

How to Put On Christ, Part 1

By John Coe

Announcer/Introducer: It's been great John. you have blessed us. You have caused us to ponder deeply. you've stretched us. You've made us a little mad sometimes. But it's all been good and it's been for the betterment of our souls and we thank you. And we haven't given you the privilege or the responsibility of opening in prayer yet this series so would you do that and just jump into the lecture.

John Coe: Let's begin with prayer.

Our Gracious Father, we, we do come to you, we open our heart and Lord we, we just want to remind ourself that we don't, we can't fix ourself in the power of ourself. We can try to do many things. And yet Father, we, somewhere at the core of our heart we desire you to change and transform us. And so open our heart to teach us Lord. So Father here we are. We bless you and open our minds and our hearts in this evening in Jesus name, amen.

Well I hope you all have the notes. There were notes, I didn't check and see at the door. Are there? OK good. This is our last time together and it has really been an honor for me to be here. If I have any regret it's that we couldn't have shared more enema stories together. I would of, I would have liked to have heard what your experiences have been.

So then I could use it next time. Fact, I was that I was doing the chapel just two days ago at Westmont College and I launched into enema stories. But I actually stopped. It was enough. I want to carry on talking about spiritual formation and there are so many things to talk about.

And I want to talk tonight about spiritual disciplines and what this whole training is all about. And so I entitle this, *How to Put on Christ: Doing Spiritual Disciplines from the Heart in the Spirit*.

I remember Rosemead student I had was reading a book on spirituality and spiritual disciplines and talking about obedience. And at one point she said, she just threw the book across the room and then screamed out loud, "I hate this stuff. It feels like a bunch of works."

That's in part why I didn't start with the spiritual disciplines because some of you would, would, would hate that stuff depending on where you are. But there are some of you if we started there who would go, "Yeah. This is good! This is, this is how I'm going to change." And so we didn't want to start there. We started with this. I put it, the quote, at the top of the page from Dallas Willard. And of all individuals, the individual who wrote the *spirit the disciplines* some years ago, he said, "The Christian life is what you do when you realize that you can do nothing."

That's really where we started. And that's really where we're going to still end. Because when I talk about spiritual disciplines I want to talk about it in the light of that spiritual disciplines are not something that we're going to use to try to fix ourselves. So we've read books on fasting, on lectio divina, on meditation on the scripture, prayer, and what we said in the very beginning is these are not things that we're trying to use to fix ourselves. These are not things that we're trying to use to generate spiritual experiences. Rather, these are going to be things that are going to open up more deeply to what Christ wants to do in our life. And so where we really began was we talked about the temptation of moral formation. The concern of being a good boy and a good girl. Then we talked about putting off the old man. And then we spent two times really talking about dark nights. So a lot of this has been about kind of what not to do and about how to experience what God is doing but you might begin to wonder, and my students do, because after they're with me for two semesters and basically what I've taught here so far in four weeks, it takes me 30 weeks to do with my students.

And at some time they begin to wonder, and you may wonder too, "Well, John. Is there anything I'm supposed to do? Is there anything I'm supposed to become, is, am I to do anything. I mean isn't the Bible filled with commands? What about all those commands? And you know, I have found in my travels now, talking about spiritual formation in churches inviting me, I have found sometimes churches who have seen this insight about moralism and legalism and they've really wanted to open deeply to Grace and then sometimes they have even perhaps lost the vision for the commands of God.

They're not sure, in fact I've talked to preachers and they say, "You know I'm not even sure how to talk about the commands of God because you know Bible is riddled with them. And how to talk about them and not to feel like I'm just putting another to-do on someone and just kind of filling them with the guilt and shame about doing something." And so sometimes having lost the vision, they're not talking about it as much. And so I want to say right up front that we are to put on Christ. I just want to say straightforward that obedience is crucial to the Christian life. In fact, obedience is a given. Obedience is expected. Paul says in Romans 12:1-2 that, that that's your reasonable service to present yourself. This is, this isn't we haven't quite hit the notes yet, but in John Chapter 4 verse 34, this is a verse to really ponder. John 4:34. When Jesus is telling his disciples and the people, "What is my food? What is it that makes me go? What is it that makes me run? What is my meat and my drink." He doesn't say it's conscious fellowship with the father.

He doesn't say it's religious experience. You all know what he says. He says my meat and my drink is to do the will of the father.

And so we as little Jesus, are to put on Christ. And this is Ephesians Chapter 4 Verse 22 to 24, if you want to turn there you can read. I'll read that. Remember in verse 22 he said that

regarding the former manner of life you need to put off the old man because it's being corrupted. And then he says, "And you, who are being renewed by God, in the spirit of your mind. Those of you who have the spirit where the spirit of God is committed to changing and transforming you." And where is the transformation? It's in the spirit of your mind. It's in the deepest part of your person. And now the command. "Put on the new man." Put on Christ. Which created, and then in the Greek text, it doesn't say in the likeness of God. It just says which is created in God, meaning that this is a, this is a creation in God. This is a work that he's doing. Not by us. It's the creation he's doing, but we're to put this thing on. And it's created in God in righteousness and holiness. That means that's the sum of all the virtues of Jesus. I am to put on all the virtues of Jesus and not because of or by the desires of deceit but he says but in truth. The truth of what I am and the truth of what Christ has done. And so this is what we're to realize is how are we going to do this. What's our part in this. Here's where the spiritual disciplines come in. Now to some of you that may be a funny phrase and it was to me. Spiritual disciplines. I wasn't spiritually raised in that. I didn't hear, when I came to the world at 19, I didn't hear my pastor, who was really an excellent teacher of the word, I didn't hear him talking about spiritual disciplines. In fact it sounded, when I discovered this language, it sounded rather Catholic to me. Sounded rather monastic. It sounded even a little legalistic, and to be honest, even once I became immersed in this spiritual formation movement, I didn't like this language.

And there are other people who were right in their spiritual formation who don't like it either because it brings up certain connotations of perhaps legalism or work or or the self training. Well I want to tonight to demystify it a little bit for you. Perhaps even to normalize it. This is where Dallas Willard personally has had a real impact on my life. To help me begin to see the place of this training, that in fact, when I came to the Lord at 19, I was involved in all kinds of spiritual disciplines. And it was an incredible training that was going on.

So it turns out that spiritual disciplines are really rather mundane, normal things. I think this is where the notes are. They're just going to be merely intentional ways to respond to the call of obedience. That's all spiritual disciplines are. It's where, it's going to be called a discipline

because it's gonna be an intentional way that I'm going to give myself of how to respond to the word of God. And that's what we're going to talk about tonight. Obedience to the commands of God. Again the scripture are full of commands. And so one of the things that I want to focus, I mean there's, I teach a whole course on the disciplines and I hardly even have a chance to get to the disciplines because I spend talking about what is going on in these things, a kind of school of theology and a psychology of the spiritual disciplines, so we would need literally a whole year of class to talk about this. So I'm just going to introduce some things and what I'm especially going to talk about tonight is the importance of how we hear the commands of God. Because we hear the commands of God all the time. Every time we have a quiet time, every time you hear a sermon, you're hearing something of what to do or to become. And I'm going to be interested in how do I hear that. And how does God want me to hear and respond.

And so I begin just by asking the question, how do we in fact hear the commands of God? How, not, not how are we to but just how do we hear the commands of God. Once Dallas Willard was talking about this very issue and he said this. He said there is much magical thinking that goes on in evangelicalism. There's much magical thinking and here's what it is. The magical thinking is that if we just hear good teaching long enough, if we just continue to come to the Scriptures and if we continue to come to the church and we continue to hear the truth being taught over and over again and believe it and say we'll do it, that it will transform our lives.

And Willard said it doesn't seem to be doing that.

In fact, we all come week after week and we hear sermons. We hear sermons with a certain amount of points in them. Good points. And then application and then we come to our quiet time. We come to Bible studies. And we might have noticed after a while, am I getting transformed by this. I've heard this one before. I've heard that I'm to love my wife as Christ loved the church. OK what, what am I going to do with this? And I take it most of you here have heard certain commands over and over again. And Willard says this. What we must do is

we must do certain kind of mental gymnastics or mental manipulation or something about how we hear that, because we hear it and we're not sure what it's going to do now that we've heard it again and yet we go on. Another way of thinking about this is how we hear what is called the sanctification gap. I don't know if you know the sanctification gap is. As I'm hearing the word of God or as I'm reading the Word of God, what often I'm being put forth in the word is I'm being put forth what we should be. What we should be or what we should do. High goals. I should be filled with the spirit. I should be praying without ceasing. I should love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. We've heard these a thousand times. "Whoa. Big goals!" And then we know where we are. We know where we are. Yeah that's where I want to be, here's where I am. And now comes the word of God . The Word of God comes and the points out this is where you should be. Now here's the question. How am I to hear? How am I to hear the Word. And especially how am I to hear the word when I've heard it many times. And what am I going to do with it walking away this time because I've heard it four times now.

I heard Chuck Swindall all talk about it. And now I hear Pastor Dale talk about it. What is this to do. I want you just to ponder for a moment. Just right now. How did you respond to the last time you heard the word or command? Why don't you just take a moment. I want to just take a moment in just the quiet of your own little mind. And just ask the Lord. God how did I respond? Think of the last time you read the scriptures or heard a sermon and there was a word or a command. I just want you open your heart to think of that. What did you do.

How did you experience it?

Let me give you some possible ways that people can hear the word. This isn't necessarily how they should. But as I am a teacher and you were leaders, some of you teach. We're all hearers. What are some of the ways we can hear the word? Here's one way. This is how I think beginners hear this and this is why I love beginners in some ways, because beginners as we talked about with John of the cross, these are people who are excited to hear the word. They

might be hearing it for the first time. It doesn't matter. It might be the third or the fourth, but they're excited, because right now they're developing their theology. They're developing their worldview. They're developing their mind map. They're starting to develop their character map and God right now in consolation is reinforcing all of this and how cool that is for those individuals. There are some people on Sunday mornings when they hear the word of God, "Oh, this is so good." And they're taking notes and thinking, "Oh yeah that's so good." And they're in their quiet time and it's so good too.

Here's another way someone might hear the word. This might be someone who's a little gone on in the faith of it. They're at a place in life where they're just hearing it in love. They hear Pastor Dale speak, they're in their quiet time and it's, "Oh God I love you. God this is so good. God I need you. So good."

Here's the third way someone might hear the word. This, this is an individual who may feel a little satisfied in their faith. People on the outside would look and see there's a fair amount of leaks and holes in their life, but the leaks and holes aren't so bad that they're gushing. And so they're doing OK. There may be a certain amount of worldliness in their life. There may even be a sneaky suspicion that they're not all they can be, but as they hear the word they feel like, "I'm doing OK, I'm doing OK." And these people are probably not going to be the leaders amongst you. These might be the ordinary Joes in Jills who come to church and just say "I'm doing OK, just fine."

Here's another person who might hear the word. These are ones who are in pain. You can bank on it. Those of you who teach. There are some who are in great pain and feel very weak and when they hear the word or when they read the word they know they're a mess. They know they're a mess internally and externally and they feel desperate and they want someone to help them and they want someone to rescue them. And so as they're listening to a sermon they're going, "Oh God, what's going on in my life?"

And then there's another person. I can think of a fifth way. This is a person who I think has despaired a little bit. This is what I talked to you earlier about was a gentle Christian. This is the one who says I've heard this before. I know this. I don't, I don't get it. God what's wrong with me. This is a person who probably wouldn't care that much if maybe they came on Sunday morning. They probably don't even mind if maybe their wife would stay home a little more often.

They've just kind of despaired and, but they're not willing to say it. And so they become what Kierkegaard called the Gentle Christian, and as they hear the word it's, "Ah, I don't get it. OK it's true. But I don't get it."

The last two ways are what I talked about last time. This is for the dedicated neurotic. These are for those of us who have gone on in the faith. We're older. This is the person who has been faithful over the years and they have benefited from their faithfulness with spiritual disciplines. They've, and they've benefited others. And they look mature and they look together because they actually are solid people in their character. But like we had talked about last time, the Lord has brought them to a new place in their maturity. These are the ongoing dark nights we talk about that I'm so concerned about. And in this ongoing dark night nobody else knows what's going on in their soul because you don't see it. From the outside that person Doug Haig, he looks together. Look, he gives his life to people. He's a kind person, and he's a loving person. Only Doug Haig would know if something else is going on in his soul, unless he shared that. And I know a number of individuals who are like this and what they begin to have an awareness of in their heart is that they know on the inside they're not quite what they are on the outside. There's a deeper hunger. They begin to see even more vices that are deeper, of pride and arrogance and other things. And they know, "God, my character isn't good enough anymore. It doesn't satisfy me. My mind map doesn't satisfy me. My theology isn't, I'm longing for the rivers of living water and now I'm hearing the sermon again."

And you know for this person it is a great quandary. "What do I do with this again. What do I do with this God? I've just heard a sermon on praying without ceasing and God I do pray but to pray without ceasing and with all the love and the height and the depth the love. God I don't know that. Or I just heard a sermon about loving my wife and yes I do love her but God what would it be to love her with with life overflowing in love with my Lord?" And now this is a quandary.

And the last way someone might hear the word, it's the same kind of person. But this is the person where hearing it isn't so much a quandary because they kind of gave up on that. They kind of felt, "You know Lord, I guess where I am is where I quit to grow. This is as far as it kind of goes in this life. And now I'm just to turn and serve and give myself to others, and that's what the maturing life is." And so they hear sermons, they have quiet times and they say yeah that's good and that's good and I need to continually grow and then they go on, because for them the life of maturity now is turning to others to give. And the fact is, as Willard says, we come week after week to hearing sermons.

We come week after week to quiet times and we walk away thinking what do I do with that. And the older you get in the faith the more it's a question. What do I do? Do I just say yes I'll do it one more time. Is there anything more? How many times have we left sermons or quiet time with oh yeah that's good. Or we said oh that's a problem. Oh yeah I agree with that. Now I need to work on that. And then we go to work and then we go have fellowship time. We can get to a point where we're wondering what do I do with this stuff. Is this a good way to listen? And so our task as the people of God is to listen well. And our task as teachers and leaders is to help others listen well. And that's what I want to talk about tonight. And again if you look at the notes, only a neurotic like me would have all these pages of notes that we can't get through. So we're going to kind of move a little because I want, I really want to get at how can I hear the word of God and respond in light of all the things that we've talked. And so we'll just begin

with a little theology of obedience and the spiritual disciplines. Some of this you'll know and we'll just keep moving.

The first point is just this. According to Paul, when he thinks of the Christian life, he captures it in many terms, but one of them he thinks the whole Christian life is a training. It's a training in godliness. It's a training in obedience. This is first Timothy Chapter 4 Verse 7. He says "bodily discipline is of some value but if you're going to do anything train yourself. Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness for this is profitable for all things in this life and in the next." If you want to know something that, it's going to help you in this life, in all things, give yourself to a training. You know, I used to be an athlete. I used to train. I mean I really did. My children will believe it, but I worked all year round running. Running distances, running sprints. If you can believe I used to run as a football player, I could run 5, 10 miles at a time.

I used to lift weights two to three times a day for eight months out of the year. I was, I was in a training because I thought it was going to be helpful for something I wanted to do in the game. I don't train myself like that anymore. As you can tell. I've become a nerd and a pear. But I have another training that's even better. This is the training of life. And when Paul thinks of how I'm to respond to the word, it's going, I just want you to put this in your mind for right now. It's a training, it's a training. Now, we're going to have to think about what kind of training that should be. But when we hear the word, and we have a quiet time. I don't want you to think of it as having a gentle walk with Jesus. We live in a world of warfare right now. The demons do not like you. This is a training, and I want to open a little up to this training. And the training is going to be around the issue of obedience.

Again I think of that text by Jesus in John 4:34. The training is not about having religious experiences. The training is not fundamentally about even trying to grow as a person. Now we're going to see, you're going to have to grow as a person to fulfill this training. But you know, you can have a focus on growth as if yours and my growth is like the end of all. As if

God existed for my growth. As if spiritual formation, it all exist so that I can grow and be happy with my growth. Jesus is the model in this life in the fall. My meat and my drink. As long as in this life and demons are here, they're doing their thing. They're accusing the brethren. They're going before the throne. My meat and my drink is to do the will of the Father. That's what I'm giving my life to. Now, I will say, you're going, that's a long road. Because I know right now that's not my meat and my drink. I've got a lot of other food. I like to gnaw on. Anybody else? Yes. But this is the food that I want God to open my heart to. And so I think of this as the call of God to obey, to train. And I think of it in two ways. And you're just going to have to think with me here for just a bit. The first is what I will call the general call of God. The general call of God to obey. And the second one is the specific circumstantial call of God to obey. Now what's going on here. Take the following commands. To love God.

To love your wife. Wives respect your husbands. Be patient when wrong. Be kind. Abhor what is evil. There's thousands of commands. Here's what the general call of obedience is. The general call of obedience has to do with when you hear the word of God, you hear the command, you hear the sermons, quiet time, bible study, and you may not be called upon right then to act on it. You may not be called right then to act on it, but rather you're to become that kind of person. For instance, tomorrow you may have a quiet time and you're reading Ephesians 5. You're a woman and it says wives respect your husbands. Well your husband is not in the room right now. And so you can't actuate that command. In fact that's going to be what the specific or circumstantial call of God is. The general call is while you're in your room and you hear, "Greta, respect your husband John."

I like that one. Let's say that one again. You know when the general call of God comes. See, Greta can't per say obey that right at that moment. She can't actuate an action to me. But here's how the general call of God comes when we hear the word. It is asking us to become that kind of person who will then live out that command when called upon. And so the specific or the circumstantial call of God to obey is when we are called in particular circumstances. Most of the calls of God that you have when hearing sermons and in quiet times are general calls to

obey. Their general calls of that's what I'm to become. So that when you're in that moment with, when I'm in that moment with Gretta and I'm to love her as Christ loved the church, and she's bugging me, the command of God comes and now I'm to actuate this. And the point here according to Willard, now think about this point. I didn't write it down for you. I'm getting lazy. But here's the point.

Willard's says, "It's magical thinking to believe that just by hearing the call or the word of God in general that you will have the character or disposition to obey it in the specific circumstance." Did you hear that? It is magical thinking to believe that just by hearing the call of God when everything's fine, I'm sitting in my room, I'm sitting and hearing a sermon. It's a magical thinking that just by hearing that word, that when I'm in the situation and I'm called to love Gretta from the heart, by the spirit, that that's what's going to come out of me. And so here's the general principle. This is what, this is what's leading Dallis Willard in his thinking. This is how it's impacted me. The general principle here and I wrote this down, I think, for you, we are to train ourselves in the general call of God. I am to train myself in this general call of God. When I'm taking the scripture in, when I'm hearing the commands of God, I'm to see it as a training for the sake of developing a character that is ready to obey when called upon in the specific circumstantial calls of God. I am to give myself to a training. And so this Sunday, I will probably be here and I'll be hearing Pastor Dale. My task is to hear. It's to hear it within the context of a training. And it's peace and prosperity. I'm just sitting here and nothing's, nothing's bothering me or aggravating me. I'm just hearing the word of God and the call will come. And my task is, "God, I'm in a training."

Think back you know, 16, 17, 18 years old. The training. You're in a training now. It's a bigger training. You're hearing it in a training so that you will become a kind of person. So that in the circumstances when the call, the call of God comes in a particular circumstance, I'm talking with my daughters, that I'll act in such a way from the heart by the spirit, that won't exasperate them. And so I want to know what that training is.

Number three. What is the relationship between this training and the spiritual disciplines? Tonight, I really want you to get away from thinking of the spiritual disciplines as a certain kind of esoteric list that you've read perhaps in a Dallas Willard or Richard Foster book. Fasting. Meditation. Prayer. Lectio Divina. Retreat. Solitude. Silence. When people mention the spiritual disciplines, that's what they think of. And I'm introduced in many environments when I speak now and they say, "Well Doctor Coe's going to come, and Doctor Coe's kind of an expert on the spiritual disciplines. He's going to talk to us about solitude and silence."

They're always disappointed because I'm not going to talk to them about that. No, you know what spiritual disciplines are? I give you, now later on, we're not going to have time for it, but there will be a, there's a definition in the back of this thing about what a spiritual discipline is. But let me give you just a real generic one. A spiritual discipline. This is all it is. This is all it is. I want to demystify it. It's just a specific training of the heart by the spirit to the general call of God, in order to develop that habit of heart to obey the specific call of God at all times. That's all a discipline is. You give me any command of God and I'm going to develop a spiritual discipline, because what I want to do is I hear the word of God, it's a training. That's all we mean by a spiritual discipline. It's a training. It's a training of the self so that I have a character that can respond to God.

Now what I'd like you to do is I want you to skip four for a moment. I want you to go to number five. This is on your page three I think. If that's all a spiritual discipline is, it's going to turn out. There are tons of disciplines. In fact, for every command of God, there will be a corresponding discipline. A training that you can give yourself to. Now five. How do I identify a spiritual discipline? How do you identify these things? How do you identify when you have an opportunity for training? This is gonna be very simple. Not simple, necessarily, to give yourself to. Just like lifting weights wasn't very easy. If I tried to pick up training again for football again, oh goodness. Oh goodness I'd have a heart attack after the second lap. Here's the structure of it. Very simple little scheme. Take any command of the bible. Love your wife.

Respect your husband. Love God. Be anxious for nothing. Those are commands. You can take any command of the Bible, but now, as I say here, you can take any vice trait to put off. You know, you're reading the Bible, and it says don't worry. Well that's, that's, that's called a putting-off discipline. And so now, the word of God comes and says John, don't worry. Ok, that's a command.

Or maybe it's a virtue that the scripture talks about. Joy. I'm to put on joy. So I'm going to be able to take any command of God. I'm going to be able to take any vice or virtue, anything about that, and I'm going to turn it into a spiritual discipline. Another thing I say is I can take any reality to be experienced in the Bible. For instance, I have a full pardon, we've talked about this, I have a full pardon in Christ. I am to experience that deeply. I can take that reality now and I can turn it into a spiritual discipline you will see. Or another thing I can take is any example to be modeled.

I can take Jesus, him fasting. Him going on retreat. Him going into solitude. And here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to take any of these vices, realities, examples, or commands. And number two, I'm going to, I'm going to first consider what Willard's said, that it's magical thinking that just by a good intention, this will be kept from the heart. It is magical thinking that just by your intending you will keep this from the heart by the spirit. I mean wouldn't it be cool, this Sunday you hear a sermon, and it says pray without ceasing and you said, "Self! Pray without ceasing. That is my intention." And all of a sudden, "Woo! I am praying without ceasing! I want to pray without ceasing!" Wouldn't that be cool? Willard's says that's magical thinking. It's magical thinking just by intending to love your wife you will. Anybody who thinks that hasn't been married very long. And number three. Here's the question you ask. Here's the major question you have to ask when you are thinking of the text and you just heard the command of God. If you think that just by intending that, imagine hearing love your enemy. If you think by just intending to do that you will be doing it. That's magical thinking. Here's the first thing you need to do. Number three, the question you have to ask is this. What kind of person must I become to live out that command from the heart by the Spirit. That's the question

you ask. Love your enemy. Ok, what kind of person do I have to become if I'm going to live out that command? That's the same thing as when I trained in football. I see what a person does when I used to play quarterback, what he does, and then when I played offensive guard, I see what they do. And now I have to ask the question, well I just can't get out there and do it.

I can't say, "You know, I want to do that." In fact I met a lot of guys who thought they could. "Eh, I think I could do that!" No. The question was what kind of a person do I have to become if I'm going to be able to do that. Wow. And then number four is this. It's just a simple schema right now. It's going to get more complex. And if you take this seriously, that number three, you should be asking all the time. Number four is the serious question that I want to talk about as we go on. But 3, it's always what kind of person do I have to become if I'm really going to love God as Christ of the church from the heart by the spirit? Oh my gosh. But now number four, if I take that seriously, I must now have to discern with the spirit what I'm going to have to do. What kind of training am I going to have to give myself to. What do I need to do to become that kind of person. Notice, I want to move away from thinking what do I have to do to obey that command. Because it turns out obeying that command is going to require becoming a certain kind of person.

And so the real question as we hear the word and the commands of God are what do I have to do to become that kind of person that will then obey that command from the heart?

And I'll just say this by, and this is what the spiritual disciplines are all about. This is what the training is all going to be about. I'm going to take commands and generate a training of this. As we'll see in a little bit. Let me just make a note here. First of all, just recall that you cannot do this on your own. Whatever training you're going to give yourself to, this is a whole different kind of training than lifting weights. This is a training where you're going to present yourself to another person.

It's a relational training. It's to open up to what the Spirit wants to do. And secondly you're going to need some wisdom. You're going to need some wisdom to discern what kind of trainings you should give yourself to and what kind of trainings you shouldn't. Because you know something, you can't give yourself to all the training of all the things that you're going to do. Think about it. This next week, you'll hear at least one sermon and there'll be a couple of things to do in there. Something that you can realize, something you can experience more deeply about what you are in Christ. Some commands, you'll have quiet times, you might have Bible studies. In this next week, you will probably hear anywhere from five to ten things, at least, about what you could do or become. And you know something, you are to obey them.

But, remember this. You are to obey them. Whatever you hear. You are to obey, but you cannot give yourself to training in every single thing. You can't. You are going to have to, by wisdom, discern with God's Spirit, what am I going to give myself to a training about, or else your life is going to be scattered and non focused in this training.

The next point, this is number six. Then what kinds of trainings can we give ourselves to. What kinds of things, then, can I give myself to in this training, and how do I decide what to do? I hear so much. So as you hear the general call of God, that's what I'm going to be talking about now. You're hearing the general call of God. You're just hearing the word. You're hearing truths in your quiet time, in sermons, in reading books, love God, pray without ceasing, abhor what is evil, be filled with the Spirit. These are all good things. A couple things I want you to keep in mind. Here's the first one. Now this is just something to consider. I'm not going to make much of this here, but you might just ask yourself as you're hearing that word coming to you, whether you're being called to put something off or whether you're being called to put something on. It's good just to know where you are in the logic of the word. Because as you hear the word coming, there are going to be some things that you're going to be asked to now shed. That's what the Scriptures will say. Abhor what is evil. Have you liked it before? Abhor that thing now? And so there are some spiritual disciplines that are designed to putting off. And you know

what these spiritual disciplines usually are? They're ones that are going to be in part exploring what's going on internally. These are disciplines where we detach from things that we love. And so if I'm not to worry, well now as I ponder that in the Lord, I might discover, God, I'm a very worrying person. Well now I know that if I want to give myself to a training, it's going to, it's going to involve at least some searching of why I've become a worrying person. And it's just good to know where we are.

But then as I say in the next bullet, there are some disciplines, and these are probably the ones we practice the most, that are the putting on ones. These are things like worship, meditation on the word, adoration, silence. These are what are called disciplines of attachment. These are things that we say, "You know, I want to, I want to give myself to that. I want to give myself to celebrating." So let's do that. So we'll talk about a little later how to, how to actually do a training. How to, how to put yourself through a little training. But it's just something to know right now. And the last bullet there is even with the putting on discipline's, if they feel purgative, remember the dark knight stuff, if they feel purgative, then you probably know God is now, by his spirit, making this a putting off discipline.

What do I mean by that. Well let's say you just want to spend the next week praising God. That's a spiritual discipline. You know God, I want to develop this part of me to praise you. I'm a grumpy person. I'm focused on myself. I just want to praise you, so I'm going to turn to the Psalms and for the next week, for five days, I'm going to read a psalm that praises you. And then after that Psalm is done, I'm going to spend ten minutes a day, that's my training.

That's it. One week God. I'm going to train myself. After I read a Psalm I'm gonna give myself ten minutes. I'm going to praise you. I'm going to use my mouth to praise. Well while you're doing that, if it's praise, cool. That means God in consolation is showing you pockets of your heart that are constant with that that training to praise. But you know, some of you, if you did that, and you're praising God for things in your life, you may sit there and really, if you're

honest, and that will be a spiritual discipline, "You know God, I'm bored. Yeah, I praise you God. Yeah, whatever. I've had a long day today." And then you know what that discipline has become. Yum yum. Eat em' up.

In desolation, that discipline has now become a putting-off discipline and now part of the discipline isn't just to muster up praise. Part of discipline is now, the Spirit's got your attention, so that now you say you know Lord, you know what the truth is, I don't really want to praise you. God that's so good to know. That's so good to know. That's why, that's why you died for me. God just for the next three minutes now, just take me on a little journey in this training of why it is that right now my heart doesn't really give much a rip about praising. See if you're going to be a good little boy or a girl you know what you'll do. "No, I've got to hunker down. I've got to praise." Yes, you've already offered yourself to praise. Now you see what's in your heart. That's what the Spirit wanted to show you this morning. What a wonderful, humbling experience to see what's really in the heart. This is just something to keep in mind.

But now B. This is where I'm going to park on for a while. You're going to have to ask yourself now, as you hear the general call of God, you're hearing the word. Hearing the commands, you're hearing the virtues and the vices. You're going to have to ask yourself if you want to be involved in a training. God, what am I to do with this? And I'm gonna give you three kinds of things. Am I to give myself to an intention? Am I give myself to a rhythm, or am I to give myself to a regimen?

And if you turn the next page, there you will have a, an overhead. I'll put this up here, if you can see that.

I'm going to talk about the disciplines, and if you want to look at the next page you can, you can tear that one out if you want or you can just look at it up here. I want to talk about, I'm not

going to have time to go through all the ways we can think of spiritual disciplines, because there's a gazillion of them. But I want to talk about three kinds of disciplines that we can give ourselves to. And I want to start, start with regimens, and in fact, for you, that will be, I'm going to skip around again.

I want you to go to the next page to number C. This is a regimen. You're now hearing the word of God and you're saying "God, what should I do with this thing? I'm to, I'm to love my wife." That's what it says, or "I'm to give myself to loving you." Now, that's a general call that's all the time. Well, notice about a regimen. This is the top. Reg, spiritual regimens are going to be specific plans for obedience. They're going to be short term. This is if you want to give yourself to a training and you're going have to discern this. A regimen is when you've heard the word of God and now you want to give yourself to this short term project to train yourself in that.

And so the structure of it, I give it here again. You hear the command "love your wife." Again, I'm going to remind myself, so I don't know what Dale's going to teach on this week. But let's say it was that. Well, I'm going to remind myself, number one, with what Dallas Willard just said, it's magical thinking that just by a good intention, I'm going to be able to keep that one from the heart by the Spirit as a disposition forever. And so, number two, here's the question I'm going to ask: God, what kind of person must I become to live out this command from the heart?"

That's the question I asked. What kind of person do I have to become to live it out? And then number three: from there, you're going to set forth a short term plan to begin to practice, with the Spirit, what it is that you think you might do to help build that as part of your character. Now first, we're, we're we're going to come back to this. We're going to have to discern, is this what I am to do? But this is one of the things that you can do. When you're listening to your quiet time tomorrow, there might be some things that you read and you go "God, this is important. But you know, Lord, I'm not going to make this a regimen. I don't, this isn't

something I'm going to give myself to, because you know something? I can't become a great computer analyst and a great football player and a philosopher and a theologian all at one time. I have a finite body, and so I'm going to have to open to the Lord: God, is this something I'm going to give myself to a training of a regimen?

Now you know something, in this size of the room? I'll bet there's two or three of you that in this next week, if you open to the Spirit about what you're hearing in your quiet time, or from the word, or from teaching, the Spirit might want you to develop exactly this: God, I just heard that. And right now, my wife and I are having struggles. I know it. I know I just haven't been really opening my heart to her. God, this, this is important. Lord, what kind of person do I need to be that would really love her and God, what, what could I do? Remember baby, remember that, that movie "what about Bob?" Remember baby steps? Baby steps out the door, baby steps in the elevator, "Aaahh" right when he gets in the elevator, he freaks out?

This is baby steps.

And some of you the Spirit of God may say "you need to give yourself to a short term regimen". So, these are so simple. You know what it might be? It might be something like this: you know Lord, what I'm going to do for the next two weeks, I'm going to take four. This is just one of a million, for the next two weeks, I'm going to take four hours of my life in each week, eight hours. And I want to give myself now, I want to think with you for the next two, three minutes in this quiet time, or at the end of this sermon, I want to think with you of, of what would be a good use of four hours to, to bump- start a little bit of training in relation to my wife? Well, I can just think off the top of my head. I could say, "Well, you know Lord, in this next week of four hours, I'm going, I want to spend four days for a half an hour, that will be two hours. I just want to pray for her. I just want to open up my heart deeply in prayer about what's going on in her life and my life. And Lord, in the next four hours or the next two hours, you know what I'm going to do? I'm just going to spend, I'm going to spend an hour, two nights of

this week"--You should try this husbands--"where I'm just going to listen to, to my wife. I'm going to listen to my wife with you, Lord. I'm just going to open deeply. I'm going to let her talk and I'm going to ask questions, whatever, but I'm just going to listen." You know, that's nothing! It's minimal, but you know something?

It's so much better than saying "Huh, that's good. I need to do something about that. Hey Bob! How you doing?" Something got lost. Something got lost. You know, you must hear the confrontation when you hear the word of God.

You must do that. God, here I am.

Now, this is just one thing you can do, but you give me any command, you give me any reality that I have in Christ, and I can develop a 20 hour, a 50 hour, a three hour, a 20 minute little regimen training just to bump-start and open my heart to this.

I'll say this. This is in your power. It is not in your power to change yourself. It is not in your power to change yourself, but it is in your power to open up to something as simple as that. A second thing.

And we're going backward here in the notes. B: These are what we call spiritual rhythms. One, regimens are short term, you know what rhythms are? Rhythm, rhythms are the long term seasons and ways that I want to experience my spiritual life. In the history of Christian spirituality, this is where the classical spiritual disciplines have been. Lectio Divina, that is, the divine reading of the word, meditation on the word, prayer. You know what, you know what the evangelical rhythm is? What do we call that? It's the quiet time.

I mean, it is universal. I go to Westmont, quiet time, everybody knows it. Biola. Now if I go to Harvard, they probably wouldn't.

Quiet time? You mean, you take a nap? Uh, yes, that's what I do.

What these quiet time, I mean what these spiritual rhythms were, these are disciplines that the church thought should be constants in our life. And you know what these rhythms actually do, they protect regimens by love, because what spiritual rhythms are, our constants in our life where we're trying to develop love and openness to God. This is the place where I'm connecting to God and that's what these disciplines of silence and solitude generally were. They were to ensure that regimens don't just become ways that I use to transform myself. You know, pagans can do this.

They do it all the time. You can give yourself as an unbeliever to a regimen of training. People do it all the time, even spiritual ones, character ones. But these rhythms, these rhythms are the ones that you have determined before the Lord, and some of you, I'll have to say, you probably need to read, kind of take an inventory in your life. What are my rhythms? Do I have rhythms that are protecting my love life? Because, over time, you know what our tendency is? It will be idolatry. We start getting attached to things.

I'm 50 years old. I'm attached to all kinds of stuff and these rhythms are the ones that check: what are my loves?

And they develop loves.

Here's questions that you need to ask: Lord, for the, for the purpose of ongoing love and attachment to you, do I need more silence? You can just think about this, right here. Do I need more silence? Do I need more silence in my life so I can open to you? Here's another one: Do I need more solitude? Just to be with you? Do you need that? I don't know.

Lord, do I need to hear the word more? Do I need? This is something you must confront, or else spiritual rhythms will, will die. And as spiritual rhythms go down, you know what happens? Our attachment to the finite comes up.

We're going to attach to something. That's the law of our heart. God, do I need to pray more?

You know, that's something that I don't want you to knee-jerk react to out of guilt. DO YOU NEED TO PRAY MORE? Yeah, I do. You need to ponder this with the Spirit. Do I need these rhythms? Let me just say this again. This is Dallas Willard's point: doing spiritual disciplines here as rhythms, this is in your power.

It is not in your power to transform yourself. It is in your power to ask the question, "God, what do I need? What are the constant, ongoing patterns and rhythms that I need if I'm going to maintain a decent love life?" And then the last one: the bottom. This is another category, we can call them spiritual intentions or disciplines of intention, disciplines of intention. These are the most important of all, these are the, these are the bedrock spiritual disciplines. They're really more ways of being a Christian than anything else. They're, they're in fact, these are going to be the ways that we do all of these other disciplines, rhythms and regimens in the training.

I'll say this about these spiritual rhythms. This is what beginners should be assigned.

When they're having times of consolation, when things are going well and they're excited about their faith, I as a discipler, I'm going to move them right into these rhythms because I want them to begin to develop these on-going patterns, and I might even move them into regimens, but especially rhythms, and I'll only begin to open up beginners to the spiritual intentions.

But as we go on in the faith, these spiritual intentions, or disciplines of intention, they become the heart of our mature faith. They become the heart of what it is to be a Christian.

These disciplines down here, these four that I'll talk about briefly, they are the very logic of biblical thinking. They're the very logic of what it is to hear the word of God as a mature believer. And so I present here four disciplines of intention. The first is the discipline of presenting oneself as a sacrifice. This is, this is just part of the logic of obedience. The first discipline, the bedrock to everything is, I present myself. So I, remember, here's the context: I've just heard the word of God. I've just read the word of God and how do I respond?

Here's, these four disciplines are how you respond to the word of God. This is how you respond. And the first one is I present myself. This is Romans 12:1 and 2: I present myself as a living sacrifice to God. Romans 6: I present the members of my body, no longer as instruments of unrighteousness, but God I present them to you. And so, as I hear the word of God: don't exasperate your children, John. First, first spiritual discipline: God, I present myself to you. And I do this for the sake because I don't want to fall asleep to your Word. As I say here, this is the spiritual discipline of allowing the self to be confronted by the Word. This is the spiritual discipline that protects the will from falling asleep to the will of God. It is so easy to hear another command, "oh yeah, love my wife as Christ, love the church. I need to do that." No, I need to wake up John, WAKE UP! God, I'm here.

The last thing you want in your life is to develop the discipline of numbness to the word of God. That is a killer to the spiritual life.

You must arouse yourself, this is within your power, it's not in your power to transform yourself, but it's in your power to say, God, here I am. God, here I am. I hear. That's presenting. Now you know something, as you go on in the faith, that spiritual discipline is what should be going on all the time. God, I'm here.

My daughters come up to me and [yells] God, I'm here. God, I'm here.

My first response is not to fix my daughters. My first response to God: God, I present myself to you. God, I'm here. This is a discipline for life. But this is the first discipline that we do when we hear the word of God. The second one is what we call the prayer of recollection. Now if we have time at the end, I'll teach this, but it's a very simple thing. It's simply the spiritual discipline of reminding the self of its true identity. We do this all the time. This is now the heartbeat of my life at 50, reminding myself "God, I'm in Christ, there's full pardon, there's full acceptance, and Christ is in me now, the Spirit's here." And so, this prayer of recollection, what it does, it protects our life from moralism. It protects my life from making decisions by false guilt or shame in my own power. And so, as I hear the pastor teach the Word or the quiet time "Love your wife." God, you know what I want to do?

God, I present myself, but God, I want to remind myself right here. I'm in you. And I'm not going to obey this to try to be a good little boy. I'm not going to obey this because I want to get the monkey of guilt off my back. I don't want to do this just to please my wife. And so the word here is God, I want to do this in you. This is the prayer of my heart throughout the day now. And this is the prayer of my heart: to hear the word of God.

God, I want to do this in you, I don't want to do it my power. I don't know how to do it, except in my power usually, but God, that's what I want.

And the third: it's the spiritual discipline of truth telling. It's the spiritual discipline of truth telling. This is how we hear the word of God. This is what I want to do all through the day. This is what the mature person does. It's just the logic of their faith. This is the spiritual discipline whereby upon presenting our self to God, we now want to open to what's truly going on inside. God, I just heard "love my wife as Christ loved the church." God, I present myself, here I am. God, I don't want to do this just in the power of me, I want to open to what I am in Christ in ,this and God, what's the truth in my life?

God, what's the truth? Is that true? Am I loving my wife as Christ loved the church? I want to, I want to truth-tell, you know why? Because this protects our obedience, it protects our presenting ourselves from arrogance. It protects our presenting our self from closed heartedness and superficiality. It lets the spirit teach us what's really going on in your heart. And so the cry of the heart just is God, what's going on my heart? It's reality testing. And the fourth one is discernment. This is the fourth of what we would call some, we can call these the meta-disciplines, these are the key spiritual disciplines that should be going on all the time or we can call them disciplines of intention. And discernment is this, it's the spiritual discipline, it's just a training where I want to watch what God's doing, I want to learn from him. I want to discern what the Spirit's doing and what he wants me to do, what his will is, versus what my will is or what the devil's will is, and how I can better cooperate. And here I'm going to seek wisdom on how to respond to the work of God.

See, you know what this is going to protect me from? This is now, in my own spiritual life at 50, these ones God has been working in my life. This one, this one I feel like a baby in. I want

to learn to grow in discernment of what his will is and not jump to what mine is. Even in this training. See, this protects me from responding to false calls. See, I might hear the word of God about loving Gretta, and Gretta might have just had, we might have had an argument last night, and I might want to do this just to please her. Boy, that, that's really funky obedience then.

You find yourself in the middle of it and it gets all kind of messy. I want to protect myself by discernment from false calls of guilt, fantasy, thinking that you will be able to obey that discipline, just, make it work. No, I don't know. God, is that something I should be giving myself to? It'll protect me from grandiosity. It will teach me how to wait on God. You know, as we get older in the faith, these bottom disciplines here, they become central to our life. They're, they're just part of the logic of our life.

When I hear the word of God, present myself, God, here I am. Lord, I want to do this in Christ. God, what's really going on in my heart, what's really taking place? Open me to this, and God, help me discern what I'm to do. What am I to do? Number two, this is, skip over a couple of pages. How, how do we hear and respond to the Word from the heart?

How does this take place?

What, what has to happen to do this? I'll just say this and then maybe we'll take a break. I'll give a little bit. The next time that you hear the word of God, I want to give you some ways of how you can hear. You know the greatest difficulty in hearing sermons or in teaching or preaching, you know it's always the last five or ten minutes. It's always the hardest. For the preacher, it is always the hardest. He, he's just been sharing good words for an hour and now, like Doug Hagg says, he's got to land the plane. You know, preachers and teachers, we have problems landing the plane, partly because we just, we love it so much. But you know what the other part of it is, is we just don't want to blow the landing. We want to make sure, God, because it is the hardest

when you prepare a sermon or when you teach, here with this, talking about great things. Now what do I say for people to do? You know how many times have I talked to preachers at Talbot program when they've come back to the D-min program, that, that's not the demon program, that's the D-min program, the Dr. of ministry program, the dimin program, and they say, you know, those last minutes in the sermon, and when I'm about to give three principles of application, I just sometimes feel like it blaa. "And do this." Oh goodness, God. And so, we don't want to land the plane because we're just feeling like it's going to sputter then. It's painful sometimes for a teacher to want to say something meaningful at the end. But you know, it's also painful, I'll say this too about teaching and preaching. I remember, I was around a preacher, a real great expositor of the word, but you know what I heard every week? This great teacher: "This is the key to the Christian life!" And then the next week: "this is the key to the Christian life." Well, he had 80 keys. Which one is it? We as teachers can get so excited that we think, this is it!

This is the key and our task must be to help you folks decide and craft out with God to discern in the presenting of yourself: What should I give myself here? Is this to be a training, is this not a training? And that's what we're going to talk about. Because for you, the listener, think of all the things that you hear. You've heard so much. What do you do when you hear it again? And so, when you come back at the break, we will, we will do this.