize. The work of the spirit, in our lives and also the role of everyday events and. Our spiritual growth. Of course the Gospel must be in place. You can't substitute disciplines for the gospel and you can't substitute disciplines for faith. It's never intended to be done. I just preface preface this with those remarks because there's so much else that needs to be said and you. Can't really say it here.

So I just want to acknowledge it and say if you read the article you'll see a bit more about it. But what I want to do today now is just begin right at the level of, saying the putting on of Christ. Whatever else is involved in a lot else is involved, it's something we do. It is something we do and if we can take that as our established point of reference it is something we do. And given all of the provisions that are made available to us in Christ the entry of new life into us by the renewal of our spirit in relationship to God the birth from above. Then, in a sense the real

battle begins. And as Paul says in Galatians 5 the "Flesh lusts against the spirit spirit against the flesh the desires are opposites" so that as he says there you cannot do the things that you want to do. Because you're in a conflict. And now I take that to refer to the condition of the person not only who is unregenerate because they're in the same mess. But also the person who has their life from above. There is a genuine spiritual life they have received it. It's a part of them, but it is not in harmony with the rest of their embodied self. So the flesh lusts against the Spirit the desires of the flesh run contrary to the desires of the Spirit. They're both genuine they're both real. The, great Romans 5. Being justified by faith who have peace with God. But now the war has broken out in our own selves in a way that it has not been there before.

So, the simple question is what is our plan. For putting on the new person and taking off the old person. What is the new person? Is the old person? And how do we. How do we go about that? So now I. Think that all of us can agree that far. I hope we can and again. Interrupt me please if you want to make comments or ask questions, but if we are agreed that far then the next question is what is our plan? We're talking about spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is not something that happens without a plan. It isn't something that is going to be imposed on us though others can help us. Basically a plan for ourselves our own life. And if we believe that what we are doing is adequate then we don't need anything else. If our own teaching and practice is adequate to spiritual growth. That's the end of the discussion and there's nothing wrong with that. I understand, because we are not here in the realm of doing things that are to make us righteous or anything. We're here to do the things that are helpful and if we are helped we don't need anything [Inaudible] so, is that a kind of clear idea if we, every one of us and those we know have a certain if you wish religious routine. We do things that are a part of our religious life and if they are adequate then that's fine.

Now the one of the reasons why I was led to go into teaching and talking about these years ago these spiritual disciplines was because I personally became convinced that what I was teaching was not adequate to help the people who were hearing me grow spiritually. And that they continued to fail, to become what I would call spiritually competent people. And that meant among other things that. They were not able to. In some cases they were simply not able to do what they knew to be morally right. Other issues like confidence, effectiveness in prayer, in witnessing to others, in meeting sorrow and disappointment and those fundamental things they found themselves. Many of the people in the churches where I ministers found themselves really with very little advantage over others who were not in churches and they had the consolation that when death came they would go to be with Christ they would be with God and that's not a small thing, I don't mean by and in any way to diminish the importance of that. They really did believe that and they really did trust Christ with that. But how to do anything more than, was where I systematically found Well-meaning, parishioners under my ministry in the ministry of others that I knew, in my denominational circles and beyond that as far as I had knowledge much the same way. I really saw the same sort of thing among Catholics and generally among Christians.

So that's what made me say there must be something that we are not doing and then I began to look at the practices of Christ and to think in terms of following him into his practices. So then the spiritual disciplines as they have come down through the ages are devices if you wish of spiritual formation are designed to bring the spiritual life of the individual into conformity more or less with Christ. They've been systematized they've, been extended, They certainly have not always been done wisely and one of the problems for us in our time is to recapture what is good in them without all that was bad in the way they were carried out in the chapter in my book

on the history of the disciplines I try to just trace out some of those things that obviously were not right.

Now we make a great mistake however if we just look at those all of those practices and just throw them out with something like, well Luther thought they didn't do much for him and so justification by faith just takes care of everything, and one of the, one of the, problems is you know with any movement is that it creates conditions that are different from the conditions under which its leaders were formed and it makes a huge difference. I mentioned this morning the fundamentalist liberal controversy. One of the things that you find very interesting when you go back to look at the leaders on both sides of that is that the Liberals in their practice today would be indistinguishable from many conservatives in religion. If you take someone like Walter Rauschenbusch, for example, who is well known as the founder of the social gospel and you look at his life and what he practiced. This was an extremely devout conservative person. With the next generation was not. If you look at the early fundamentalists these were extremely scholarly thoughtful deep people. But the next generation was not. And movements go like that. We look at Luther and we we we take salvation by faith. But what was the effect of his formation in the Augustinian order which he was a part. And he invites us to throw that away and we throw that away and we don't turn out like Luther. Very interesting phenomena.

So, something to think about here and we look at the practices when we ask why do we get our great are great ones? We need to look at the things that form them, and I would just really see a test of our own practice of Christianity is, when we look at the great ones, were they formed by the routine which we now identify as standard. And in almost every case the answer will be absolutely no. Whether we're talking, almost any brand of Christianity you can think of by denominational terms. When we look at the ones who stand as great ones in the way. We look

at the texture of their lives we find, something that looks like very rigorous Spiritual discipline.

And if I'm wrong about that. I mean you're many of you folks are more knowledgeable than I. So if there are outstanding cases where that's not true I really want to know about them.

So now then once we've gone through that, if it is indeed true that we need to develop something more than the kind of standard recommendation as to what you do to be a good Christian, the spiritual disciplines historically stand as a challenge to us to look at those. And to see how we can adapt them and use them for our purposes. OK. The basic idea of a discipline now, I have put there on page 2 above the list, you have a concept of a discipline an activity that enables us to accomplish what we cannot do by direct effort. And then I have given you a list here of various disciplines I want to emphasize that isn't presented as a complete list by any means. [Inaudible question] Yes I mean it I mean it to be applied not just in the religious realm but everything else. Like for example, speaking Spanish well. You can't just try to speak Spanish well and do it; you can't play the piano well. Almost any human activity requires that you do things which will enable you to do it where you can be sustaining conversation. Good relationships in a family and so on. Those cannot be done just by willing it, by direct effort, see. You have to you had to prepare the embodied self to produce that kind of result.

So now the important thing for me here is to say that even when Grace is involved, you still have to do that. And that's for many folks that's the choke point because they want to say no since grace is involved you don't need discipline. Isn't it all a gift? And my answer is usually yes it's a gift, but you still have to receive it. And how do you receive it? So, that's, that's the basic concept. Any other questions about that fundamental idea? When we look at the list that I have here we won't be able to go over all of these by any means. I think I'd like to select one or two of them out for special attention. I think quiet; solitude and silence are primary in your planning. I

would imagine that from the side of the positive results, study, and prayer are probably the most important ones. But let's talk a little bit about how these two lists relate to one another. See I'm, I'm deeply committed to the idea that the written word of God is central to the healthy Christian life. And I mean really that it comes to us and we receive it and ingest it and it becomes a part of our very mental framework. If you look at astounding verses like John 15 7 for example "If you abide in me and my words abide and you will ask you'll ask what you will and it will be done for you." These are those verses where you just kind of shake your head and walk off and wait a moment. And of course I believe that in looking at verses like that we always have this thing now, the one who actually did that and had that right was Jesus.

So, when we come down to you and me, we're going to be talking of matters of degree. An approximation of that, but people you know hurt themselves badly when they take verses like that or Mark 11 and try to force them to work because you can't you just can't do that. You can't force them to work. That we can work on, moving towards one that talks about. And I think for example, that passage really does say to us that, if we will take the words of Jesus and we simply make them a part of our mental furniture, by holding them before us, meditating them, analyzing them, interpreting them, but above all, just making them a part of our mental furniture. Then what will happen is we will have a different faith framework of viewing everything. And a lot of the things that the naive person when they read that verse they think well I'd like a new whatever house, car I like this. Once, once his words come to abide in you and you abide in Him, most of the stuff that the nice person is going to think about when they first read that verse you're not even going to think about. You won't ask, you won't will them. They just won't come up. So, you see growth by taking the word in changes our whole outlook on things and our motivations in wanting a new Cadillac or Buick or whatever it is we want.

So it depends on your social class which one of those you want. Some place you say Buick's, Wow. The other parties you want to be. Why do you want a Buick? [Laughter] Why not a Chevrolet? [Laughter] Our whole mindset gets into the way we value and think about these things. My wife is from Macon Georgia, and down there Buick's are big, they're real big. One of my graduate students from India recently told me that because I happened to drive an Oldsmobile and he had got it into his head that that was what a proper upper middle class men drive. Oldsmobile in America and he told me at length about this. I drove up in the Camry the other day and he he was shaking. [Laughter] I had to reassure him that I still had my own. In any case, I really did for myself, my own experience, my theology of the word, what I have in the way of a psychology, it leads me to think that these matters like prayer and worship also and study as far as the positive output are the fundamental ones.

And I think the scripture the teaching and the psalms and elsewhere about the word and the law of feeds right into that. And I mentioned last evening, if you remember Joshua 1:8 I think, that's that's that's one of my great disciplinary verses in all of the Bible because it precisely talks about doing something that enables you to do what you cannot do by direct effort. Joshua 1:8, "this book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate there in day and night. Soak yourself in it, mumble it, say it, and keep it in front of you in order that you may observe to do according to everything that's written in it." And see the very crucial idea that it is that our minds our spirits are not capable, of great exertion apart from utilizing the proper means. We cannot observe to do the law just by thinking, well I know what it is and I'll do it when it comes up. We want to observe to do the law, we do it by having our minds full of the law, having it before our minds, making it constant in our in our thinking, occupying ourselves with it and I think I think the Psalms also talk at length in various Psalms, especially the one hundred

nineteen, about how this functions, and I think you have to give the 119 Psalm a psychological reading. You have to read it in terms of the psychology of law and meditation on the law, of loving the law to understand fully what it's what its saying.

So, As far as spiritual formation is concerned, that's a very central. Discipline is the study the meditation, reading the contemplation of the law. Beauty comes into this. Beauty is a big term in the Old Testament, beauty of holiness, the beauty of God, the beauty of the law, and beauty is part of our Spiritual disciplines I think. This a strength of beauty is amazing, and it is not true as Shelley, I believe it was, said that, "Beauty is truth and truth is beauty." That's all we know on earth or need to know. It isn't true. Boy I'll tell you, there's there's a power to beauty, and it's very difficult to look squarely in the face of a gorgeous flower, and think of evil. It's very difficult, you can do it, but beauty has a power of its own, and that's the beauty of the law as a part of the power it has to draw us, and to keep that before us, then you see, is to have a source of strength that's constantly flowing in us, directing us, giving us, giving our team our tiny will power additional force and strength.

Now, from my own tradition emphasizing this the Bible and it's your tradition too, I know so much, one of the things that I had to come to grips with is why is it that my folks in my congregation, generally, are not able to use the Bible ritually in their lives in a way that would transform them? Same thing with prayer. There's a good intent, but very few people in Bible believing churches are doing much with prayer. And many of them feel like personal failures in dealing, with prayer. Very often, among ministers, this is the big fail point for them. And they will say "they just can't manage to pray" and often they have tried things like, they read Ian Bounds, the power of prayer. Wonderful writings about prayer. They'll hear how Luther got up early and how Wesley got up early and spent three hours in prayer and so try that for a while.

And it usually just doesn't work. Pastor I used to know over in Pasadena said, "He heard Wesley got up at 3 o'clock in the morning and prayed and he tried that for a while and he found he could sleep better in bed." [Laughter] So, unfortunately that's the way it often goes.

Now I'm only saying that to say this. Things like prayer and Bible study, worship, we can't, most of us cannot just decide to do those and effectively use them as disciplines for spiritual formation. And the reason for that is, because they can only be effectively used in a life that is planned as a whole around Spiritual growth and if you if you don't have your life plan as a whole around spiritual growth, then as I certainly have experienced in my own life both as a minister and in my other capacities prayer and study and all of that, will wind up taking the tag tens of days that are totally gone on other things and the dregs of energy which are just almost nonexistent. And so unless I plan carefully, these things which would do so much for me are not allowed to be effective because other things are crowded out. I think that is where when we when we pursue that a ways and we see, and if I'm wrong, just correct me but in fact if we see what I take to be the general ineffectualness of the use of prayer and scripture for Spiritual growth, a lot of good things are done on emergency prayer basis acknowledge that and I'm certainly not against emergency pray.

But still, there is a general, I think, a lack of just seeing people grow spiritually and by that I just mean moral growth, confidence and capacity to effectively pray to witness, to rule if you wish and financial affairs, to be in command of their finances, to be at peace with them. Very little of that, I'm afraid, you're just in general to be, as someone said this morning, "Victorious." It just doesn't. That's not the rule. And when we see that the things that are recommended like church attendance, prayer, Bible study and so on do not, in themselves, bring about the desired transformation. Then the call of discipleship comes back and echoes in our ear

and we hear words like Luke 14, for example, these very strong statements that unless you hate your mother father so forth and your own life also you can't be my disciple. Counting the Cost, forsaking everything that you have, you cannot be my disciple.

Now, I recognize that these are often read in ways which are terribly destructive and discouraging. And I don't believe that's the way they're meant. I think that what Jesus is saying here is something that makes perfect good sense once you understand it in a real life setting. For example, you know very well that he's not teaching you to hate anybody, but on the other hand if you put discipleship to Christ first there are many people around you who are going to side you hate them. For example if you were the father of the Sons of Thunder, you know, you're old somebody and you're standing out here in a ship trying to get the mess cleaned up and Jesus comes by and says, "Follow me." They say, "Okay bye Dad." What do you think Dad's is going to say? Dad is going to say, "I've raised these kids that hate me." I've often thought Jesus manifested his genius in many ways, but none perhaps more subtly and powerfully in the fact that, when he had chosen his right hand man, one of the first things he did was heal his wife's mother.[Laughter] I think, I'll tell you. That that took care of the family problems for years, but now you know this is a real issue because I mean you know what it meant to drop everything and go off galloping around the country with some rabbi.

And so that's how it would look, you see, yet the other side of it is if we're going to be disciples we're going to implement the spiritual disciplines. It's got to be that kind of an approach. You've got to have it clear that this is the most important thing for us to do. And it doesn't mean that we're going to be brutal to our family or others. We will be very sensible about it. We will be very firm, but very sensible and very loving. And we will approach our whole life now, in the light of what is most important for us to do. If it is important for us to have days,

weeks, and months to simply absorb the word to worship God. And I probably some of you have been through this, I know, time after time you meet with people who have been called into the ministry. They will tell you about a time in their lives. A time in their lives when they did almost nothing else but simply just read the Bible read the Bible read the Bible, worship the Lord, pray, you know for a long period of time. My older brother one day I Willard when he gave into the call the ministry had a tremendous experience. He was in a situation where he had to work hard physically all day and he would stay up all night and read the Bible and he read it with such intensity that he memorized a lot of it without memorizing. You know how that goes it just there it is. And amazingly had strength to carry on with his life.

Well, you see, that kind of that kind of experience of the total absorption is the way that the disciplines work, but in order to get it you pay a price. And of course these kinds of experiences I was talking about with my brother and others that's that's an abnormal unusual kind of case and we ought not to try to count on that if it happens that's fine. Otherwise, what it will mean for us is that we have to plan our lives so that we have the time. We can take the time to be in solitude, in silence, to be withdrawn, can give our full energies, and when we do that, we will see the transformation of the self towards Christ like this. Solitude is, I think, the fundamental discipline of abstinence, because it is primarily the one that gives us the space to reorder our life as a whole. Of course you can't get the space to have the solitude without having the vision and making the decisions about its importance. Of course making the arrangements, also and solitude is something I believe that we need to have regularly or periodically at least, that we need long periods of time and we need time enough to let our bodies stop reverberating to the world that we've left and our mind to calm down.

See, so many of the things that defeat us in spiritual formation come from our not giving enough time to the particular practice we're following. Like the effects of reading a whole gospel at one's sitting are very different from the effects of reading 5-10 chapter a day. You cannot get the effect of the one by doing the other. There is a place for reading five verses but it's see the total impact of the experience is what really forms us spiritually. It's the total impact of the experience. When I have people as I often do and you probably do to say, "Well I just can't pray because when I pray there's all these distractions I'm thinking about this that and the other." When I see people like that often have not spent enough time praying to allow all that stuff to die. To quit. Maybe they have some special problem where it won't and they need help in other respects but for most of them most of the time people simply need to spend enough time in solitude and prayer to let their little machines slow down. Let their mind stop responding to all of the things that it's been responding to lift your body calm down.

So they need to take enough time so that these natural processes of self-slow down. When I talk with folk about going into solitude. Often the very first question is what will I do. And the very first answer is nothing. Nothing. You don't do anything. That's the point. And don't take all the books you've been intending to read. And I encourage you don't even take a prayer list with you. At most a Hymn book and a Bible and then, use those only at the impulse of the spirit. Your feelings. Let them calm down, let your thoughts come to rest just. And there are many ways you can do that. You can do it in a quiet room, Try to be comfortable, don't torture yourself. I'm one of those people who really believe that there's very little gain from pain and I think that comes from a masochistic view of God in human nature. And I sure know that there's a lot of pain from which there's no gain. So, when you go to practice the disciplines, like solitude, don't, don't try to make it hard on yourself. Don't feel like you got to sit on a rough log in the cold wind, be

comfortable. Nature is very helpful with this. Jesus was went into nature you know. I love that description in Mark, of how he was alone in the wilderness with the wild leaves and the angels, and Satan came to see him. See he's out here in nature. And ah just a quiet room. I sometimes rarely but sometimes I like to just go downtown and just wander in the urban mass. There's a kind of aloneness that you can achieve there that you can't achieve anywhere else.

So, you're going alone you're stepping out of all of the things that keep you reacting all the strings and buttons that the world has on you and you're just going to be you. It's just you and God. And you spend time in that solitude. Now, I wouldn't begin with three days, I would begin with an afternoon and work up to larger times. A lot will depend on you, and you may be able to have the use of solitude and not needed anymore faster than someone else. In all the disciplines were dealing with things that are highly individualized. You may not need solitude like someone else. Maybe someone who has solitude and blessed are the persons who have solitude as a natural part of their life and can use it. See that used to be the normal condition. People used to have solitude naturally under the conditions in which most people have lived in the face of the earth; they have large amounts of time alone. Now you you by solitude dearly. Because of transportation and communications and all that sort of thing. You're just constantly hammered.

So you have to make real special provisions to get it. Now once one has gone [inaudible] and I need to add something that relates to what I said last evening but it needs to be added in. Because again many people will say well if I go into solitude I'll just go to sleep. Well you probably need to sleep and there's nothing wrong with that. Sleep is important. Rest is important. It is. It is a spiritual discipline. I'll guarantee you that you can do things spiritually when you're rested that you absolutely cannot do when you're not. And being rested has a has a pervasive effect on every aspect of our being, spirit, body, soul, emotions, mind. Most of us don't get near

enough rest. So it may be a good use of solitude just to catch up on your rest. And your sleep. Find out what it's like to wake up once rested. And probably a lot of us in this room haven't felt that for a long time. Or it's not the usual sort of thing.

So solitude is a way of unhooking ourselves from the world that constantly occupies and punches and pulls us and drives us in one direction or another. Silence complete solitude. And silence has the two dimensions of no noise and not talking. And sometimes when people say silence they mean don't talk sometimes they just mean no noise. And we need to experience both of those. And sometimes you can have silence when you're together with people. If you are agreed. Not to talk. And in fact group or group retreats involving silence or couples who have retreats in which they practiced silence for a time often in very encouraging times of growth. I've seen for example a group retreats and people are taught a whole new meaning of what it's like to be with others. By just such things as eating together in silence. See what silence does in groups is it gives you a different way of attending to people. You don't think in terms of what they're saying at you or what you're about to say to them. You become attentive to one another in a different way. And I've seen I've seen groups just almost float with joy in the experience of silence together. And of course silence alone is extremely powerful. I always like to recommend it as a discipline partly because I always receive such glowing reports back from people about what happens when they go into silence. And I include a letter from a young lady in my book.

I will take time to read it if you want to look under the section on silence and you will see her testimony but it's just so common. And I even have seen people who are converted by silence out of their misery. Asking someone what to do and just the simple direction go into time. Find a place to sit in the woods and listen for God. And. It's amazing the power of these disciplines. Well. I'm running out of time. One of my favorite stories as far as discipline's is a is a Wesleyan

story. There was one occasion when the Wesleyans were watching together late at night. And the power of God came upon them so much so that they all fell to the floor. And when they came back to consciousness were united in the praise that they lifted to the presence of the God who had visited them. Watching is an old Methodist discipline and some others have taken it over and it can be practiced in groups as well as as well as individually. So when you look at the list what I'd like you to do please is just to think of these as concrete proposals as to how we can plan to be with Christ to learn from him. The things we need to know to receive from him the things that we need to receive for the transformation of ourselves. We are out of time I think quote I'd like to do is see if you'd like to ask a question or to. Make a comment or two.

Speaker 2:

...The Law or the Soul perhaps... [Inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

Spiritual formation obeys the laws of the soul long as we understand by that these are descriptive laws not normative laws like thou shalt, they it obeys the laws of the natural laws of the soul. Now the soul was meant to be spiritually alive to God. So you have to always add that on. It won't work any other way.

Speaker 2:

So would a non-believer that practices many of these practices and [inaudible] whatever beliefs or not. Like yesterday you said spiritual formation doesn't have to be-

Dallas Willard:

It doesn't. No and in fact you'll find many people who are not Christians who practice something like this and frankly they're better off for it. But that's different from saying that they have entered into eternal life of course. They're just better off for it. And that's the part that's the part of the health of the human self, right. [Inaudible question from Speaker 2] To bear witness to the method. To bear witness to the method. This is this is one of the hardest things to come around and this is why I spent time talking about if we are so content with what we are doing then we don't need anything else. One of the strangest things however is you go into our successful churches. And you talk with the folks most involved and you find out what is going on beneath the surface. And how much failure there is. And yet we don't know anything to do except keep doing what we're doing. Insist on the faithfulness in the services that's fine. Exhort people to read their Bible. And to pray. And so on but see now nowadays a lot of this is being spun off into therapy. Because one of the realities of church life today is that people come to church and then they go to their therapist to get help.

Now I'm not condemning therapy. Please understand me. There is a place for it. And a good place for it. And there are things that therapy can help that disciplines can't. But what we have today is a real failure. Of the recognized and endorsed methodology. But not a readiness to change and say to people quite frankly and honestly we must do something different and to lead them into the spiritual disciplines. So I think the primary function of the pastoral role is to preach the gospel and teach and lead people into those practices which will transform them into the likeness of Christ. And that is some form of spiritual disciplines individualized. For their own

person. Personality. Other comments or questions. Bob. [Inaudible question from Bob] Yes. Bob I think that is the absolute right question. That is the way to go. I think there could be a curriculum devised around these but we wouldn't be able to leave our message unchanged. We're going to have to say simply that what the gospel is about is learning to live in the kingdom of God. Now taking on an eternal life. And then the next step is to implement. The teaching. The teachings of Jesus the way those lead into the disciplines. How the disciplines can be actually made to work.

Now if we do begin to do that in churches as they stand now many people will be upset. Because they will say in effect that's not what I came here for. That's not what my contract with this church is about. They haven't understood it in that way but that's because we've allowed this gap to grow where we admit it's quite all right to be a Christian from here till judgment day and never become a disciple. See that's the wrenching part. Now once you get past that then the absolutely reasonable thing to do is to lay this out as an educator would. If people can be taught. How to do these things. Then what we need to do is to develop the method. And I know of nowhere that that has been done. And as I indicated this morning I really don't, this doesn't seem to be taken as a serious issue. It doesn't seem to be that we intend to do it. And the closest places you find where I think it is done is in the formation of Catholic clergy. But outside of that or eastern orthodox also but outside of that I don't know of anything I can even point to as the beginning of it. You're going to say something on this.

Well I think it is because the essential message we preached has nothing to do with that. I think that is the fundamental conceptual disconnection. And. That. We cannot overcome the problem unless we address that. And that is why my own view is we should preach. The availability of the kingdom through trusting Jesus Christ that that is the gospel. I believe that's

the gospel in the Gospels. I believe it's the gospel of the kingdom the gospel of the early church. I think it's to be our gospel once we do that then we're inviting people to actually not just talk about being changed and having a different kind of life. But actually they have a different kind of. Doug.

Doug:

You speak of a need for the community to bear witness to the method, recognizing [inaudible] seems like that has a bearing not only on our university's concern but faculty as well. It's not as if we all have these practices down well... I'm sure you... spiritual disciplines to do this. Are there methods [inaudible]...?

Dallas Willard:

It would be a great effort on your part to do this. It would have to be an earthshaking. Change. And. But I'm sure it could be done. It would simply require that your community here would give yourself to understanding and articulating this and leading out towards it. Now again you're going to run into this fundamental issue about what does this have to do with the basic message. That's why at Protestant seminaries generally this kind of talk topic is treated perhaps in the demand program or something of that sort. But the essence of it still remains the essence of the work still remains in the theology department where you're hammering away at the teaching. So that's very important to be done. But our question is is that enough. No what I said last evening. I believe is a very important thing to say but perhaps very contested and that is that

we have counted on the formation of faith by teaching and preaching. To then lead over to the formation of the life and my own view is that has not worked. And we are even faced with a choice of whether the formation of the life is in any way essential. And there are issues like work salvation and all that get up and we have to deal with that. Or. Or is in fact just irrelevant. Except a few if you like that kind of thing.

See the real question is what is the essence of what we're doing. What is the essence of what we do? And if it is we are arranging for people to be forgiven. So when they die they will go to heaven. If that's the whole thing. Then we're good. We really have nowhere to go with these other matters. The only rational connection is well what if we do these other things then we will be able more effectively to get people ready to die to go to heaven. And that's often presented that way. The reason you ought to be real devout and. Practice spiritual disciplines is so you'll be more effective at converting people. And I don't, I want to repeat I don't diminish the importance of that. But then how does that relate. To the ordinary congregation. And leadership. I think the answer is it won't relate well at all.

That most people will continue to think there's religion and then there is life as usual. And religion is a little thing I involve myself and take care of the connection. To God. Uh but life as usual is what I spend most of my time doing and that has nothing to do. With with anything else. It's very challenging now and you almost take me off guard by proposing that question Bob because I don't get that often. This is second time in the years I've been teaching this and then the other time was with a group of Methodist pastors in South Africa. In August. They said what can we do for a curriculum. And I can only suggest guidelines because I have I certainly haven't sat down and. written anything out on the board thought anything out on this.

Bob:

Also as you look back on the history of the church these kinds of things you're talking about seems like they've largely been practiced in committed communities, communities where-

Dallas Willard:

I think they require that I think they require that.

Bob:

But eh local Churches by and large don't think of themselves-

Dallas Willard:

And now again why don't they.

Bob:

Is it feasible that we as a university can think of ourselves as [inaudible] that kind of a different kind of a filter that-

Dallas Willard:

It would require a lot of conceptual shifts to do it. See what you're essentially doing is talking about becoming a church. And that would cause you a lot of problems that you might not be prepared to go through. On the other hand. If you step outside of the conceptualization of the church as as develop it may well be that that's what you're waiting for. Is to become a church. But you're not going to be able to think about it. The. Church as usual. You're going to have to think about it in terms of an organic body of believers. Who are related to one another in the spirit. So it would be very challenging to say the least and it would be upsetting too many people to do this that this is like you go into the ordinary church and say now you don't. People often come to me and say How can I take this back to my church. And I tell them don't go back and say

Now we're all going to do disciplines, we're going to become disciples we're gonna don't do that. You have to go back and you start preaching the gospel. Out of the Gospels to them. And you try to bring all of that alive and then let people respond to it. And they will many of them will want to rewrite their contracts with the church and the ministry. Others will say this is not for me something's going on here. I want out. This but this. Your comment Bob and the others. This is I think the way we have to go. I don't see how I don't see the way to go. Practically. I don't see how to do it. I think I see what must be done but not how to do it. Is. Hanging in midair. And tell me.

[End]