

Spiritual Formation I

By Dallas Willard

Announcer:

And. We're switching over to discussion spiritual formation. I spoke to Dallas prior to our meeting about how we do this. I think he's going to say a few things; he's got an idea about how he'd like to proceed here and then uh probably give you a chance to um ask things that you're interested in and ask about things you care about in the context of his presentation. Dallas Willard, for those of you who may not have been here for the formal introduction earlier is a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California where both J.P. Moreland and I received our Ph.D.'s in philosophy and uh in addition to the work that he does in metaphysics and continental philosophy [inaudible] he has really served the church well with his books on spiritual life. And uh his book, the Spirit of the Disciplines in particular has been very well received in the church and uh a lot of [inaudible] this material and so we thought that uh we would ask him to stick around longer and spend some time just developing some aspects of a view of the spiritual life. Ok, with that Dallas.

Dallas Willard:

Thank you. Thank you Doug. Actually, there's a very close relationship between what we did last hour and what we're doing this hour. And. In this world, it's a real struggle to believe in

the reality of the spirit isn't it? And especially when you're being bombarded constantly with all this. Wisdom of the age. About what you are. And if you think that you're a brain. How does that relate to things like prayer? Does God have a brain? What do you think? [Inaudible comment] Well Jesus has a brain. Jesus has a brain. I'll take that one. So. How we think about ourselves. Is absolutely crucial and that's why for example in the Ten Commandments that's a big issue there how you think about God isn't it. Second Commandment forbids you to make any visual representation of it. Deuteronomy 4 very careful to point out Moses is that you didn't see his shape. He didn't see his shape he doesn't have a shape. And we, see how we think about God is crucial to how we think about ourselves. And.

So now, what really matters in our lives? What really matters in our lives? Well. You will answer that question. In terms of how you think about what you are. Now I want to tell you that you are a spiritual being. That cannot stop existing. You will never stop existing. You will never know death. Those of you. Who have eternal life and you will never know death. One day. People are going to say you died. And those who are left on this side have to clean up the mess. So it looks pretty bad. From this side. But as far as you're concerned. You will not experience any of that. And what is called death from this point of view. Is a matter of stepping into reality? Fully. It's the full realization it is the opening of reality. Our condition now is one of being closed away from reality. And we have to seek our way back. The incarnation is important because God has put his hand into the visible. Put his person into the into the visible. In order. To make that invisible reality real. Jesus had to. Go in disguise. Occasionally his disguise slipped a little bit like it did on the mountain transfiguration. And they. Could see more like what he was. Demons always saw him for what he was.

That's why they always screamed when they saw him. And. We might scream too in fact the disciples did a little screaming from time to time. Remember when he came to them walking on the water. So he had to be careful. With. How he allowed himself to be known. Because he was not. The body. Though the body was real. We've had centuries of fighting over that issue. But he was not his body any more than you are your body. You are a spiritual being. Jesus said you will, he that believeth on me shall never taste death. Your consciousness as you now know it in it's better moments will persist and get better. As you die. And that's because you are a spiritual substance. And God is a spiritual substance. And so now I thought I might just read a verse or two from second Peter this evening to begin this part of the discussion as it fits in very nicely with what we are talking about here. In the third chapter second Peter I won't read all of it. You might want to meditate on it before you go to bed tonight. He's talking about how the visible world will pass away.

And the one we know and he says verse 11 second Peter 3. Seeing then that all of these things shall be dissolved. What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and Godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat. Nevertheless, we according to his promise look for new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore beloved seeing that you look for such things. Be diligent that you may be found in him in peace without spot. And blameless. In peace. Without spot. And blameless. So how are you going to do that? That's the question. Of spiritual formation. How are you going to do that? To take other passages like Colossians 3, how are you going to put off the old person? Put on the new person. I don't. I don't want to deliver a long discourse tonight so I'll just say quickly when

you hear spiritual formation commonly spoken of it it really can be quite confusing because sometimes it doesn't refer to.

Anything spiritual to tell you the truth. It often refers simply to learning how to carry through with a certain type of life. You will this language is often used among Catholics for example. And. There's a book that I brought down to one of the Talbot faculty today called the Integral formation of the Catholic priest. And it's it's about how you train to carry out. Appropriate service in that position. And sometimes spiritual formation means means nothing more than being shaped to fit into a certain kind of. External tradition. Always has an inside to it. But what really matters is the externals. And for example in our context it might we might speak of how you form successful pastors. What kind of training you go through to get them to the point where they can carry out that role? Really. That is. Not something I could recommend at length. Spiritual formation in that sense really is a kind of cultural formation. And.

So I would rather shift to the level of the forming of the spiritual part of the self. Now you're a whole person at least most of us here are think all of us are more or less. You're a whole person. You have a range of different abilities. And these can be categorized in various ways. Let's just start here bodily you are a person you have a body and your body can do certain kinds of things. You also have a mind I'm not trying to make any neat division here. You think don't you. Think you're conscious you have beliefs and representations and that's mental. You also have a soul. And your soul is kind of like. The computer that organizes your whole life. Keeps it running. It has, it doesn't. It's not mostly it's not conscious in the sense that you make it work. You have a lot of stuff in your soul that was there when you were born. So you could do things like breathe and eat. Your body and soul grew together you learned to walk you learned to speak

and those kinds of things. So. You have this capacity. Remember these are all just capacities of various kinds.

And you have a spirit and the spirit is primarily a spirit in the human being is primarily what we can also call will or heart. And. This is the center. This is like the executive center of yourself. That's where you make decisions. That's where what is really you. As Jesus said. Don't worry about what you eat because it enters into the stomach system that's up here. He says what is evil comes out of the heart. Now what is good comes out of the heart too. But evil doesn't come out of your stomach. Or you're not evil because of what goes into your stomach. So you're I don't pretend this is exhaustive these are just some interesting things to think about. These are components of personality. Now what is spiritual formation looking at this spiritual formation is the training of the heart or will. The forming of the heart or will so that it in fact. Brings forth. The. Fruits of the character of Christ. And. That's not really the end of it because intentions and choices that's that's nice but you don't live in your heart. You live in your body. And indeed in your world.

So. The formation of the whole person is more than just forming the spirit. That has to be formed. And of course the primary movement the first movement in the formation of the Spirit is the new birth. You reconnect with God. That's why the new birth is born from above. God is above. So your spirit now comes alive when you reconnect with God. You don't do that. That is done. With you with your cooperation. Because it's true. That if you don't do something you won't be born again. But you don't do that by yourself. You respond to the initiative of God and grace through the Word of the gospel and you as it were. Say yes to God and you receive. A relationship in your heart to God. So that now there is a person to person relationship in the spiritual dimension. And God. And you remember Jesus said God seeks those who would

worship him in spirit and in truth. Now you say well what about the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit will be there you can count on that. You won't be able to do anything without it.

But on the other hand you don't act for the Holy Spirit you act for yourself. And I can tell you how to go to hell in one short phrase just do nothing. Just do nothing that's all you have to do. And if you're going to go to Heaven you'd better do something. And you say but it's all of grace it's not of works. Still even though that's true if you don't do something you're not going to get it. And you say I can't do it by myself. No you can't do it myself. You don't have to. Still if you don't do something it has, these things have to be said because you know we've just gotten ourselves into a condition where the idea of grace has just blotted the human will. And we don't know how to put the human will into. Religion. So we have to say that now so then spiritual formation is a matter of forming this new birth. The spirit. The will side of the human being. We have to say the will is a pathetically tiny power it's a pathetically tiny power and yet it's absolutely essential.

There is such a thing as willpower but it won't get you much of anywhere. You have to learn how to use it. And the primary place that you experience freedom of a will is in how you direct your mind. It's in how you direct your mind. What you choose to think about. And if you choose to place before you the things that are good and above all God himself then. You will be able to do mighty things. Because you have tied this pathetically tiny power. To what is great and gradually this whole. Structure will be renewed. Now one other thing is that this pathetically tiny power. Can Do Things With the body. That help the mind. It can direct the body in such a way that the mind is helped. In its apprehension of God and what is good. And spiritual disciplines are a matter of learning how to use our bodies. For the benefit of our minds. Our spirits. Our souls. Spiritual disciplines are bodily behaviors. And so when we think about.

The various disciplines such as solitude, silence, study, and service not all of them of course are just disciplines but they have disciplinary effect. We want to remember that it is through the management of the body that the spirit is able to direct the mind so that there is a gradual transformation. Also the body has this capacity in its social world to act pretty much on its own. So the spirit. With the mind. Has to keep the body. In a position. Where it will be able to live with the intents of the heart so when Jesus says to his friends in the Garden of Gethsemane the spirit is eager but your flesh is weak. He's giving a diagnosis. He had told them what to do. He had said watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Now watching and praying is something you do with your body. They did something else with their body. And you remember what happened. They entered into temptation. And folks for most of us once we get real well into temptation. It's all over.

It's all over because of the pathetically tiny power of the will. Your will cannot carry you to righteousness directly. You have to form. The whole self. Certainly the world is involved in that but not by direct effort by indirect effort. Through the direction of the body and the mind. And. Incidentally as we do that our soul. Is increasingly reprogrammed, it's increasingly reprogrammed. So that for example. The things that were attractive, the wrong things that were attractive become unattractive. Good things that were unattractive become attractive. And not just at the level of the will but at the level of feeling. It's really what we feel good and feel bad about. That's the kind of the immediate interface between action. And the body. And the feelings can govern bodily behavior without consulting the mind at all. The practices of the spiritual disciplines are designed to move us aside sufficiently so that. We can begin to get. Reformation of all of these interior dimensions including soul. Now it's this. Again this is not opposed to

grace it presupposes Grace. And we need to finally mention that when we speak of spiritual formation we always of course mean above all formation by the spirit.

Not just of our spirit but formation by the Spirit of God. The invisible. Kingdom of God. The word of God. The Spirit of God and. Christ of course himself and indeed the father are involved in this so the instrumentality here is what is emphasized the instrumentation or the instrumentality of reformation is the spiritual. Uh many folk and there's this is almost accepted. Accepted theory today that you cannot live any other way than to be governed by your surroundings. And that's true of many people they are totally governed by their surroundings. The aim of spiritual. Formation in Christ is to. Bring you to the point where. You are. Not dominated by your surroundings. You're dominated by God. That God is your surrounding. And that really takes some doing. And among other things you have to choose that because many times if you're going to have God as your surrounding you have to choose. To get away from. Some other things.

And this is not just talking about honky tonks and pool halls. Perhaps some of the greatest temptations you'll ever be under are under are in committees in the church house. Faculty meetings. Did you hear the joke about the person who on his deathbed regretted that he hadn't attended more committee meetings. And so we had to be very careful because the subtleties of language for example in a conversation. Of godly people. Can in fact drag you away from God. And so the surroundings are extremely important and. There are just lots of surrounding you. You will learn to. Simply absinth yourself from. Lots of contexts you won't be in because you know the power of the environment you know the power of your body. And. When we read these great statements about choosing to be holy, a large part of that choice is learning where not to be and what not to engage in because that is putting yourself in temptation.

If you want to avoid what is wrong you don't want to just avoid what is wrong. Avoid being in a situation where you're tempted to do what is wrong.

Now you can't always do that and you don't want to go out of the world. But a great part of wisdom is learning how to do that. You see that that is respecting the true scope of willpower. I know that my willpower is not capable of carrying me. And so I have to use what willpower I have to direct me to the retraining of the self. But also in the specific context allowing me to make choices. That don't just keep me out of sin but out of temptation. Now of course that all sounds very negative and it really doesn't begin getting good until the retraining of the self gets us so involved in what is good. That the pool of the good. Is what sustains us you see. So that I don't do what is wrong not just because it's wrong but because I have something better to do. And. So these are some of the ways that we form ourselves spiritually and the spirit of Christ cooperating with us, our spiritual disciplines. The outcome of this is that then goodness righteousness is the natural outflow of our presence. That just as it is might be more or less natural for us to do what is wrong or to. Live in apathy and disengagement for what is good. That might be natural.

And you know if you watch the world around you on the media or in real life it's sometimes hard to tell the difference. But if you watch that you'll see that there's just this incredible drag. Down. From what everyone recognizes as good meaningful energetic existence. As well as into what is evil. And that is what. That seems almost natural. And see to put off the old person is precisely to move out of that. That's what it means to move out of that. And. To put on the new person is just to move into the goodness of truthfulness and integrity and. Devotion to the good even self-sacrifice self sacrificial devotion to the good. That's natural. You come to the point where that's the natural thing to do. And. That's when we take on the character of Christ

and bear the fruits of the spirit. When it's just the natural outflow. Love joy peace longsuffering gentleness goodness kindness meekness faithfulness temperance or self-control. See that's Fruit of the spirit. That's means it's just the natural outflow.

Now I found I took my first degrees in a college very like Biola and I found that that wasn't the normal course there. That it was everyone was struggling to keep smiling. And that particular group really had no concept of spiritual formation or spiritual discipline. They thought there were church that you did the churchly things and you did them with enthusiasm and that was supposed to take care of it it didn't take care of it it didn't take care of it and you know you begin to really smart up when you realize that the ordinary church routine is not going to do it. And it isn't. It isn't. For one thing it is just isn't intensive enough. The problem is much more serious than can be dealt with in a few hours of church services. And maybe even a 15 minute quiet time. And things like quiet time. I think I'm more than anything else. Here people who feel guilty especially in evangelical circles of course who feel guilty because they don't do their quiet time but. You know usually they're just going at it all wrong because they're trying to patch a quiet time onto an otherwise unplanned existence where they have no overall order into which it would fit.

So they need something more radical and spiritual disciplines such as solitude and silence and service and worship and fellowship and frugality and chastity all of these spiritual disciplines that we mentioned. Are ways of taking appropriate means. Doesn't exclude church services or anything of that sort. It just puts them in the context of overall life. So the question becomes what is our plan for doing. The things that. We are challenged to do in the scriptures. How do you manage to be diligent. As that passage in Peter says. How do you manage to be diligent enough. Something like a course of life planned around spiritual disciplines I think is the answer

to that. Now discipline spiritual disciplines are just ways of following Jesus into his concrete activities the things that he did we might do and learn experimentally. The difference they would make and that would give us a program for. Spiritual formation. Well I think I've talked long enough probably too long. And why don't we go now to see if you have questions or comments. Anyway you want to go. Yes.

Speaker 2:

[Inaudible question]

Dallas Willard:

Well I'll talk about it some. I mean it's better for other people to talk about a case. You understand that but I understand the context and please just take it as. I did not have a theory or understanding of this. I basically came to understand the spiritual disciplines because I felt by reading the lives of great Christians I was so far from what they were. That I desperately needed to do something. And. The. Way forward that I found was trying to spend longer times in prayer. And I found I could do that only in solitude and in silence and so I came to spend afternoons and days I was in college at the time. And I just observed the tremendous effect not so much on I became uh perfect or anything I haven't made that yet but. Just a. Great transformation of my inner self. In terms of peace ability to respond to people sensitively and. Listen to them and love them. And. Then also I found that it had tremendous effect on my efforts to preach and teach. That the effects of it of the work I was trying to do just almost you could almost. Plot it on a graph depending on how much time I had spent alone.

But then of course how much time you spend alone depends on how you're planning the rest of your life too. And now at that time I was not married. So that makes a difference and once you're married you have to consider that spiritual growth in a family is supposed to be growth of everyone. And. So really one thing led to another. I had no I had no plan for how. This should be done. It was later when I was trying I guess in the late 60s or middle 60s I began to try to help others with it. And that's when I began to. Well for one thing began to just see how much of this there is in the scripture. In our theological context it's hard to see that I was telling someone yesterday about. Making a presentation before a well-known Mission Board here in the area. And the leader after I was done. We were talking about solitude he said. Jesus never went into solitude. Well you know. It's interesting because you know he'd read he had read the same things we all had read. But he just blurted that out. And so he was he was thinking in very different categories that I was quite used to because of the same background. The idea that you're supposed to. Burn out and not rust out. And. Get out there and keep driving in the background the ideas get as many people to confess Christ as you can. So they'll go to heaven when they die. Don't waste any time. And so we really we don't have the conceptualization. To pick this up.

There are other things like well isn't this really Catholic. You know. Didn't we get rid of all of this at the Wittenberg door? We really need to we do have to go back and rethink those things you know we have to remember that. Catholics for I guess most of the history of the world. Were just Christians. And. God was not asleep all that time he was working he was working with people we need to look at some of these people and try to learn from them but our theological framework makes it very hard and it really did hinder me for a long while, theological framework namely that basically the issue is salvation in the sense of the forgiveness of sins and what's going to happen to you when you die and you settle that by believing the right

things and once you get that settled then the only important thing for you to do is to get others to believe the right thing so they will go to heaven when they die. That Framework is very hard to reconcile with spiritual growth. It really makes shambles out of the education programs and churches. Excuse me you can holler at me if you want to but it just really makes it very difficult to make much sense of Christian life generally. OK and then next back there.

Speaker 3:

How do you go about suggesting to somebody to take a posture that's more formational rather than informational whether that's scriptures or other devotional literature throughout history or whatever. In our culture, which is so informational, what kinds of strategies or prescriptions or techniques or whatever do you use as you enter into trying to suggest something to somebody [inaudible]?

Dallas Willard:

Well it does vary a great deal from individual to individual. But I think there are some things that can be said in general. You had to lead. Well first of all you have to help people. You have to kind of help people explore. Their own satisfactions or dissatisfactions with where they are. And if you're dealing with someone who has got it right and things are going the way they think they should be going and so on there's not much you can do. Not much you can do. Now even if their life is objectively viewed falling apart. And that's often the case it's often the case for. Those of us involved in ministry. We just go on like a house fire. We've got money coming

in and people coming and we're dying. And you know you can almost predict how long that's going to last or not.

But if they're not convinced of their need not much can be done. If they are convinced of their need then you can begin to recommend that they experiment with things. And my recommendation is nearly always that they begin with experimentations of periods of silence. And in order to get that they're going to have to do it in solitude usually. So. Retreats if you wish but not retreats where you go into the woods and do spiritual calisthenics for three three days retreats where you really don't do anything. The greatest challenge and the greatest mover of people. Who want to grow is to get them to do nothing. Get them to do nothing. And that they would normally if they are active people that will just drive them nuts. But being driven nuts can have very beneficial effects and it usually does. Quite frankly I have I can't remember a case where I have sent someone into silence. And they they did it. Intensively for a significant period of time where they did not come back substantially changed. And sometimes these are people who are. Widely known as leaders.

Sometimes they are just other folks. But. Sending a person into silence. Getting them to work through the going crazy part helping them. They may have to try two or three times. Before they can. They can do it. It's very hard for people to do this. When they're so actively involved. But once you get them to calm down. And they begin to meet with themselves and God begins to meet with them. Then you have the basis laid for really significant change. One of the things that will drop off is all of the explanations of why they have to do all the things they don't like to do. And it's a great change in people's lives when they stop doing things because they think they're supposed to. And it's many folks are quite threatened by this because they think well what are they going to do. You know there is a danger in it. But there's also a great danger in living your

life. Being harassed from moment to moment. Not having enough inner space to actually live your life with God.

So that kind of thing is important for getting beyond the informational mode. Using the scripture. One of the things you do in meditation with folk is tell them I'll give you one scripture and that will be your scripture for the day. And you send them away with it and allow them to meditate. With that for a day and if they don't get anything send them back the next day with the same scripture. Or something of that sort. That sense is appropriate for them. And the use of the scripture when people are cornered is if they will finally give up and it will begin to speak to them not at the informational level. But at the level of who they are and what their world is like. And how they are. Fitting into things or trying to form things to suit themselves. So. You can use some devices like that. Other devices. Getting someone to serve another person. Just getting some say go serve another person. Maybe someone they hate. See that's beyond information. General thing is engagement.

You get people engaged with things whether it's meditation on scripture. Or engaged with silence. Or engaged with service. Normally I think I can't do much with people by telling them to pray. Or just to study the Bible because that's usually they they think they've tried that at any rate and it doesn't do much good. And one of one of the things I tell folks if they're going on solitude and silence don't take a bunch of stuff that you were trying to get done and didn't have time you know don't don't take don't take a bunch of stuff. Just go and be. See you can I think put it down as a general rule that God is not going to compete for your attention. And he's waiting for you to come around on that. And. It may take you a while. See when you go into solitude or silence you have to be there long enough that all the inner racket. Stops. Folks often say I can't pray because

all these thoughts come well. How long did you stay there. See. Usually. 15 minutes is enough to run them out but just stay there it'll calm down stay there.

You have to work through stuff in silence and this stuff is often very close to making what's making you run. And you just give it time. Believe in God. Wait for it. And that is the whether you're in service or whatever. You go into service as a discipline. It changes your whole life. And. Mainly all of the disciplines that are designed to pull you out of your plans. Your ideas about how you're going to save your life. As Jesus said If you try to save your life you lose it. And that's what most of us are doing, trying to save it and we lose it. So those are some suggestions. Back over here in the corner. And I'm trying to keep a line here. So I think we've got one here and one here.

Speaker 4:

I just read a book recently written by [inaudible] next to spiritual formation of the personality of some degree. Could you comment on personality and spiritual formation? Is that accurate or is that...?

Dallas Willard:

Yeah. It's very important. Very important idea now. And you track me with what you read in Mulholland. I've looked at the book but I haven't studied it. What it amounts to is this is that we are all different in our souls and in our bodies we come ticking a different way. And when we are fully developed persons [gap in recording 47:06-47:12] the experience of the

individual and what that means is that one person may need more of one than another. Some may need none of one a lot of another. The disciplines are strictly to be followed. In terms of need. And need will be. Partly determined by these differences in personality. So we don't we don't think for example in terms of. Well I need to fast as much as someone else does or I need as much silence or I need to use service as a discipline or certainly in the area of chastity or sexual purity.

There are very great differences. In need and so. We need to. We need to adapt the medicine to the situation of the patient. Now among the disciplines always are fellowship and submission and confession and so we need to not just go it alone in our disciplines. This may be your wife or a friend or whoever it may be but you need to. Let others kind of stay in touch with you and let them know what you're doing. I don't encourage the. Opening of the soul to everyone that comes by in fact I think you'd be very cautious about that. You open your soul primarily to God. But you don't. You don't want to shut yourself entirely off from others especially people whom you know to be wise and solid. Not necessarily your bosom buddies but perhaps necessarily not. You need to you need to have some people stay in touch with so you work out your disciplines experimentally in terms of what you see to be your your problems and you understand that. Practice in what you need. Will really bear a lot of good fruit. And you pursue it in that. In that spirit you want to achieve certain ends.

As you go along and you fail you figure out why you fail. If you fast and you can't. Why didn't you. See this. The secret is not if at first you don't succeed try try again. It's if at first you don't succeed figure out why you failed and fix it and then try again. That's the way it goes. Not just try try again because you just try try again you may confirm yourself in your bad habits. Because practice in things that are mistaken will confirm mistakes just like practice in things that

are right will confirm what is good. So it's it's you work it out as you go along. And again there is no right and wrong way about a lot of these things. And other things I'd like to say when I'm doing this systematically. Don't be a hero. Don't torture yourself. Don't believe that it's better if it hurts. When you go into solitude.

Be comfortable. If you go to sleep, have a good nap. You probably need it. Rest. That's a discipline that's that's a discipline if you ask yourself how much of the things you regret having done were done because you were tired. And exhausted and you will find that a lot of them. It's very hard to love people when you're tired. Very hard to pray when you're tired. Prayer is hard work. So you know you look into these things you take care of the needs. And you believe that Jesus is compassionate and kind and he really does not get a great kick out of seeing you suffer. And I think that's hard for some people to get over because they think somehow they are doing better if they're suffering and Jesus would rather really kind of like to see them in pain you know like he was he was a painful guy wasn't he? Always in pain. Yeah.

Speaker 5:

I'm wondering about the preparational steps before spiritual formation uh if we as children we [inaudible] seems like some of that [inaudible] as adults it seems like [inaudible] is broken...

Dallas Willard:

Yes, that's very good. Good question. See spiritual disciplines are not necessarily, what we need. There may be other things that we need. We certainly need to hear the gospel we need to hear it and get it right. We need to know about God we know and need to know about the heart of God to us. We need to know about the Risen and present Christ who would like to be yoked with us and let us walk through life with him. And we need to learn about the forgiveness of sins and the grace that is in Christ and we need sometimes ministry from others we may even need deliverance. We need prayer. We need all kinds of things. And that's a very good point because you can't just cure everything by discipline. You know if you've got a broken leg you don't need exercise. You need to have the leg set and you need to let it heal and then perhaps you need to exercise.

So you have to be quite sensitive about this in yourself also. And one of the things that you might do if if you try. For example solitude, you practice solitude. And. Sometimes the demons come out quite frankly. In solitude. And so if you start hearing voices. Check it out. And. A lot of the people in the early period of the church lost their lives because they went into solitude and silence and went mad. So you see you have to stay in touch you have to. Be sure that. The needs of your body and your spirit are met. In an adequate way and then you have a foundation for practicing spiritual disciplines. [Inaudible question] Well. You mean things like family relations. Actually, there's a real risk in this. With reference to those kinds of needs. There are legitimate needs for affection. Maybe between you and your parents for example. And sometimes those can be met by spiritual compensation. Sometimes they can't. Sometimes they have to be met in other ways.

Like uh repentance confession working out things and so on between a husband and a wife or child brothers and sisters and things of that sort. But in general you cannot substitute

religious exercises or even prayer for righteousness and repentance. You need. You need to meet whatever the needs are. Now on the other hand many times we are wounded because of failures in relationships that cannot be rectified. And there for example sometimes spiritual compensation our relationship to Christ or to God is the only recourse we have. And frankly folks most of us are going to go through life in some measure or another wounded. And uh. And it's never gonna be as if that had not happened.

So then we have to learn how to go on and a part of that I think is a wise use of spiritual disciplines. When we come to Christ. We don't. Get a new live. Now you may be shocked and angry at me for saying that but it's true you don't just everything doesn't begin to. If you were mistreated. And injured you're, you're going to be the person who was mistreated and injured. Now there will be some things. That can help you with that. And I believe that the promise is still true for anyone that all things can be made to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his spirit. But that's it's a burden. To carry that.

Speaker 6:

Dallas how does being a philosopher in a role as a philosopher relate to the spirit of life [inaudible]?

Dallas Willard:

Yes I do actually it'd be wonderful to go back and look at some of the tradition on this. In the fifth and sixth centuries. As a result of the great Cappadocian fathers. Gregory the Great

Gregory Nazianzus and Cappadocia is roughly the area where Paul went on his first missionary journey in Asia Minor. They developed a vision of Christian virtue. Which was. Closely tied closely tied to the traditions of the monks that had been developed up to that time where the Christian the holy Christian was thought of as a philosopher. And called that the language was explicitly used and for this reason.

It was because Christianity was thought of as the true wisdom of life. Which enabled you to live. The idealism which those without Christ could never succeed at. And. It's a very interesting idea and I think it's I think it is really. New Testament teaching. That we should. Think in those terms now our philosophical work. Should allow us to be very clear. About what good and evil are. I think that's the primary. Focus of our philosophy philosophical work. Is to be very clear about what good and evil are and we have a lot of trouble with this. Even in our churches a lot of trouble with it. For example what about the Ten Commandments. What is their relationship to us? Are we able to see that the Ten Commandments are God's basic outline of the good life? And. How does that work.

We have a real problem with that today because we have been taught away from the commandments I think. I don't know how it goes in your particular fellowships and so on but I often ask groups of ministers I'm speaking to. When's the last time they taught a series on the Ten Commandments. And. What do you teach? You're going to tell them what. Don't kill everybody. Well. Kind of misses the point that the Ten Commandments. But. We need to really. Focus our work as philosophers on- [End Part 1]