

How to Put On Christ Part 2

By John Coe

[Applause]

John Coe:

That's great. Well, let's turn in the notes and continue. I want to, I want to finish with some things about hearing the word and, and then we'll see if we have time to actually do a few disciplines together. But again, the issue is how is it that we are going to hear and respond to the word in a reasonable way, in a way that's, that's realistic given our life, and open to what God wants to do rather than maybe what's going on in our heart that we think we ought to do. That, that's going to be a major issue, is to discern: What is it that I should give myself to? Now I say here, I think it's in the notes, Willard's point is this; if you shoot for nothing, you will surely hit it and that, that is a major issue is to not walk away from the word and say hmm, that's interesting. But the question is, how to walk away from the word. What do we do with this? And so in general I want to say this, that the disciplines of intention, presenting, recollection of the heart, honesty and discernment; these are going to be the foundation disciplines of how to hear and respond to the word.

Next time that you're in a quiet time; next time that you're in a sermon, there's, there's something out of which that you can open yourself to. You can practice the discipline. Now, like all disciplines, the goal is that these would become habits of my heart. They would become habits that are going on all the time, but like a training, you've got to start somewhere. And so even if something's going on in this, in the word I'm reading and "ugh I'm so bored", I still present myself and I'm, and then I'm going to be open to what's going on in my heart with this.

And so, I don't know where you are with these disciplines, but I tell you one thing: like all disciplines, as Willard says, it is within your power to open to do them. It's not in your power to

transform yourself. And so, as I hear the word to love my wife, to put on Christ; as I hear the word of I am in Christ, how do I present, how do I open to this? Well, number one. And we've, we've said this before so I'm just going to do this briefly. I'm going to present myself as a sacrifice. As I hear the word of God and the command, I am going to intend, now this is within my power, I am going to intend to allow myself to be confronted. I don't want to walk away from the word, from the word as if kind of nothing happened. Like it was just a minor car accident, and "Oh that was interesting." I want to allow myself to be confronted, and I want to say literally, and I would encourage you as you're sitting in a sermon this Sunday, or in teaching, and you're hearing it, say "God, I hear you, I'm here. I want to open myself to you." Those are words that you can present.

And that's where we begin. God, I hear your word. Here I am. And secondly, as I hear the word, as I'm open to this call of God, as I'm reading, I want to intend my heart, I'm going to say God, whatever I'm going to do or whatever I'm going to become, I want to do this in you. And I, I want to do this with the Spirit.

And I want to be open to that. No matter what I'm hearing, I want to do this with him. And number three is so important. Number three is so important as you get on in the faith. Because number three is where you are, you engage in honesty, the spiritual discipline of truth-telling. God, what's really going on in my heart? This is where you intend to open to the truth of what's really going on. Pastor Dale, some weeks ago, he said that feelings are lousy leaders and that is so true.

But you know what they are? They're excellent windows. We talked about that last week.

Feelings are lousy leaders. I'm not going to use my feelings to determine whether I'm going to present myself, but at some point, I am going to want to open up to my feelings, to what's inside, because I want to know: God, what really is going on inside here? And those of us who get older in the faith, this is where we can miss this, because we've heard the word, and we've heard the word, and we've heard the word, and we've heard the word and we can hear it and say yeah, I need to do it.

Yeah, that's good. Yeah, and that one's kind of going on in my life, and then we go on. Here is where, for the mature especially, you need to let the Spirit do a little heart surgery. God, as he's sharing, as I'm listening, God, continue to open my heart. What really is going on in my marriage?

If I'm here, I might be hearing a sermon on the forgiveness of sins.

Then God, what's really going on in my heart about it? Do I really care about that, is, does that truth just kind of bore me now? OK, I'm forgiven then, whatever. God, I want to know the truth. Because, see here, I can open the Spirit, open to the Spirit of what he wants to teach me. And what will happen is this: as I open my heart, if my heart is congruent with what I hear: "Oh God, this is what I, this is good. This is what I want to experience more deeply and open to you.

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I want to obey." That's cool, let it be. Then you know the Spirit is giving you a moment of experience of part of your soul that is congruent with that truth. But if you're opening the heart, and you see something else, like ah, whatever, I've, you know, I should love her as Christ, I oh, whatever. How cool.

Yum yum.

Eat them up, because at that moment, the Spirit has decided out of his kindness to show you part of your heart that is not congruent. And now you have a whole journey. God, this is so good, I need this. Something's going on here. And number four.

This is key I find. This is key to us as we're getting older: discernment, discernment now. And there's going to be a couple places of discernment.

The first one is just this, and you can always ask this, and we should always ask this: God, if I am to become that person, if that's what you say that I'm to do or to experience, what kind of person do I need to become to experience that? I've just heard a sermon, or I just read about the forgiveness of sins.

God, what kind of person do I need to become if I'm going to really experience the forgiveness of sins, and enjoy that? Not just for salvation's sake but daily, or if I'm to love my children, what kind of person do I need to become? And so here, I'm going to intend and I'm going to say, God, what kind of person do you want me to become?

But now number 5. This is another discernment, and this is to me where the rubber starts hitting the road. And this is where we get a little confused and we can get a little lost because now the discernment is: God, what, in light of what kind of person I need to become to really experience or obey that, God, what are you asking me to do? This is the bottom line. This is a transaction. In psychology, there was an old psychology called transactional analysis, and in preaching and in teaching and hearing the word of God, you know what is going on? A transaction.

Well, you know when you're buying a car, a transaction's going on and you're getting really nervous, like am I going to do this? How much are they going to come down, are they going to come up? What's going on? When you hear the word of God, there is a transaction.

Don't walk away without closing the deal. I'm really serious about that. Now, what does it mean to close the deal? Because you're not going away from this, you're not going to walk away from this quiet time totally perfected.

But here's what you can do. "God, what are you asking me to do?"

And now, in A, B, and C, this is what now, I want to encourage you to ask: to close the deal each time, to experience the transaction.

Those of you who are preachers and teachers: This is what you need to lead your people to do. And here's the questions. There are three kinds of questions, I can imagine. The first one is this: Lord, what I have heard, should this be only an intention of my heart? That's a serious, that's a serious question to ask, because you see, you're going to hear again five to 20 things this week about what you should experience of being in Christ, about what you should do, about good things that could take place, and you cannot give yourself to a regimen and a training and a rhythm of everything, and you need to now open to the Spirit, you need to open with another teacher perhaps: God, what I heard, should this just be an intention? And you know what that means? That means you just say: God, what this is going to be, I've heard that this is good and God, I desire, I desire this to be in my life and Lord, I desire that when you bring up specific circumstances that I would respond this way. I commit myself, I present myself as an intention to be this way.

And then you let it be.

You don't walk away with magical thinking that everything was solved. You don't walk away thinking that you're going to now obey from the heart, from the Spirit in the next time this comes up. But you've just realized this with some discernment with the Spirit: God, there are other things I need to give myself to right now. And so, I'm not going to make, I'm not going to

take this thing and make it a rhythm or regimen. This is going to be intention. You know, most of us, that's how we walk away from the Scriptures.

But now I want to be explicit about it and I, as a teacher, want to say, look, some of you should not necessarily be given to the training of this. This is the ongoing thing. Make this an intention of a heart and then the Beatles song: Let It Be, Let It Be, Let It Be. Let it be.

Otherwise, you're going to walk away thinking, "God, what should I do about it?" No. Resolve it right here.

It's the transaction. God, this is my intention.

And now I can go and fellowship with others and God, as I go, you can keep bringing it up. We just had a sermon on loving my, you know uh, all of my children. Fine, you'll, you'll be bringing a lot of stuff up, but then I'm going to ask another question: Lord, should what I have heard, should this be a rhythm in my life? Is this something ongoing that I need? Is there something here that is so profound and it's so pronounced and it's need of my life for this next year, for this next three months, whatever, I need to build something into here as a rhythm?

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He's just talked about praying without ceasing. Well, I don't pray more than five minutes a day. God, this is something I need. Lord, I want to open to you in this. I want to open it. And now you can give me, this is totally up to you. This is within your power. Do you want to get in the training or not? It's just so simple. You can give yourself to a rhythm and that's something that you are going to need discernment with the Spirit and maybe even others. God is this something that's really that important? Because not everything you read can you now build as a spiritual discipline, as a rhythm.

You can't do that.

But there are some things that you're going to need to. And so Lord, I want to open to, are there certain rhythms? And this is where reading books by Willard and Foster are helpful because they can kind of mirror some things to you to discern: God, is that something I need? Do I need more silence?

Or maybe, you know, you could even take loving your wife as a rhythm, for a training. Now of course, we all want to love our wives.

But now, you can make it as a rhythm part of the training. God, I think for the next three months, I need about 20 minutes a day to ponder my wife.

This is crucial. It's up to you.

It's up to you. Or Lord, should this be a regimen? Should this be a regimen? This is where Willard has impacted me. Is this something I need to address now as a short term project? Has something that the preacher said, the teacher said, that I read, this has grabbed my heart. I want to develop a short term project right now. I want to develop a little plan. I'm going to take three hours next week, five hours, two hours, whatever it is. There are a million things you can do in making plans. You know, I found that I used to do this when I was a younger believer.

I've gotten a little lazy. You know, I call it Sloppy a Guppy. That, that was a J. Vernon McGee, what he used to say when he was a professor of mine. "There's a lot of sloppy a guppy going on." I feel that.

In my own self.

But something good is going on because these have become more my heartbeat. But I don't want to let go of these. This is the training, I'm in a training. Don't assume that you're supposed to do a regimen. Don't assume that you're supposed to do a rhythm. You always need to offer yourself as an intention. That is always the case.

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And then if you decide to do one of these, number 6, ask the Lord God, help me make a plan. Help me make a plan. Help me get in the training. You know, isn't it amazing, if you wanted to pick up anything in life to learn right now, you would have to do this.

You would. If you wanted to learn the computer, you're going to have to do this. You're going to have to do the training.

Well, this is the Christian life. This is within our power. Plan and then do it.

Now what I'd like you to do, and I'm going to end my, the lecture notes, I think, but we'll do some disciplines maybe at the end. Turn to page 2 in your lecture notes.

I want to come back to this plan and then do it. What do you mean do it? Well, this is number four: in the spiritual disciplines and training, what do you lead with? Where do you begin? You've just made a plan for yourself, a rhythm, a regimen, an intention. And now, all of a sudden, it is an intention, you're in with your children. Well, here's what you do. This has always, in the Church, been the way: we lead with the body to open the heart to the Spirit. That is always the path of spiritual disciplines.

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You don't lead with the heart, you lead with the body. Kind of the Nike commercial, right? You do it.

The focus is on the intention of presenting yourself. You know, when you're a beginner, that's cool.

Yeah! I remember when I was disciplined. I had a guy who disciplined me into lots of projects. Oh, this is good.

This guy was really into spiritual regimens and it was so cool. I'd go home and Gretta and I'd spend three nights together and then we'd talk about certain things. That was so wonderful. But you know, as you go on for those especially who are in dark nights, it's not going to be so wonderful.

The rhythms are going to feel really boring and dry. [Lick] yum [lick] Mmm, yes, good. Is you do these things, if God gives you consolation, ride the wave. If you're doing these things and it's dry, say "God, this is so good to know about my soul. It is so good that I have no taste for this, God. Now show me what's in my heart." And so we lead with the body, but it's always to open the heart. We let the, the heart mirror what's really going on in our life. If I, if the worship leader says to sing congregational music, I remember, I was at a church and they had put A Mighty Fortress to, I don't know what it was, rap music or something. Might-Y Fort-ress Ep-a-uh [raps]. And I'm like whoa, OK. I think this is dumb. It doesn't work.

But I'm called by the sovereignty of God to present myself. And so I will sing this, and as I sing it, you know what may happen? God may say oh, he may open up my heart and I will just "God, this is so good, I love you." But he may open up my heart another way and he'll show me a part that will say "oh this is so dumb, this is dumb music, whatever." And now, I've got a wonderful conversation with him, because you know, the truth is when your heart is so open, Balaam's ass could talk and it would be glory. That's the way the heart is. Here I find a generational difference.

The older generation led with the body, very faithful, but not very open to the heart, and the younger generation picked that up, and the younger generation opens the heart, but they don't lead much with the body. And so they're pretty faithless. And so where the older generation may sometimes seem unreal, even arrogant and superficial, the younger generation is flaky and disciplined and unfaithful.

But here, we lead with the body, but to open the heart. And to open the heart really, to what? Ultimately, to the Spirit. That's what it's all about. It's the Spirit of God who is the transformer of the soul, and in spiritual disciplines, while I'm doing all of this, you know what, now at my age 50, I'm really doing? See, this stuff should be a given. I just want to say that. To Paul the Apostle, this stuff is a given. What I really want to do now at 50, is I want to watch for the Spirit. OK, as I'm spending this evening with Gretta, Spirit, I've got one ear to her, but I've got one ear to you.

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I'm watching for you. You're the lover, you're the transformer. You're the one who's going to lead me into places that I cannot lead myself. I want to be open to that.

I just want to end these lectures just by saying what I've said a whole bunch of times: the process and the transformation, that's not, that's not up to you.

But what we've talked about tonight: so much of this is up to you, so much of it. What I'd like you to do is turn to page 17.

We have a half an hour left. I'm going to teach you a spiritual discipline.

These, this spiritual discipline, uh, the first one is called the Prayer of Recollection. I'm going to teach you one form of it. It's on, it's on page, what is it for you? Ten? Oh I'm sorry, I had another one, yeah. Yeah. I have 17 pages in this thing, so I skipped a bunch, you can read some of that other stuff another time. I'm going to teach you a little bit of the discipline of recollection, then if I have time, I'll teach you the, the spiritual discipline of Lectio Divina. These are two of the most ancient spiritual disciplines in the history of the church.

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Ones that were actually carved out as official, kind of classic disciplines where they just started doing this. The prayer of recollection is, I would say for my wife and I, this has probably been one of the longest standing ones of a discipline.

It's become kind of a little bit of our heartbeat and it's been, it's been so dear to me. You know what the prayer of recollection is? It's the idea to recollect the heart back to its center. That's what it means. It was used by the early church before they heard the word of God. Before they hear the word, they wanted to collect back at their center: what I really am in Christ, so that I can hear the word, not from fantasy or grandiosity or guilt, but God, open to you. I'm in Christ. It was also supposed to address the scattered heart.

Have you ever, have you ever gone to a sermon and you're hearing a sermon and your mind's just kind of zipping through the universe? Or have you ever, yeah, sorry. Pastor Dale, yeah. Or have you ever been in a prayer time and your mind's just going?

I've been in prayer times where I've wondered, God, how did I get over there? And I retraced it, oh my gosh! I had seven conversations with myself. I'm not even praying.

How cool to know how, how, how harsh my heart is, and how, yeah, it's great to know, God. And so, when you've ever felt your heart scattered, your mind wandering, this prayer of recollection was to help kind of open back to: this is what I am at the center. In the prayer of recollection, we're not going to read it because of time, but it's really came from Philippians, chapter 3, verse 7 and following. In Philippians 3, Paul says, after he listed all these things that

he had become, he says, "and whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count everything as loss." Now that's the first half of the prayer of recollection. It's to count everything as loss in comparison to Christ. It's to detach from potential false idols, and it's to detach from potential false identities. That's the, that's what the prayer was, it was to open up the heart to, "John, what really is driving you?" And so, I'm to speak truth into my heart. And then the second part of the prayer is going to be: I consider all things loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I've suffered the loss of all things. I count it but rubbish that I may gain Him and may be found in Him, not a righteousness of my own, but that which is through faith in Christ.

He's recollecting his heart in Christ. And so they took Paul here, and they made it into a prayer. Detaching from false identities and attaching to my true. That's what the prayer is all about, detaching from false identities, attaching to my true identity. This has many forms, but what we're going to do is, we'll just do this for a minute or two. I'll just teach it quickly, we won't do it. But what, what you do in this prayer is you send these truths down into your heart. And as you send them down into your heart, you open to whether or not they're congruent or not. Kinda like sonar, you know, you send it down.

So the first thing, one of the things we're going to send down is, we're going to send down the fact that I am, at my core, my core identity is not being a professor. Now that's one thing I'll do. And so, as I send that down: John, at the core, you are not a professor. Now sometimes, when I send that down, my heart says, "yeah, that's so good John." You know, other times I send that down my soul, you know what my soul says? "Liar! That's exactly where you're finding your identity."

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You know, I do this most of the time every time I go speak now? You know what I say to myself? I recollect my heart, and I say to myself "God, I am not a person who needs to be loved by those who hear me. God, I am not a person who needs people to come up and say, that was insightful. God, I don't need at the core that this night go off well. What am I at the core? I need you. That's what I need." Sometimes when I do that before I speak, it's cool.

Other times, the anxiety is really high, and I know "Liar! You want people to come up saying, oh, Dr. Coe, that was so good."

Oh yeah. Oh no. Yeah. No. Kind of.

And so, if I hear, if I hear parts that are "God, that's not true of my heart right now. How cool." And now I have something to open to God. So here's what we're going to do. The first thing, in this one, this is just one form of it. I'm going to affirm the truth that I have a finite, physical body. What does this mean? I am affirming the truth of my limitation. That's what I'm going to do. God, I am not you. I am a human being that has a body.

I cannot do everything. I am not infinite. I can't grant everybody's wishes. I can't meet everybody's needs. God, I am finite. I'm going to affirm that to my soul, because I want to speak the truth. I want to recollect my soul into the truth. And then, number two, I'm going to affirm that I'm a finite spirit. Now this involves two things. The first one is I'm going to disregard all the potential idols of my soul. That is, I am now going to go through a litany, and I can send my students to do this for two days or I can have them do it for five minutes. In the

morning, I can do this in 30 seconds, to remind my soul what I am not. See, I am a father, but you know something? Some fathers find their whole identity in being a father and I want to, I want to make sure that no, that's not my identity. And so I'm going to say, at the core of my soul, I am not a father. At the core of my soul, I am not a professor. I know some professors where that is the core of their soul. I know that, at the University of California where I taught. At the core of my soul, I'm not, I'm not a husband. Yes, I am a husband, but that's not my core identity.

You know, some of you mothers really need to say this about being a mother, because you're finding too much of your. And now there's always the person who, who's not finding enough of their identity in being a mother.

That's for sure. But some of us have gone the other way. We have found way too much of our identity in being a mother, and whatever you find your identity in something finite, you know what happens? You squeeze that thing to death. And children know when they're getting squeezed to death because they end up at 18 trying to scrape mom off. I'm going to say things like, even at my core, I'm not a son.

Now if I'm having problems with Mom, it might come up saying, Liar! You are attached to that, because you're struggling with her. It's hard to really love her. But I'm going to go through this litany. You know something? I can be an angry person. But you know what the truth is? The truth is at the core, John Coe is not an angry person.

Now it's one thing to deny anger, it's another thing to say I have anger, but it's another thing to say, I am just my anger. There are some people who go to counseling who have identified themselves with their anger. At the core I'm not my anger. At the core, what am I? And here, and be affirmed the real identity. I was created for union with God. That's the core. I came naked into the world as a naked spirit longing for perfect love. And now I'm clothed with Christ's righteousness. This is the core of John Coe. I have said this prayer so many times and sometimes my heart is just in love with this, and then sometimes my heart is just dry as dust, and when it's dry as dust I know I have a conversation with my father, and how cool that is.

And then number three, in this particular version of the prayer, I'm going to ask my soul in the presence of God how I've been approaching God. This is now not truth-talking about my identity, but this is truth-talking about how I've even been praying to God. And one of the questions I'll ask is God, have I been approaching you as if you're a genie? Have I been praying to you as if you have a will too? Or is it just my will? And then after we would do that, we would sit awhile and then we would hear the word of God.

And that's the next page, Lectio Divina. And in Lectio Divina, we will, we will only read the word here, but Lectio Divina, it's called Divine reading, was one of the oldest spiritual disciplines and what it was: it was a bringing together of two passages in the scripture where it says, be filled with the Spirit and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Because in those two texts, the result is the same, speaking to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. And so the early church said, then our relationship to the word of God is also a relationship to the Spirit.

And so we're oh, we're to open to the Spirit and the Word. And so, what they would do is number one, it's very simple, Lectio is just Latin for reading. They would just read the word over and over again until it kinda, they hear it with the inner ear and the minute it takes. Oh yeah. Oh. Have you ever heard a sermon you're not listening, and then all of a sudden mm, I just heard that. And then they would engage in meditatio, in meditation. That means you roll the word around and you let it richly dwell in you and then, in oratio, you know what you're supposed to do, this is so simple, you were just supposed to speak what's going on in your heart. If your mind is like, let's say you spend 20 minutes doing Lectio and Meditatio. In Oratio, whatever is taking place in the heart, that's what you talk to God about. If you find that your mind's wandering, that's what you talk to God about. There's another spiritual discipline where you pray over the word, and that means when you take the word of God and you pray the Word. But Oratio means, you know, you've let the word come in and whatever is coming up, if you're thinking of the Ram game, that's what you talk to God about. Because now, that's an interesting question. You know Lord, I've been thinking about your Word for 20 minutes and I'm thinking of the ram game. What's going on?

And then, in contemplatio, all that is you just sit there. God I'm here. I've heard your word. I'm here. I want to do this for two minutes, three minutes and then we'll have ten minutes for questions. I want you all to put your feet, both feet on the ground if you would, just to remind you, I'm here.

Right here, and I wish now for you to pray with me, and I'm going to take you through this prayer ever so quickly. Father, we just present ourself. Here we are. Here we are. Oh God we need you.

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I want you just to take, as you open in your heart to the Lord, I want you just to remind yourself and God, your soul, the truth of your limitations. I want you to tell the Lord, God, I have a body and it's limited. And just for a moment, ask God, has that been true in my life where I've been, have I been doing too much? God, is that true? Just ask him.

God, I have a body, with limitations. Open me to my weakness. Just remind yourself, you can't meet everybody's needs. Your children. Your spouse. And now just moving on.

Speak to your soul and to God, and disregard all potential idols of your soul. False identities. Just begin to say, at the core of my spirit, I'm not a father. Or a mother, or a son, or daughter, an angry person, a student, a pastor. Focus on one or two and just open that that is not you at the core anymore. Open to the truth.

Just moving on in this exercise, affirm who you really are. I am in Christ, I was a naked spirit, now clothed with Christ. I'm precious in his eyes. He calls me "beloved." Just open to that truth.

If you don't feel it, then talk to him about that. Just open to that. And now just moving on in this exercise: God, how I been praying to you lately?

Have I been praying to you as a genie to do my will? Or am I open to your will?

Might even be looking at things you're wanting or praying for, are you open to his will? Just open to that with him.

Now, hear the word of God. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. I, the Lord Jesus, am the vine. You are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. I am the vine. Jesus. Imagine you're a branch connected to the vine.

That's what you are.

He who abides in the Vine bears fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing. Oh Lord, teach us these things.

Lord, bless these people. God, open our hearts. In the name of Jesus, amen.

We have ten minutes, and so I am open to, these ten minutes, any question for the whole series. Anything that's come up or something that's hanging in your mind or something from tonight.

That's fine, but anything of any of the nights. Anything, comment, question. Yes.

Person in audience: [Inaudible].

John Coe: Yeah. You know, I mean these these are all artificial distinctions, but we see them in the history of the church, and we can see them in our life. The rhythms generally were things that the church, as it, as it began to develop, they saw these as kind of long-term responses to needs in our life: that we all have a need to pray. We all have a need for silence. We all the need for, for opening to God and not just all of the other noises, and we all have needs for some solitude.

Now we kind of wrapped all that up into the quiet time. But these were ongoing disciplines, these really became the classical spiritual disciplines where they thought, "these should be rhythms that are probably long-term ongoing." Now there are other elements that can come in there, like for instance, if I, I really believe that there are times in our life with our children or with our spouse or with some element of life of the business or something like that where this might even go into this kind of rhythm because it really needs to be addressed and then it's going to be long term.

But generally the class and the spiritual disciplines were the disciplines of love, to stay attached to God. And they're, they are the ongoing ones through life. Where the spiritual regimens were: when you're hearing the word or you're reading or you're reading a book or something and something's really grabbing you, or you're in a conversation with somebody and you're just really broken about something, and you just know you need to give yourself to that. To working on some, like an element of your marriage or your relation with your children. Or it might be some vices that you've become aware of.

And these are now more short term projects that have a specific plan that you want to give yourself to. It would just be like, you know, if you want to lose weight. Now losing weight is an interesting thing. There is a kind of rhythm there, right? It's the ongoing healthy way, and then there's a kind of regimen. And the regimen of training is a little more short term to kind of bump-start this whole thing. So again, you can take almost any kind of training and you'll have certain rhythms and then certain regimens.

Let me say this also, that when the early, you know, the later church, they started talking this way about disciplines and you know part of the reason was, they said, you know, when the early church was under persecution, the church naturally did all this stuff. But once the persecution ended, and it was time of peace and prosperity, well, the church noticed, in the third, fourth and fifth century, the difference between grandpa, you know, Josiah, who was in the persecution of the church, and his stories about what it was to pray, and to wait, and to be together.

And now, in a time of peace and prosperity, you don't have to be very disciplined at all. You don't have to put yourself through a training. You can get up in the morning. And the biggest

decision you have is, you know, am I going to have eggs or waffles. And so, this was the development of what they called the White martyr. The red martyr were those believers who had died for their faith and they were in the training just by necessity. The White martyr was the one who realized, in times of peace and prosperity, there is nothing external in my life that forces me into the training.

I've got a great life and, but I am going to now intentionally give myself to the training, and those guys became called the White martyrs. And the White martyrs are those who give themselves intentionally to a training even when life circumstances don't call for it.

Well that's us, that's us.

Yeah.

Question from audience: [Inaudible]

John Coe: Yeah, and that's where we see the disciplines of abstinence are really disciplines of putting off. Those are times where they're part of the spiritual rhythms typically, silence, solitude, fasting. These are times that open us up to what's really going on inside. They help us hear, and his view too, I agree with this, he said "evangelicals do more the disciplines of

engagement, or called the disciplines of attachment, than the disciplines of abstinence." And I think that's true. And, and that's because we in our evangelical tradition have focused a little bit more on the putting on than the putting off with some consequences.

But yeah, that's, that's right where he's at. Yeah.

Person in audience: Can you make any distinction between dark nights as you seem to have defined it, as spiritual dryness versus actual life circumstances?

John Coe: You know, it kind of, you know, back to the red martyr, white martyr? They accomplish the same things. When Paul's talking about, in Second Corinthians 12, 10 and following, where he says that you know, he had all these trials, everything that's happening around him, and especially these thorns in the flesh, and out of them God didn't grant those to him. And God grant him so much trials. But Paul discovered through all of that, that in weakness, the power of God was being perfected. So that's explicitly text about external trials. As the early Church went on, into the times of peace and prosperity, here's what they noticed. They noticed that individuals no longer had external trials to peel the heart. And so, that's when God seemed to begin to do this especially through dark nights, so that no, I have no troubles in my life; in fact, when I was going through an extended dark night, the main trouble was God, where are you in my prayer life? And because, we know what dark nights do, they do the same thing trials do. They finally open you to your heart. God, what's going on? And now God's ready to take you on that journey.

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So, so in life right now, some of you if I, if I spent 20 minutes with you, I find out whether there's times, seasons of desolation in your life, consolation, maybe both.

I'd also find out whether external trials are major. I'd bank on it. There's probably going to be two or three people in here where there's a major trial, an external trial going on. And then, you know, we talked last time about depression, and that's a whole different kind of thing than the dark night. Yeah.

Person in audience: Sounds like you have [inaudible]... you have a dark night, then you have times of consolation coming out of that, then you have a dark night, [inaudible].

John Coe: It could be. You know, all it is is this: I am just watching what the Spirit of God is doing now. Now I've been at this faith a little while, and for a number of years, man, just really confused what's going on. And now, I want more and more. You know God, if during a prayer time it's dry or whatever, I'm not, that's fine. That's cool. What are you doing? Because God, He's always here. And so I want to just track with the Spirit, what he wants to teach me.

And I want to, I want to watch where he's taking me. And so, there are early dark nights that we talked about, dark nights of the senses that had to do mostly with the desire for spiritual pleasure. But it's the later dark nights I talked about last week that I'm really interested in, and those are the dark nights where those of us who've gone on in the faith of it now are beginning to be turned inwardly to say, God, you're doing something more now.

I've heard that sermon a number of times and God, others are blessed by me. But God, this isn't enough. I want you. I want you to teach me. So again, who knows what God will take us through, and then external trials.

The same thing. During times of consolation, oh, it's so wonderful. And the greatest thing is we are made for that. So the fullness of the kingdom will be total fullness of the Spirit of God in love. Now. Yes.

Audience member: I have a practical question: as we enter into all this spiritual Formation and start to deal with some of the stuff [inaudible], what are some practical ways we can deal with the people around us, both in the sense of how as we start dealing with our sins some of this comes out and affects the people around us, and being around people who maybe haven't thought about things this way and are still thinking in [inaudible] more of a holistic way?

John Coe: So do you want, uh I'm concerned, do you want, like what can you do, or how you can help them, or what, is your?

Audience member: Just how, either, like how do we work with other people around this [inaudible] .

John Coe: Yeah, that's an issue. That is, because I'm around some individuals in my work where entering into these places, that's not what they're interested in. It's not necessarily what they're doing.

And you know something, I have to let it be. I have to let it be, just, you know, because here's, this is, this is where I am, God. This is where you're taking me. And so, as you enter into these things, I will agree: they get a little messy. It gets a little messy. God, what really is going on in this issue right now between my spouse and I? Or my relationship to you, and my general advice is this: if it gets, the messier it gets, the better it will be if you have someone who can go in there with you.

That's the point of a spiritual director or a spiritual counselor or a therapist. Someone who's, who's got some wisdom about the soul who can take you into those places especially in opening up maybe to the Spirit. But, but if you're in one of those times, this is the time to enter deeply into that place. This is also a time where I would encourage you to be gentle, because some people get inside their soul and they start ripping stuff up, because of guilt, frustration. And here's where I want to encourage, you know, let Jesus be the gardener. You're to take his yoke upon you.

And initially, I want you to just open to the truth and sit there with him. Get used to experiencing the truth of yourself with God, not running away. Now, when you are ready, then I might move to these.

If I begin to see certain vices in my life or tendencies towards my daughters or my wife now, I might move into some regimens, but I'm also going to try to stay disciplined and faithful to these rhythms.

Anyway, yeah, last question and then I think we need to stop.

Audience member: I think we were just touching on the answer to my question, but I'm wondering, if we conceptualize these almost as developmental sort of building blocks, because if we just start with spiritual regimen, then isn't that easier to become a [inaudible] discipline than a spiritual discipline?

John Coe: Could be. Absolutely. But again, when I was a young believer, I'm just so glad where I went to church because I just immersed myself in these. But much of it was in the power of my baby self. AH read the word, ahh this is great. Mmm. It's wonderful. It was just absolutely wonderful time, but much of it was my fortitude, not that I was saying, "I'm doing this by the power of me," I just was, because I was a baby.

I just was more filled with myself than the Spirit of God. That's just the truth. So I engaged in those and yes, I engaged in these, I had a discipler who loved this stuff. It was so wonderful. This is a great time for developing your, again, we talked last time, your mind-map and your

character-map. This theological grid. However, here's what will happen: when dark nights come, they will begin to expose how full of myself I really was doing all this. But it was, there was no other way to do it, because I was a baby, and so God is now beginning to cause me to limp when I do those and realize, God, you know, doing these, that won't transform me Lord. That's just minimal presenting because now, now you have, I think there's a developmental thing, these really are the heartbeats of the Christian life. God, I want you. God, I want to do this in Christ. I want to be open to what's really going on.

I think this is the heartbeat. I think most begin here. I think most begin actually here and that's cool. That's why I'm going to start beginners and I'm going to move them here and get and begin opening them here. For those of us who have gone on the faith, this is the place to live. But don't forget these. Don't forget the training. Why don't we close in prayer. Father, I thank you so much for just these five weeks. Lord, you have taught me so much. You have opened up my soul to so many things again, and Lord, I just really ask you to bless and love these folk, and open up the hearts of those of us here, Doug, the pastors, the leaders, of what all of this can become as we ponder these things with you. What form and shape they even might have, but we first ask that God, you would just open our heart deeply to you.

Lord, teach us to love you, teach us how to put on our Lord Jesus. Father, we bless you, teach us to do this from the heart and in the Spirit. We need you so much. We pray these things in Jesus' precious name, Amen. Thank you.

[Applause]

One final thing that Doug asked was a reading list, and so if you look in the back, we gave a reading list of those from the institute in certain categories, and so that might be helpful ongoing. Have a good night.