

President's Chapel

By Clyde Cook and Dallas Willard

Clyde Cook:

It's a joy for me to welcome to the president's roundtable Chapel today. Dr. Dallas Willard. Dr. Willard is professor and past director of the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California. Where three times he was honored by his peers and his students for his excellence in teaching. He's also an author preacher. Father Husband. And most importantly for Biola a member of our board of trustees. He's no stranger to speaking of Biola spoken to one of our commencements to our students in Chapel. To our faculty. And last year was one of our resource people at the Faculty retreat. The Lord has given Dr. Willard a special measure of wisdom particularly as it relates to philosophy Christian higher education and finding the Lord's will for your life. His book *In Search of guidance* is one of the best I've ever read on discovering and following the Lord's will for your life.

He recently published *The Spirit of the Disciplines* and as I read it, my heart resonated with the truths and the insights that he shared. I thought it was so valuable that I bought a copy of it for every member of the board of trustees to read and digest. Dr. Vernon Grounds, President Emeritus of Denver conservative Baptist Seminary has written about this book, "in the provenance of God. This book stands out as sort of a blessed serendipity in today's devotional literature. For pleads eloquently for a renaissance of traditional spiritual disciplines among all Christians. If that plea is heeded there will be transforming consequences in both the church and

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in society." Richard Foster calls it "the book of the decade." Please welcome Dr. Dallas Willard.

[Applause]

Clyde Cook:

Dallas. Why did you write this book?

Dallas Willard:

Clyde I wrote this book because it became clear to me for why I am in the universities as a teacher I continue to teach and preach regularly through a wide range of churches. It became clear to me that what Jesus Christ offered us in the gospel was not being made available and was not being captured and lived in by serious people in our churches. Sometimes you see a person go for 40 years to church and at the end of that 40 years there are no more confident about their prayers. Their ability to understand God's will the place of their work in the kingdom of God. I mean their ordinary work. As well as their spiritual work. And it just seemed to me very clear that we were missing both in the message we preached about God and in our directions for the lives of those who believe in Christ. We were missing the heart of the matter and I know that's a pretty grim way of putting it. But I came to believe that we were and that therefore it was necessary to try to address this.

Clyde Cook:

It's a serious book and for the serious reader and as I read it it seemed to contradict so many of the values not only of society which we might expect it to do from your Christian worldview but it also seemed to contradict some of the values that uh Christian parents might have. And even evangelical churches if this is correct you know, why?

Dallas Willard:

Well I think it is correct and I'm going to make some pretty dangerous statements I guess but this looks like a friendly bunch. And so. We'll impose on them. I think that we were starting off from the wrong premises within the New Testament. We have selected from it what will fit into our prejudices rather than opening ourselves to what it says and I can put this I think in very simple words. First of all we're not preaching the gospel that Jesus preached Jesus preached a gospel of the open invitation to live in the kingdom of God. His gospel was repent. For the kingdom of heaven has now drawn nigh and it is available to you. And if you want it you can move into it. He preached that gospel and he called people to discipleship. And he laid down clearly the conditions of discipleship in Luke 14 and elsewhere.

If you do not hate your mother your father your brother your sister. Your own life also. You can't be my disciple. In other words, we have to want life in the kingdom of God more than anything else or we cannot be his disciple. Of course this isn't an invitation to hate your sister that you always wanted to hate anyway. It's an invitation to understand where we must put the focus of our lives and we don't commonly get that in churches and let me just let me just go a little further. When Jesus got ready to leave, he gave us a commission and the first part of that commission was to make disciples. We have in a very curious way turned that around to where

we make church members. And then we suggest to them that if they would really like to get serious they might want to become disciples. But on the other hand. If they don't. They'll make it okay anyway.

And this leaves everyone in a position of Well here I am I'm all dressed up and ready to go to heaven. What am I going to do until I do. And so we have a mistaken conception of the gospel that is organized around the wrong set of values that allows people to live pretty well like everyone else in the world. Pursuing the same values of security and respectability and perhaps a high degree of self-righteousness. If you're a Christian. There will be a lot of do's and don'ts that are tied on. But the central message of Jesus of salvation as life in the kingdom of God under the rule of God here and now. Is missed. And so we miss our greatest opportunity. And for what is good. We go for what is good. But we miss what is best which is life under God.

Clyde Cook:

Are there any groups that are really practicing this and who have not been caught up in in our culture and our, the pressures and the imbalance. I was talking last month with Herbert Schlosberg and we talked about the imbalance. I have been told a thousand different ways the amount of time we spend watching television. The uh what we read, the music we listen to everything is directing us one-way and we have very little going the other way. Are there any any groups or churches or individuals practicing this that you've seen?

Dallas Willard:

One of the great things about the church is it has an invisible sector and a visible sector. It has. The church is immortal. And if you look at the church over time. You will certainly find many people who have practiced this you will find many people at present as individuals who are practicing the brightest lights I can suggest right off beyond the early church itself was the early Methodist movement. And in that in that group of people Wesley and Whitfield others such as Wilberforce John Fletcher. Many of the great Methodists in this country Asbury for example. These were people who understood this and that's why they were called Methodist by the way. They were called Methodists because they believed there was a method for growing to be like Jesus Christ and for coming into the reality of what Jesus called the the light burden and the easy yoke.

Remember Jesus said come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. That's discipleship. That's method. Taking the yoke of Jesus upon him. We've lost so many of the wonderful old figures of speech that are present in the Bible and elsewhere. But the way you break a horse or an ox that is untrained is you put them in the yoke with an oxen or a horse that is trained. And Jesus invites us to take his yoke and to learn. And when we do that then we are able to step into the reality of his character and his power. Now all over this world there are people who are following that course. My concern today Clyde and the reason why I really found that I must write this book is that that message is not the one that is commonly represented in our churches. It isn't the message of an invitation to live in the kingdom of God discipleship. And as the Great Commission says teaching them ourselves first teaching them to do all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always. See I know many groups that say go to the ends of the world go to every nation.

But we stop short of the fullness of the gospel when we don't make it clear that everything that Jesus said was good, right, and available to us and it is what makes the yoke easy. The burden light. We rob people of the very thing, which would liberate them. And set them free. And that turns them back to the bondage of the world. You see many people living between those two in our churches. So there are always great ones and I mention many in the book. And there are always people in the present who sense this God does. God does not leave himself without a witness to these fundamental things. But. The masses of Christians today have not even heard about this.

Clyde Cook:

It seems to me as I recall the. Methodists. One of their secrets was a. Strong. Firm. System of accountability. They were divided into two groups of twelve and a leader there would call on them every week. I think that part of the person's duty was to make sure that none walked out waveringly or unseemingly and took a collection to find out just where they were in their spiritual walk and so there was it. Just imagine meeting somebody every week who're going to ask you how are you doing in your life how are you doing in devotional life how are you doing in purity and things like this and give an answer to that person and if you weren't. Then you had no part in this running of the group and actually were put out.

Dallas Willard:

And that's quite right. They were called societies they were not called Churches. It's interesting that in South Africa today they still call themselves societies. They were not called

churches because they assume that the church was really the Anglican Church at that time. So they started societies in which people were small groups people were held responsible as you say they took up collections they understood what the money was going to go for it went for real needs of people ministry not just to Christians but others the needy ones in the area where they live. They had a sense of community they shared their problems. They prayed together they shared their victories on a weekly basis. But you see now. What we what we need to understand is that that was responding to the issue of really growing to be like Christ and what I'm saying is that today in many of our churches no matter how doctrinally correct that isn't even an issue that isn't even an issue.

You are allowed to consume services and support the church. You're encouraged to do a few little Bible reading because it's good for you. And you should pray some but if anyone ever really gets serious about it everyone shouts look at this person and that keys us in here is an exception. Here's something. In fact, they didn't even expect to happen. No one expects that of you. Serious growth in Christ is not expected. It is not, the way is not taught and that's why it's so important for us to look at Jesus himself for example and see how did Jesus spend his time. And when we look at that we see that he spent long periods of time alone long periods of time in prayer, Long periods of time in service and submission. I often wonder if perhaps the absolute key to Jesus's life was not how after the age of 12 years old when he clearly understood who he was and what he was about for the next 17 18 years. He was a good Jewish boy. And in submission to his parents and from the looks of it he remained in submission to his parents afterwards. Unless it really got in the way of God's will. These are disciplines that teach us how to trust. And the book of Hebrews says that Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered the things that he underwent. That's how we learn it we don't learn it by head trips.

We don't become capable of loving those who revile us or slight us or say bad things about us. By thinking, now I really ought to do this. You know we really don't get there that way. We have to understand that there is a general pattern of life which Jesus himself exemplified and called us to follow. And that following that overall pattern is the secret of the easy yoke. Jesus the hard thing for Jesus would have been for him to have cursed his enemies that would have really been hard.

Clyde Cook:

It'd be pretty easy for me ha-ha.

Dallas Willard:

Well, we're praying for you. Clyde ha-ha. No. No, I understand. That's really easy for it's really easy for all of us. But you see we have the option of allowing the spirit of God to come into our bodies through our devotion to the practices of the spiritual disciplines and occupy our members. Now that's plain scriptural language we are to give our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God the question is how do you do that. See where we're lacking is the how to. For example, all of us here might go to our churches next Sunday. And take Paul's verse where he says mortify. Therefore. The deeds of the body. And ask our leaders what's our program for mortification.

Mortification has gotten a bad name because it used to be not wearing lipstick. You know. Things like that. But after all here is Paul Paul's statement. Romans 8 if you therefore. Through the spirit. Do mortify the needs of the body. Then the spirit will move in to the body

and it will become the temple of the Holy Spirit. See it's the question of detail what does it mean when it says that our body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. And how does that get into our body.

Is it something that just gets poured- [End]