

The Divine Conspiracy Lectures
Dallas Willard @ Harvey Fellows 2007 Summer Institute



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*The sessions were originally typed from the videos with good-faith effort. Some of them are verbatim thanks to the work of Dallas Willard Ministries. We are moving from mostly complete to full transcription. The [brackets], underlined and **bold** disclose the scribe's commentary and also possible cross-reference of these sessions with other Dallas Willard teachings.*

~ 01 [Jesus & Culture](#) [YouTube link]

[1:13:02]

Well thank you very much. It's very gracious words, and I'm just thrilled to be here, and to be a part of your walk with Jesus.

Some people kind of find it a little odd that a philosophy professor should do all the things I do - in particular, that I should be such an explicit advocate and follower of Jesus Christ. But that's because of a peculiar past that we have in our culture.

The truth of the matter is, when the Christian gospel came into the Greco- Roman world, it was understood to be answering the questions that the philosophers were asking. And especially in the second and third century of Western history, the intellectuals converted en masse precisely because (and they said because) the gospel of Jesus Christ, with the background from the people of Israel and the Old Testament, answered the questions that, at that point, philosophers had been trying to answer for five hundred years or so.

Today we live in a situation where the culture has more or less taken Jesus and put him aside. You don't think of Jesus as being particularly intellectual, or intelligent. You think he's nice, but not smart. And if you ask a group of unsuspecting people who's the smartest person in the world, they won't think of Christ. They'll think of Bill Gates, and Einstein maybe, or some of the others that now are on the horizon of the intellectual life. But they don't think of Jesus.

Christ and Kingdom

And so, when we come with the message of Christ into our world, we get recategorized. And what one of the main things that I want to do, this morning especially, is try to shift that back and help us see Jesus Christ in a different kind of way. The theme that we're following here is the divine conspiracy, and we're going to be talking about dimensions of that as we go along.

I've put up on the screen - and I wonder if someone wants to do something about this message that's being sent to me - how about don't display this message again? Let's do that!

I've put up here a couple of passages from Paul's letters, because Paul was the one who really came to understand the place of Christ in world history. And if you just look at **Colossians 1, chapter 1, verse 13** speaking of Christ, For he delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son.

You'll want to note the occurrence of the word kingdom there. Paul understood

how the Kingdom worked, and what the Kingdom was, and where Christ stood in relationship to it.

Authority

In his beloved Son we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all Creation . Watch how Christ is being pushed out to be inclusive of everything. For by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by him and for him.

(Colossians 1:13)

That's pretty inclusive, isn't it. All things have been created by him and for him. And he is before all things. He is prior to all things. And in him everything holds together. That is to say, the order that is in the chair you're seated on, is Christ in action.

And then he goes on to say, He is also the head of the body, the church, and he's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself might come to have first place in everything. See, that is the picture of Christ that impressed these people who made up the first century Christian body. This is how they thought about him. And this is how we must think about him today, if we're going to understand reality. Reality. Because that's what this is all about. It's about reality.

Humility — Philippians 2:5-11

And he goes on to spell that out, just a word or two from Philippians, because this puts the drama in a little different way. Philippians 2:5,

"Have this attitude in yourselves which is also in Christ Jesus, who although he existed in the form of God..." and we have to talk about that at some length later on, the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be held on to...

Now this is one of the most amazing things in all of the cosmos, what he did. He emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men...

This mind that was in Christ Jesus was one that arose out of a community which we call the Trinity. And the absolute stunning quality of love and trust in that community was that one who had it all could it turn it all loose in confidence that he'd lost nothing. He emptied himself, took the form of a slave. Took the shape, the condition of human beings, and being found in appearances a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

Death

I see the meaning of the cross is it is the ultimate point of emptying out of one who was equal with God. Laying that down, turning it loose in death on the cross. And now, that cross became the center point of the divine conspiracy.

Someone asked me a few days ago, why did Jesus die on the cross? I said, so Mel Gibson can make that movie. And that's true; it's profoundly true. Jesus planned it. And brought it off, and all through the ages that has stood there as a high point in human history.

The cross! Think about that. See. What is God doing...does it that way? Who would have chosen to do it that way? No one. And of course that's for our benefit, because that's where we are in union with God, and in union with Christ, and where we walk forward in what he's doing now, as we join him on the cross.

The Cross

See the reality of Christ and the cross in human history is what brings us into the flow of the single greatest force in human life, which is the cross. And believing that totally flips everything upside down. It affirms a kingdom which is eternal, and different from anything that human... Therefore God is highly exalted in verse 9 of Philippians 2: And bestowed on him the name that is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, those that are in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

When I was younger and a great deal meaner than I am now, I used to believe that this was a picture of Christ standing with his foot on the neck of every resisting person, and making them say - You're Lord! I don't think that's the picture at all. I think the picture here, one, is going to be one of great relief, where even the people who had not accepted him will thank God that he is who he is, and that the world is a reflection of that kind of God.

So now, when we think of the divine conspiracy, we're thinking of God in action in history. And this is a description of the central personality of God in action in history, and that is Jesus Christ.

Images of the Kingdom

[11:30]

Now Jesus himself taught mainly about the Kingdom of God. It was on the assumption, of course, that he and his Father and his Spirit were the King. But in Matthew 13 you have these wonderful parables of the Kingdom of God. You know that Jesus mainly spoke about the Kingdom of God; that's what he talked about.

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Or in the Matthew version, the Kingdom of Heaven. That was his gospel. We'll talk more about that later.

One of the ways that he taught, was by means of parables. And figures of speech.

So what's the Kingdom of God like? Well the Kingdom of God is like a kind of life.

Mustard Seed [12:15]

And here he says in **Matthew 13:31**, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed." Little bitty seed. A man sows it in his field. It's smaller than all other seeds. See, that's Christ pouring himself out. That's Christ dying on the cross. It's hard to get more insignificant than that.

But that's the way the Kingdom is. The Kingdom from the human point of view looks like nothin'. Very small, very insignificant. It is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. The little bitty seed, it grows.

Leaven [13:20]

And then another parallel he draws is in verse 33, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven." Leaven is yeast. It's a kind of thing that grows and takes over. It's very like a virus. But it grows and it penetrates. The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, or about a bushel. And she hid it there until every part of the meal, or dough, was leavened. Leaven works quietly. Just keeps growing, just like that mustard seed. So now, that's what we want to think about - the divine conspiracy.

When I was in the process of publishing the book, The Divine Conspiracy, I had intended to entitle it The Kingdom Among Us, because that's what it's really about, the Kingdom among us. But editors and publishers have ideas about titles. And they didn't like that. For one thing, they were worried about queendoms, and not just kingdoms. And other things that came up; they didn't like it. So there was discussion about it.

And then one day after another discussion by telephone which led nowhere, as I walked back to my study, the Lord said to me, The Divine Conspiracy. Now I had never thought of that, had never occurred to me. I wasn't trying to think about it. But that's the way it comes sometimes. The Lord does talk to people. And so I turned around in mid course, and went back to the telephone and called them and said, The Divine Conspiracy. They said, The Divine Conspiracy, and that was the end of the discussion.

But I do think it is a wonderful concept, to cover the Kingdom of God. **The divine conspiracy is God's plan and process of overcoming evil with good in human history.** And that is what he's doing. And that is why the cross and that is why the resurrection.

Understanding Knowledge

[16:15]

Now, we need to talk about knowledge, because that's what we bring, is knowledge. And we need to understand what knowledge is, because that's the battle we're in, when we bring the message of the divine conspiracy. And if you don't understand what knowledge is you really, I think, won't know how you stand in the battle.

The constant problem for human life is to find an adequate basis for life in knowledge. In other words, we need to know what we're doing. And by and large, we suffer from a lack of knowledge. And most of all, from a lack of knowledge of God. What is God, and what is God doing?

Now of course we have to know things like where food comes from, and what's likely to harm us or help us, and how to get about in the world and deal with the issues of life. That's certainly important. And the story of human progress has been a story of progressive knowledge, so that we can do more and more and more things.

The things we can do now that even that a person has almost no means at all, the things they can do now, compared to what people could do in the days of Alexander the Great; it's just transformed beyond recognition. We're used to it of course. And we know more and more what to do.

But we also on the side of research are constantly researching more and more what to do. We know, for example, we're not exactly the head of the food chain. Perhaps something in the order of a virus or a bacteria are at the head of the food chain, and they'd like to eat us. And we're in a constant battle trying to head them off and get something that will stop them, and then they're fighting back by adapting and adjusting - so the stuff we learned to use to stop them won't stop them much anymore. And so it's a constant battle.

Food, armaments. Terrorism for example exists today because of the increase of knowledge. For most of human history you could not blow up a bunch of people at the same time. And if you were going to hurt people you had to get close to them. Now you can blow up a lot of people at the same time, and you don't even have to be in the area to do it. And all of that is knowledge, you see.

And so, knowledge is absolutely central and what we bring when we talk about Jesus Christ and what he's doing, is knowledge of reality.

Knowledge Defined

Now bear with me, and let's work this through. We know something when we're able to represent it as it is. That's knowledge. We know something when we're able to represent it as it is on an adequate basis of thought and experience. So we don't just bring things that happen to be true guesses - but it is based in experience and thought. And in the case of the teachings that we bring as Christians to the world - or as followers of Christ to the world - in the case of those, it involves a tradition that involves the Bible, and involves the church and church history. It involves the community of thought and experience that now exists, and so knowledge is a communal kind of thing. Now there are traps in that that we'll talk about later, but that's important to understand.

So when we come with the message of Christ, we come out of the context of Bible, church and history and of course the overarching presence of the Spirit and our best experience and thought ourselves as we go along.

Knowledge and Truth

Now, knowledge involves truth. And that's why it's so important. Because you can have a true belief but not know. Right. You could guess and be right. You might think in terms of an investment, and you might invest your money in it. And you might be lucky, and be right, and get rich. But it wasn't because you knew; it was because you just happened to be right.

So, you can't guide life by what happens to be true. We can't grow by guessing, because the thing about guessing is you never know whether or not it's true until it's all over. And guessing about God of course is something that extremely hazardous for your health. Because if you're wrong in that case, you're in real trouble. But that's true of everything that's important in life. We need knowledge and not just truth. But truth is why knowledge is so important. It...it is what enables us to deal with reality in a way that is good for us, shall we say. An idea or belief is true if what it is about is as that idea or belief represents it.

Truth and God

[22:15]

So for example take John 3:16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, puts their confidence in him, will not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now that's a big idea. And often when we're sitting around talking about all

religions being the same, I will raise the question if it seems appropriate - Is there another religion that says that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. And suddenly there's a silence in the room.

See, that's a watershed issue on the nature of God. Is God really like that? Does God really love the world? And does God really act in the world in that way? Now, is that true?

Now, you see, if that is true, everything is changed. If that's true everything is changed. If that's true, then I can trust God. And I can trust him with everything. So that means that I don't have to run my life. And fight with others over the bones of life like two dogs in an alley. You see, that means that I can release my life into God's hands. I can trust him. That means I can do what he says in confidence it's a good thing, and not just something designed to make me miserable.

And so the idea here turns out to be extremely important towards truth.

Cultural Metanarratives

[24:00]

So going along with that now, why do people perish for lack of knowledge? Well, they perish - to make it very short and sweet - because, if you don't have knowledge, reality will run over you, or desert you, or leave you out.

Whereas if we act with knowledge and truth, our actions harmonize with reality. Otherwise not, or they do it just by chance. So this now is why it is so important for us to get the right take on what God is doing. On there being a God. On the nature of the world that we live in.

Three Background Stories in Our Culture Today

[24:50]

Naturalism

One is the idea that the natural world or the visible world is all there is. We can't see all of it, but that's all there is. That's called naturalism. It is the guiding philosophy of a major segment of our culture, and mostly of our universities, is naturalism.

That's why, for example, in no area of competence today is knowledge of God required. You won't get a question about God in any PhD examination in any field. Possibly not even in religion. And, that's naturalism. Naturalism basically says the visible world is the only world. Nothing more to it than what is physical.

Nirvana

And the other popular idea is what I call the nirvana view. And the nirvana view is also what we call New Age [See New Age Spirituality]. It's the idea that the world that we see is an illusion, and that the real world is a world of non-differentiation, where, for example, you and I are not distinct. We are actually the same.

And I've had students at USC that'll come in and present this line to me. And I'll say, Do you mean that you are identical with the wastebasket? And they will say yes. See, they're committed to that idea of non-differentiation. And then the third view...You have the naturalist view, the nirvana view.

Theism

The third view is the theistic view. That's the one our culture came out of, and of course there's a very strong representation of that now. Those views dominate the discussions. The theistic view now is generally pushed to one side, or treated...treated as some odd cultural artifact. But the very idea that the ultimate reality is a god, and that this God is a God who is all-powerful and all-loving - see, that is not thought of as knowledge.

Now, whether or not we're right or wrong about that is the great question. One of the things that sticks in the throat of many people is that Christians talk as if there is an ultimate difference in where you wind up. That, if you believe certain kinds of things, you will not be OK. You understand what I'm saying?

See, that's one of the things that really sticks in the craw of many people in our culture today. And we're not going to be able to go into all of that and why that's true in these times we have together; though when we come to question period, you may actually want to raise those questions, and if you do that's fine.

Truth and Reality

But the fact is now is that reality is totally unyielding to false belief. Truth is unforgiving. It does not change if you have certain opinions. No one has ever made a belief true by believing it. Beliefs are true or not in terms of the reality which they represent. So if we get it wrong, we're in trouble.

And I often define reality as what you run into when you're wrong. Because the university has a real problem coming to grips with reality and truth, and our culture does also. But if you believe there is gas in your tank, and there's no gas, you will run into reality. Probably in the form of your car stopping on the freeway or somewhere, and then you will have to have help.

Now truth on the other hand, frees you from reality you disagree with. If you are true in your belief, then you will sail down the highway; you will not need any

help; you will get where you want to go; you will be able to turn around and come home. You will experience wonderful freedom because you - the truth of your belief that you have gas in your tank will facilitate your operation, and you will not wind up in disagreement with reality.

So now it's important for us to understand that, because when we come talking about Christ and his Kingdom, and the divine conspiracy, the primary issue is truth. Is it truth? Or is it falsehood?

Human Efforts and Babel

[29:55]

Now, Babel represents human efforts to succeed by human abilities. And...the human beings want to run their world and be in charge, and we want to do that corporately, and we go back to the old story in Genesis 11. What you see here is people who on the basis of the quite mistaken knowledge that they had, decided on a policy. They were going to build a tower that would give them an identity first of all. And allow them to know who they were: well, we're the people with the tower.

But that tower also, they thought, would also take them into a different realm. The realm of the gods. They actually believed this, but it represents the human efforts to succeed without God. The human effort to find the knowledge that we need, and carry on in a way that we will be successful leaving God out. They had no idea of what they were doing, and it is of course pathetic.

Contemporary Babel

But then we have to recognize that today, the Babel of today is the secular knowledge system of the universities and professions. And that operates in our culture on this idea that often comes up in terms of separation of church and state.

That's a very confused idea, and I don't want to try to analyze it here, but just to say this. That if it was assumed that the church had essential knowledge of life, without which human beings could not live well, or live at all, there would be no question of separation of church and state. The idea of separating church from state, which means separating religion from political processes, that whole idea is predicated on the idea that religion has nothing to say about reality.

And if it were thought that for example, if you practiced a certain kind of religion, that would substantially transform the human situation, there would be no issue about separation of church and state any more than there is an issue - would be an issue about - separating physics from state. All right. There wouldn't be a question.

The Key Question

And, some of you... I know you couldn't possibly remember, but several years ago, the Maharishi wanted to bring in transcendental meditation as a way of transforming society. And practicing this in government buildings, and schools and all of that and so on. And there was actually quite a buzz about it, because the truth of the matter is, if you practice the things he was talking about, it will make a difference in your state of mind.

But of course it didn't make enough difference to impress anyone in the end. All right, then. Once the Beatles had had a round with it, and a few other leading people had had a round of it, then they gave it up. The same thing is true of many other areas, and I don't mean to be pugnacious about this, because being pugnacious about it is just the stupidest thing you can possibly do. But you want to be realistic. What can transcendental meditation actually do?

Or here, we have Ron L. Hubbard Way right down here, and the whole operation.

So the whole question is what it can actually do. Can it do what Jesus Christ can do? Is there anything that Jesus Christ can do that it can't do? See, those are factual questions, and now, people who follow Ron Hubbard, or the Maharishi, they want to say that they have knowledge that is not in the possession of the universities and the professions.

And the greatest single issue facing the Christian church today is: do they have knowledge that is essential to human life. Or is it just another wild faith project? Where you launch yourself into something and maybe pretend that you're being delivered and so on.

Human Limitations to Knowledge are Great

[33:40]

Now the human limitations of knowledge are very great. And when we're realistic about it, we have to come to terms with that question. Can human beings on their own achieve the knowledge they need in order to live? And the answer is no.

So when we think about the Bible, what we're actually talking about here is this issue. Suppose that the Bible, in a way that needs to be discussed of course, that the Bible contains the most important information about the most important issues in human life. Suppose that were true. Suppose there is a God of love, who actually speaks to human beings. So now, if you are - if you have certain credentials in our culture, you may try to write a book about the cosmos.

Since I'm growing older, I never know what young people know, but are you

familiar with the old Cosmos on television, Carl Sagan? If not, it's a kind of a nice thing to know about, because here you have an individual who's actually taking that first story that I mentioned - the naturalist story - and trying to blow it into a total knowledge of human life.

Well. The truth of the matter is, he has almost nothing to say about the things that matter most for human life. Simple things like, what am I going to do? See, that's the knowledge that is central to human life. What am I going to do? Well, you've told me a wonderful story now about the cosmos, but I need to decide what I'm going to trust in my actions to determine basic moral and vocational choices. What am I going to do?

See, that's the kind of information that one needs and the biblical tradition offers some information about that, shall we say, and introduces you to a God who just might speak to you, and give you guidance in your life by walking with you and talking with you, and guiding and helping you. And so you see that's a different source of knowledge.

Knowledge & Self-Will

Now, it's a good thing that we're limited in our knowledge, because our will, our self will, is really unlimited. And Descartes, in a marvelously dry and philosophical fashion, brings this out, the philosopher Descartes, because he says that all evil in human life comes from will running beyond knowledge. That we are willing things that are not based on knowledge, and that's where all evil comes from. And he built a whole theodicy on that.

But the truth of the matter is, knowledge is very limited, and it grows very slowly. And I believe that if we say why that is, we'd have to say that God allows knowledge to grow slowly in order that we might have opportunity to grow morally, if you wish.

Knowledge Brings Power

In other words, very simply, knowledge brings power. Power brings responsibility. If you're not going to misuse it and hurt yourself and others, you're going to have to be the kind of person who wouldn't do that, you see.

And now that's our problem, isn't it. So at least for two centuries, there's been a constant moan going up from the scholarly world that we - our moral growth has not kept up with our technological development.

I mean, just imagine if they had atomic bombs in the day of Genghis Khan. Well, imagine if we had them in our day. Well very interestingly, when we got them,

though they were used with horrible results, still we entered into a period where there was a moral restraint. Used to be called MAD - Mutually Assured Destruction.

Now then we're dealing with people who don't care if you do destroy them. So that's a new stage. Right. Now how are we going to deal with that.

See, the great issue today on the human stage, is how will the civilization that is still - whether it knows it or not - basically Christian, deal with a culture that has a totally different take on God, and on who they are, and what they should do. Right. What are we going - how are we going to deal with that? Just bomb them into oblivion? Probably not.

But who is going to answer that question? See that's where we have to understand that Jesus is still working on the stage, and that the divine conspiracy continues to grow.

Knowledge sets limits on desire

Our self-will is set against truth and knowledge because truth and knowledge always limit what you can desire. Our desires always exceed reality, and if you don't know that just watch how credit cards are used. We will what is not. Right. Credit is one way of willing what is not. And sometimes it's good, and sometimes it's not.

So, it's true of individuals and groups, and Paul has this wonderful verse, so analytic. **Romans 1 is the most important part of social analysis in the whole Bible.** And Romans 1:18 talks about how people turn away from God and then they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. And that is true of individuals and groups and institutions. And it comes out of that basic conflict between will and knowledge.

You have a wonderful illustration of this in the case of **Simon Magnus in Acts 8**. Remember Simon Magnus was a person who had certain abilities at least to fool people, and to make them think he was great. That's why he came to be known as Magnus.

And in **chapter 8 of the book of Acts** you remember Philip is in Samaria, and Peter and John come down; and the manifestations of the Spirit in power are such that Simon Magnus, who had lined himself up as a believer under Philip - the preaching of Philip - Simon Magnus offered money to John and Peter if they would give him the power to do the things that he saw them doing.

Simon Magnus was interested in power, but he was not interested in truth. And the story on Simon Magnus is that he eventually killed himself in Rome by announcing

that he was going to fly from the top of a tower. And he jumped but he didn't fly. And that's the problem.

God and the Human Will

[42:30]

Now God looks at the heart, and in thinking about knowledge, he's concerned with the heart, and that's the will. God is trying to perfect the will in human history. And I like to put this just by saying about us individually, that God's intent for each of us is that we should become the kind of person whom he can empower to do whatever we want. You see the real issue here is - what kind of a person am I?

The Character of Christ

Now go back to the statement from **Philippians 2** for just a moment. God, Jesus, the third member of the Trinity in his eternal condition, turned it all loose. He didn't have power any longer. He subjected himself even to the death of the cross. Well, what does that show? That shows a will, a character. You see, it's in our heart that we decide what we're really about. And in particular whether what we want will govern us. Will it be God, or will it be us?

And that abandonment that you see in Jesus, is the abandonment that we ourselves can live in joyfully and with delight and also with power and with knowledge; and all of that comes together as God grows the human being into the kind of character that Christ has.

Now suppose that everyone had that character. Or suppose that a significant percentage of the human race had that character. And you can see that life would be very different. And that is the intention of the divine conspiracy in human history.

So what God looks for is the heart, always the heart. The heart is where we decide what we're really going to be. What is going to govern us. And of course the central issue is the surrendering of the will, abandoned to God, delighted in him, and his will. And then as that grows, then it's perfectly safe for us to have knowledge and power and so on.

The Hiddenness of God

But this current situation is one in which God is not obvious. And that is because he is interested in the will. And this theme - "deus absconditus", to use the Latin (everyone needs a little Latin) is an old one in the history of the church. Because God doesn't overwhelm you. God comes in ways that are gentle. And the reason for that is because, if we - if God didn't hide from us, we couldn't hide from him.

You see, my knowledge of this thing is not up to where my will is. So we have a illustration here.

So the basic idea here is that God hides to permit us to hide from him, if we want to. See he's so big, that if he didn't hide, we couldn't hide. So that you may need to think about that some. Now that's why there is a divine conspiracy. A conspiracy is something that is hidden. God does not overwhelm us. He does not jump down our throats. He remains hidden and available to those who seek him.

The Parables of Jesus

[47:10]

Now there is something in Matthew 13 that you want to think about here, because Jesus explains why he uses parables. He taught in parables, and today, because there's such a deal about telling stories, people like often suggest - well Jesus was just a good storyteller. But he explains in this passage, **Matthew 13:13-17** why he used parables. And he said, So those who see can not see. And that those who hear can not hear. You may recall that he often used the phrase in his teaching: He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

That's an interesting phrase, don't you think. What it says is not everyone has ears for the purpose of hearing. Not everyone has eyes for the purpose of seeing. What do they have ears for? And eyes for? Well, they have eyes and ears for the purpose of sorting and arranging things. Now this goes back to what we were talking about earlier, about the need to adjust what we take reality to be, the need to adjust that so that it will suit our will.

And what Jesus is talking about here, is he speaks in parables, so that those who have eyes not for seeing will not see what he's talking about. See that is God's provision for the will that doesn't want him. If you don't want him, you don't have to have him. At least not now. So, I hope you'll think about this because it's fundamental to Jesus' way of teaching, and to Jesus, and to the Bible.

A Provision for the Human will

[49:20]

"God can not ravish, only woo. The creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves." CS Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, Letter 8

That teaching about the parables, ties in with something here that you see in C.S. Lewis. Lewis has this wonderful passage in Letter 8 of *Screwtape Letters*, where he's talking about how God does not override people's will. The devil will do that.

And this language here: Merely to override a human will, as his [God's] felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do would be for him [that is for God] useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo. For

his ignoble idea is to eat the cake and have it. The creatures are to be one with him, and yet themselves.

Now, if you have a copy of *Screwtape Letters*, I really urge you to read on this theme of the divine conspiracy, and the hiddenness of God, what Lewis says in that letter. Because it is important for us to understand why God is not obvious. I mean he could have been obvious. But he is not obvious because of the need to allow human desire and will to go its way, because that's what defines human character.

The Presence of God

Now, when I said God's intent for each of us is that we should grow to the point to where he can empower us to do what we want, you see you realize immediately, well, there's a lot of work to do on the wanter. And that is what both individual life and human history is about. Is God calling forth the human will, and allowing the human being to have an identity. So God is present, but in ways that anyone who wishes to deny can deny.

The long series of individuals in the Old Testament. I mean, for that matter, beginning with, with Adam and Eve. The experience in the Garden. But then Noah, Abraham, Isaac, David - now what characterizes these people is they're very different. But that difference is not a visible one. You can see it in its effects, if you want to see it. But if you want to deny it, you can deny it.

The Nature of Christ

Same way with Jesus. We often ask ourselves, perhaps, how could people be in the presence of Jesus and deny him? Remember what we're talking about here, and you'll understand that. See. If you see how Jesus comes, born in the manger, lives a simple life out in the boondocks, comes in as an outsider, essentially. And is regarded as such, so people are like, where did you get your authority? You didn't go to school with Rabbi So and So.

And of course John the Baptist was there as a sort of sticking out like a sore thumb, an Old Testament prophet that people could not deny as such. And he identified Jesus, and that gave Jesus a place to stand, humanly speaking, to do his work. But still he was rejected.

And Paul you remember says in 1 Corinthians that if the rulers of this world had understood and recognized the lord of glory they would not have crucified him. (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

I mean, imagine if the rulers of this world had understood what we read about in Colossians 1a few moments ago. Would they have crucified... Well actually, they

almost didn't crucify him, and this is a story in itself.

But if Jesus had just said three more words to Pilate, he wouldn't have crucified him. (Mark 15:1-5) That's why he was silent. See, Jesus was working that whole process to his ends; he was the one who was in control. And he told Pilate that, didn't he. (John 18:33-38) It really was true. He was controlling that process. He was not a victim. And yet he looked like a victim.

The post-resurrection presence is most interesting. You know, if it had been me, rising from the dead, probably the first place I would have gone was I would go back to Pilate and say, Now can we have that discussion about truth and power one more time? All right. That's perhaps the way I would think about it.

God's hidden ways

Perhaps that's the way Peter would have thought about it. You remember Peter when he, after he'd made his great confession, and Jesus said, I'm going to die on the cross - Peter said, that's not for you, and Jesus actually called Peter Satan. (Matthew 16:21-23) And he said, You do not savor the things of God, but the things that be of man.

See those - there are two ways. The two ways. The things of God and the things of man. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of man.

I think I would have come into Pilate's palace on a big Huey helicopter, something like that, you know, and then maybe after that I would have gone by to visit a session of the Sanhedrin in process. Say, gentlemen, would you like to think again about your choice?

Now, what's interesting is he didn't do... He did not appear to a single one of those. And Acts 10 tells us that he became visible only to those who had been prepared beforehand. Don't you find that interesting?

You see, that fits the picture. God is present but present in the Bible. But just think of how the Bible can be disregarded, or twisted. People say you can prove anything out of the Bible. That's only because they don't know what proof is, but the fact is, that you can allege proof of almost anything out of the Bible.

God's Conspiratorial Nature

You have to understand, it's because of the conspiratorial nature of God in human history, and that is there because of the need to allow human beings to make their choices, both individually, and in groups, in nations. We make our choices; we're going to have an election here, in this country.

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And I'm not running on either side, but I'll just say - see, what happens is people make a choice. They will make a choice, and it will be a manifestation. I mean, imagine a choice. It's the economy, stupid. Is it really? See. Suppose we make the choice in the basis of the economy. Well that says something about our character. What would be the other...See individuals and groups make their choices.

Now, the church itself can be looked at in all kinds of ways. And of course it is, isn't it. And it's a great battleground, that people interpret and reinterpret. And someone was saying on the radio the other day the thing about the Marxists was that you can...you can't be...you can be sure about the future.

What you can't be sure about was the past, because they were in such a frenzy of interpretation and reinterpretation of the past to make their theories stand up. And we look at the past in the church, and we try to make it come out to where we want it to be today. Whether it's a political or a moral issue, or whatever it may be. But the church can be twisted.

The Spirit's Invisible Presence

Now listen to the words you see in Colossians 3:1 through 4. Let's do 1 through 4. If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. Your life is hid. What your life is, as Christian, is hid.

Now this is the same lesson that Jesus was teaching Nicodemus in John 3. Those who are born of the Spirit are moved by something that is not visible. It's like the wind, you can't see the wind, but you can see the effects of the wind.

But you see if you are set to interpret that hidden part in other ways, you can do that. It's up to you. You don't have to accept the reality of Christ in the church. You don't have to accept that. You can try to treat it in other ways. You are - your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, will appear, then you will also appear. You get to know and see who you are for the first time. God is present, but...

The Divine Conspiracy is...

[59:20]

So then here's what the divine conspiracy is — **The divine conspiracy is God's plan to overcome evil with good in the grinding processes of human nature.** The Kingdom works that way. You are tied into that reality of the Kingdom of God that is going to bring to pass this condition where the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of - the Habakkuk version of this - it's a prophetic theme.

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But if you read Isaiah 6, you will read that the earth is filled with the glory of God. But it is not filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, because Isaiah you'll remember, in that passage in Isaiah 6, he's faced with God in the Temple. And God is saying, Who shall I send, and who will go with me? And that's where Isaiah says, Here am I. Send me. Saying...

Why? Because the knowledge of God is painfully absent. But the future is where the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

The Crucifixion is the Center Point

[1:00:50]

So now the crucifixion then is the center point of it all. Where crucifixion is the high point of the revelation of the hidden Kingdom. Colossians says, "And through him we reckon to reconcile all things to himself." **Colossians 1:20** All things to himself. Having made peace through the blood of his cross, through him I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. That is where the conspiracy comes out.

That is what when you walk around here in Hollywood, and you look at all the things that are here, and the people, and you say, What's this all about? It's about this. It's about a process through which individuals and groups move toward the reconciliation of all things in Christ. And I, if I be lifted up, Jesus said, I will draw all men unto me. One way or another they will all come to him. Being lifted up, he was referring to the cross.

And he did this very consciously with back reference to the Old - to the stories in the Law, about the poisonous serpents that were lifted up; and there was a time when Israel had sinned, and the poisonous serpents came into there and were killing people. (Numbers 21:2-9) And when these poisonous serpents bit someone, if - Moses was instructed by God to put a symbol of a serpent up on a post where they could look at that serpent. And what did that serpent represent? It represents the poison of human self-will. That is what killed Jesus, and what is seen on the cross.

The cross is opposed to self-will

Now, if you don't know the Kingdom of God, then the human self-will is all that's left. But the cross is designed to help people see what self-will does. What living as one's own king does. And it is by looking at that and recognizing it, and turning to God, in Christ, and giving up one's self-will and saying I want to live in the invisible Kingdom of God which is now available, that we come to... So, what...

What we need, what we must have, what the people of Christ bring into the world is truth in a community of crucifixion. You see, human beings really can't deal with truth on their own. So that's why, for example, instead of saying that truth will make you free, you might more aptly say the truth will make you flee. This is a

little change there. The truth will make you flee.

It's an important change, because the truth that human beings get apart from God is always, or nearly always, destructive. And it will be used for our purposes. And those purposes, not subjugated to God, will be harmful.

People of Christ bring in truth in a "Community of Crucifixion" [1:03:20]

So now think of...think of how the community of crucifixion handles this. Paul speaks in 1 Timothy of the household of God. He's saying to Timothy, I'm coming, and I want to instruct you. But now I'm writing you some things you will know how to conduct yourself in the household of God. Which is the church of the living God. The pillar and support of truth. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

This is very interesting. The church supports truth. How can that be? Didn't we want to say the truth supports the church? Well, truth can only be endured and promoted in a community of grace, where self-will does not rule, but where love rules. And so that's why you want to understand that Jesus did not say the truth will make you free.

And the elevator in the Humanities building at USC, it just says, The truth will make you free. Apparently you don't even have to know it any longer. It's just has this wonderful mystical capacity. And this is where Babel winds up. Babel as I earlier explained it, with a blind confidence in human research. And that the problems will be solved.

Now here's what Jesus said. Jesus said, If you continue in my word, and that means that you're living in it. If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:31-33) See that's the whole sentence. Jesus did not say the truth will make you free. It won't. But, confidence in him, and living with him, and being his disciple, will enable you to know the truth in a way that it sets you free. So it's very important to understand that.

The Issue of Social Authority - Who has knowledge (truth)? [1:06:40]

Now just finally for this session, the issue of social authority is the issue of who has knowledge. And that's what I in this first session want to try to drive home as we conclude. That is the issue underlying all the battles of our day. Who has knowledge. And for reasons which, historical - and we could go into if we had time - the message of Christ through its institutions in the church and the schools, that message has been set aside as a basis of life, truth, and knowledge.

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The secular mind has redefined knowledge so that it alone has it. Christians do not. And Christians often have conceded this. The single greatest terrible mistake in the last two centuries, has been the willingness of the Christian church to walk away from knowledge. And to try to substitute for various reasons something called faith.

The knowledge of reality

And the result of that is that determining policy for life, which is not the only issue by any means here, but determining policy for life, is left to the secular mind. **So the greatest challenge of the people of Jesus Christ today is to stand in our world as representing knowledge of reality, and with love and with intelligence, to show that we have that knowledge by the lives that we lead.**

And that is the pressure point of the work that we do today.

Now you are going... You're in your churches, and your various situations in life. And what I'm saying is, for me where I am, for you where you are, the great challenge is to stand where we are and say we have knowledge of reality, and this is shown by the lives that we lead.

The Conspiracy and Character

But the basic idea now, in the first session, is this: there is a divine conspiracy and it will win. And it is a conspiracy because God must be hidden in order that humanity may take the alternatives that presents itself to self will, and character grows out of that.

Now you know, I think we all really know that with reference to raising children, because at a certain point if you do not let the child do what they want to do they will never learn what's wrong with it, and they'll never learn what is right.

Character only develops with freedom. Character only develops - and this is not just a little psychological thing. This is a profound spiritual truth about the meaning of human history and what God is doing in the cosmos. OK. And so it's almost like there are a certain number of dead hymns that you have to work through before you see what is good and what is right. And that's true of individual life. And it is true of corporate life of humanity as a whole.

God at work

So now, when you look at the contemporary scene at any level - whether it's business, military, communications, popular culture, music - remember that. That's what's really going on. Is that God is at work far beyond what we would call

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the church, because God is just as much involved in business and in science and in the arts. He's just as much involved there as he is in the church.

Now, that may go down hard with you. And by the way I'll just admit - you know I'm probably going to say a few things that are wrong, so I ... assume that since everyone else has been wrong about something, I must be wrong about something. Couldn't be that I'm right about everything. Now, if I knew what I was wrong, I wouldn't say it, but I don't. So when I say something like that I really believe that, and I believe that because of my understanding of the Kingdom of God and what God is doing.

And the kingdom of the church is not the Kingdom of God. That may be one we'll have to work through later. The church is not the Kingdom of God. It is a peculiar manifestation of the Kingdom of God. And Jesus has taught in his parables about these kinds of things. You remember the parable of the tares, the wheat and the tares, the parable of the net and the fish and so on. And so there are deep lessons. I love to teach the parables but here in this series we just more or less can use them a little bit and try and get their point.

So then, that's what we want to understand about the divine conspiracy and what God is doing in it.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 1** ~ ~ ~

I. What is a Human Being?

Now we want to move on now to our next topic - What is a human being? - because in the contemporary scene that is the biggest battle is to try to understand what a human being is. So we want to try to get into some of the biblical material here and go fairly deeply into this issue.

The current battle over human nature - and really the extreme form it takes, is: is there human nature? You can say that the official point of view on this now is, there is none. There is no human nature.

Battle Over Human Nature

And you want to understand that that's an outcome of the drive to total liberty that was developed in the twentieth century, into the twentieth century. And this drive to total liberty is the essential mark of the Babel orientation in human life. The drive to total liberty. You go ask - go to a school ground, little third graders, and ask them: Should people be allowed to do whatever they want? What will be their answer? Yes. That will be their answer.

Democracy as a political system and a social system has come to essentially mean the exaltation of the human will. Everyone should be able to do what they want to do. And that's a perversion of human liberty, in fact, but that's how it's... That's what it's taken to mean.

Nature versus Liberty

Now, that can only be true if you have no nature, because if you have a nature it's going to put a limit on what you can do. And that's true of everything - a wristwatch, a podium. Everything has a nature that limits what it's good for. You can't pick your teeth with a podium, can you? It would be very awkward and you'd have to have a very big mouth.

So you see how nature limits freedom - if by freedom you mean doing what you want to do. You might want to be a movie star or something of that sort, but your looks and your talents would limit that.

Now, because in the past nature was used as an argument for what people could or should - could not, should not do - see, and often these were bad arguments; so for example, racism was a bunch of bad arguments based on supposed nature. You see how that works?

Or more recently in the feminist controversies, the idea that biology is destiny. Have you heard that? And the rejection of that because of arguments that, you are a woman and therefore you should or could not do this, that, and the other. And often those were very bad and harmful arguments. They were oppressive.

So now the swing against that, you see, is what we see currently. And I've just put the name John Dewey down here because he's the most famous twentieth century American to reject the idea of human nature. But of course many people have followed after him.

Nature versus Public Opinion

Now the swing against nature is seen all around us. For example, natural law cannot be invoked as a basis for law. And now I don't know to what extent I, you are into this kind of discussion or not, but if the idea has been traditionally that there is natural law - that is, there are things, there are ways things should be that are natural - and that these are laws in nature, and that law in the legal system should be based on laws in nature. OK. And now that has been rejected.

So, for example, Justice Kennedy in his - when he wrote up the decision on the sodomy case in Texas, the basis for the decision that he cited was the change of public sentiment. So public sentiment then is put in the place of natural law. Public sentiment means: What does the public like? What does the public want to do?

Now then, someone might say, Well gee, the public, what they want, that's wrong. You see the difference there? And they might say that's wrong because there is a natural law and they might also say God has declared what the natural law is in certain interesting cases.

And so we've now moved in the last century to where what is wanted or desired or felt to be right by the public would be the basis for law. Now of course you don't have to be told where that could lead, but that's - I'm just saying that's - what has changed here on this issue of nature.

Nature can't be invoked to support hetero-exuality, we'll see there. I'm missing s I guess. It can't be invoked to support man-woman marriage and so on. So what, what did the Massachusetts court say in that case? They cited public sentiment, the change of sentiment.

Now if you were to say, Well, but, you know, what about Nazi sentiment? Suppose you had a whole society that agreed with Nazi sentiment, would that make it right? They would hastily say no.

But when asked how they could support that they wouldn't have a leg to stand on.

Right? Because they have already abandoned nature and the way things are as a basis for law. You see, denying a human nature takes care of all the issues where desire wants free play at one fell swoop and turns it in at most to a social issue.

So if you desire what society does not desire then you can be told that you are wrong and you can be controlled on the basis of that. But it's only because you have group desire. Now that's why political correctness becomes so important in our time.

Struggle of Self-Will and Desire

See, the underlying issue here is the difference between what is desired and what is good. What is desired and what is good. And then that redefines the meaning of love.

Let's go over that for a few minutes, OK? Desire can be for what is not good. You can desire what is not good. So you can't define good in terms of desire. You can't define good in terms of desire because you can desire what is not good. If you define good in terms of desire then automatically if you desire something, it is good. But most people can't quite push beyond that because they know they have often desired things that are not good. That's one of the meanings of regret. Most everyone knows what regret is.

Love Desires Good

[09:15]

Now to love someone means that you will what is good for them. If you love someone you will what is good for them. That's the meaning of the word be-ne-vo-lence, benevolence, be-ne-vo-lence, will to good. OK?

Now, if I love you, that means sometimes I'm not going to will what you desire, because you sometimes desire what is not good. Do you see how that works? So we all know this again in the case of our families, that to love a child often means that we do not do what they want. Isn't that true?

Now frankly, to love me would mean that I would often not do what I want. Do I need to say that again? To love me would mean that I often would not do what I want.

So I might be the sort of person who would say, If I want to - if I have to die, let me drown in a chocolate milkshake. I might just adore chocolate milkshakes. That doesn't mean they're good for me. So self love would mean often that I not do what I desire to do and do what I do not desire to do.

So now this is tremendously important folks for understanding the kinds of things

we deal with in trying to live for God and looking at what God says because what God says is what is good for us, not necessarily what we desire.

Self Simply Desires

But self will says, I want what I want when I want it. Or in the language of the Cole Porter musical that is now the rage - Anything goes, right? Anything goes. As long as I want it. See, that's the poison of self will that corrupts the good in human life. I want what I want and again we...

One of the first things you have to teach a child is, it isn't always good to do what you want. You would like to hit Johnny over the head with the truck. That's not good, and you should not do it. You ought not do it and if you do it you are a bad boy. Right? See, those are rudimentary lessons that we have to keep in...

Nature, Will & Desire

Now nature, that is connections of things in reality independently of what we think or desire. See, that's our only salvation, is to define, to find out what those are; and when it comes to life at large, we especially as individuals are not smart enough to do that. And that is where a God who speaks in love becomes central to the wellbeing of human life.

So now we are currently awash in a sea of sexuality of all kinds. God said certain things about sexuality. But they do not conform with what people may want in the area of sexuality. So when you cut loose from the teachings that God has given about it - I don't mean to say that there are no difficulties, in that human beings being what they are, there are difficulties - but when you just cut that loose and say anything goes. As long as you have consenting adults anything goes. Right?

Well, then you have stepped into an area where things are going to have a nature and results will be there regardless of what you like because you can choose the action but you can't choose the consequences.

So now we have a situation if you want to see the insanity of sin, we have a situation where millions and indeed hundreds of millions of people are going to die of a disease that is fundamentally tied to wrong sexuality. And no one can say a word about that.

The Frenchman who was head of the health organization that first came into Africa to deal with AIDS made the suggestion that it was related to sexual practices, and he was immediately fired. Immediately fired. Why? Because will, human will and desire, has institutionalized itself in the culture that rejects truth and goes for desire. Right?

Now, those are just illustrations.

Now, nothing lacks a nature. A squirrel or a brussels sprout is a definite kind of thing. It has actual parts and properties. Because it has those parts and properties - brussels sprouts, for example, do not climb trees and collect nuts. Squirrels do. Squirrels do not grow in gardens. Brussels sprouts do. See that's...

Now of everything that's true. And because things have the parts and properties they do, they stand in the relations they do and that's true of human beings.

Nature and God

[16:30]

So now we have to look carefully at this issue as it regards human beings, because whenever we step over the boundary of nature, then the first thing that happens is God goes first because God is, if you wish, nature writ large. God's nature dominates everything and determines what nature is elsewhere.

And so now we need to take some time to look at Romans 1. I mentioned it earlier. This passage in **Psalm 2** talks about how the leaders of the earth say: Let's cast aside God's restraints. Let's get rid of them. And Psalm 2 is an interesting study in the rebellion of the human will.

But let's just go to Romans 1 now and spend some time there because this is a profound analysis of the human situation.

Romans 1:21-23, *"Even though they knew God they did not honor him as God, or glorify him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their own speculations and their foolish hearts were darkened."*

God Defines Nature and Reality

Now you see, when you start to deny the reality of God then everything comes loose. And it's now left up to the human capacities to discern and to act and live within the boundaries of reality. Since reality does not fit the human will immediately the mind becomes confused, and the illustration with reference to AIDS which I gave just a moment ago is a case of this; but there are many, many others.

Professing themselves to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man.

This is the issue of what you worship, what you take to be ultimate; and when you turn from God you take man to be ultimate. And when you take man to be

ultimate, since that is false, you begin to run to birds and alligators and cows and other things of that sort, together as ultimate. So think of the phrase "holy cow!" If you've ever known a cow, you might well wonder how they could be holy. But if your mind has been messed up about God you might start thinking that a God - a cow is God.

Well, how does that happen? That happens because with the rejection of God you have already loosened your mind from reality and once you loosen your mind from reality then again, Mr. Porter take a bow, anything goes. Anything goes.

Because now the mind is going to be directed by the will and it will not function rightly. The will is supposed to be directed by the mind under truth.

Therefore God gave them over to the lust of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

You see, the human body is the first thing that is under the direction of the human will. So why is sex and violence so prominent in a society that is devoted to desire? Because that is what can be fulfilled through the body. The body is what is under the control of the will. And when the mind no longer governs the will through truth, then the will turns to the body and says: I will squeeze out of you all the good - and now good means desired. I will fulfill my desires with reference to the body.

And so then John says in 1 John 2, *"there are three things that are in the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life."*

The pride of life means dominance. And dominance takes all the forms that you see - from power dressing, to sex in advertising, to brutal force, gang behavior and so on. Why? Because that's the body. You've turned from God - now your body becomes god, if you wish. We will talk a little bit more about how that goes later, but for now just to make that point. So that's the picture. God goes first, then degrading passions.

Verse 26, God gave them over to degrading passions. He doesn't say he made them have degrading passions. See this is the natural progression of the attempt to have good in terms of what is desired.

Desire is not Self-Limiting

Once you turn to desire then you have no way of limiting it. Desire is not self limiting. And it will push farther and farther and farther trying to get satisfaction from desire when there is no satisfaction in desire. Desire only leads you on to more desire. If your life is built around desire you will never be satisfied. And that

will push you increasingly into the perversion of desire.

So you see there is a certain sense, you may know this line from Dostoevsky, Ivan Karamazov: If there is no God everything is permitted. Now that's not actually true, but that's the way the mind works. And this became a sort of slogan in Europe in the nineteenth century; and Dostoevsky expresses it because in the nineteenth century was when God first came under such pervasive and brutal attack from the institutions of knowledge; and that worked itself out in the twentieth century in ways I described in the last talk.

But for a long while that was just what the so called leading intellectuals would say. But then it became more and more commonplace. The arts picked it up. And it is true only in the sense that if you if you are not rooted in the knowledge of God then it will seem as if there is no restriction on what you might do to fulfill desire.

So turning to the body then men use it in every way possible to gratify desire and they lose their mental capacity to discern good and evil.

People and Lack of Knowledge

And I do want to look at this passage in Ephesians with you, so if you would please turn to that - because again you have to read Paul as if he were a university professor talking about social and psychological reality. And if you don't read him that way you won't get the full impact of what he's saying.

See, currently in the context of so called knowledge, sin is not a category. It does not explain anything. And so we don't understand why things go as they do because we can't introduce the appropriate categories. Educators today are very like farmers who do not believe in weeds or bugs. They believe in fertilizer. And so they just pour on the fertilizer. It makes better weeds and better bugs. Because they can't deal with evil.

The evil is not a category of explanation now. Sin is not a category of explanation. Now for Paul it was. And for Calvin it was. And for Luther it was. And for most of those who were responsible for creating the world out of which the atheism of the nineteenth and twentieth century grows, these were still categories.

Distorted Reality

Look at what Paul says here in Ephesians 4:17, "This I say therefore and affirm together with the Lord that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk."

Now Gentiles always means people without God. When you read Gentiles in the New Testament you're referring to people who stand outside of the covenant

relationships with God. Now of course they're being brought in but that's what the Gentiles is...

The Gentiles, who are the Gentiles? The Gentiles are people who don't know God. They're getting to know him, because the mystery of the Gentiles and God's purposes for them is being revealed right here, you see.

But it's saying, looking at the people around you so don't walk in the futility of their mind. Do you notice that phrase? The futility of their mind means a mind that doesn't succeed in getting anywhere by thinking. Their minds are futile. They don't work. Because they have distorted reality in their premises and no matter how furiously they think away they will always come out at the wrong place.

Being darkened in their understanding excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts and they have become callous.

Now callous means they don't feel. If you have a callous on your thumb, then you try to use that to feel with - you don't feel very well. Right? To become callous means unfeeling.

Sensual Culture

But notice the response. Have given themselves over to sensuality. Now what does that mean? They have become callous, so they don't feel very well, so they have given over themselves to sensuality to feel more. Feeling. Now we live in a sensuous age. If you listen to the advertisements you will have Sylvan Learning advertising itself on the basis that learning feels good. No one ever learns in order to feel good.

I'm going to master quadratic equations so I will have a wonderful feeling. No. I mean, you never learn on that basis. You do feel good if you learn, because knowing is good. You feel good. But no one learns on that basis.

So you should give your old car to this charitable group because you'll feel good - not because giving the car will do good for some people - but because you'll feel good. Now if that's the reason you give, then it's irrelevant as to what it does - it's just you get the feeling. You see. But we live in a sensual culture and increasingly that's true.

We even have a song right? Feelings, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa feelings. Ever hear that song? Oh, feelings. Whooo. Well, see, that's why we're so addictive. See addiction, the condition of addiction is a condition where you say, I've got to have the feeling. And the only way out of addiction is to realize you have a will distinct

from your feelings, and you don't have to feel good.

Did Paul? Paul had observed that because this is a truth of human psychology. If you live for feelings you will become callous. And if you've become callous and you're living for feelings you will do whatever is required to get more feeling.

Hey, am I making any sense at all? See, this is what Paul... You have to read Paul as what he was - namely, a brilliant analytical mind. Being under inspiration doesn't mean that you're stupid. See, you can be brilliant and under inspiration too, and it may actually help. So you read Paul, you see he knows the stuff we're talking about.

Institutions and Lack of Knowledge

[29:45]

Now he knows where he bleeds. Look. Once you get that callous mind and you've misunderstood your nature in such a way that you're only going for feeling, then social institutions and arrangements will conform to that. Let's go back to **Romans 1**. Because when you understand this, then you can really see, and with understanding where we are today in our society, well 28 to the end of Romans. Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer. Remember that's the linchpin. Acknowledge God. If you have God then you have nature. And a God who speaks tells you the truth you need to know. Don't acknowledge God. God gave them over to a depraved mind.

Now a depraved mind is a mind which doesn't work. It doesn't work. So when you listen to the discourse in our culture today what you're listening to is a mind which doesn't work. And this has all kinds of manifestations.

A Politics of Contempt in Fallen Humanity

For example, we live in a politics of contempt. I mean, suppose that John Kerry and Mr. Bush were to say to one another:

"I believe you're a basically good person, and I'm not going to attack you any more about being a bad person. And what we're going to do is we're just going to talk about what we would do. We're going to talk about policy and we're going to spend our time not trying to blow one another out of the water with a million dollar television commercial, but trying to help people understand what is good and what is right. I believe that the American people will make a choice. And if they choose you I'm going to be rooting for you to succeed because I want the good of the American people."

When this progression with fallen humanity, where desire and will does not square with truth and reality, as that progresses we see that social institutions and arrangements adapt to that situation. [31:45] And we can see this all around us in

our culture now.

A Lack of Restraint

When Paul spells that out in the last verses of Romans 1 where he says, "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer." Now remember that's the root mistake. God gave them over to a depraved mind. Remember God leaves you free. He lets you go if you want to.

"God gave them over to do the things which are not proper. Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful." Quite a list. Actually Paul piles those up in other passages as well.

And you may say, "Does that really describe people?" Well, I'll leave it to you. I mean, of course there are exceptions. Thank God for exceptions. But people in general, unfortunately, when you look at them thoroughly, you find them not too far from this.

Though when there is a restraint by the knowledge of God that is institutionalized in human institutions, then you see a knowledge that these are wrong and people step away from them.

But verse 31 caps it off. Although they know the ordinance of God. Because you .. People do not lose this entirely. They know it - they just don't accept it. That those who practice such things are worthy of death. They not only do the same but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. And that's where the institution dimension of this takes over.

No Recognized Moral Knowledge

Now the situation we're in today is one where there is no recognized body of moral knowledge. Because this progression has moved along to the point that it has. And what I'm saying here is, seem you may not be familiar with that way of putting it, but that is the way things stand in our schools generally, and our professional institutions. And it is that way because when nature disappears, knowledge and truth disappear, because then there's nothing to be known. And what takes over then is political correctness.

Now what is political correctness? It is correctness in someone's view. That's political correctness. And that's all that's left. So now we have our pressure groups pushing for this, for that or the other with the idea that the church and the way of

Christ is just another pressure group. Right. So just one among many groups of people who want certain things. And implicit in this is the idea that will is the only thing you have to deal with.

So you have a bunch of people called Christians and their desires and wills go in one direction. You have other people and their desires and wills goes in the other direction.

And that's the situation now with regard to all of our institutional ...

Truth Does Not Change

Now of course it's all a sham. The truth is, what is good for human beings and what is right for them to do does not change fundamentally. And whenever you're in a personal relationship and, for example, you tell someone what is false, they will treat you as if that was wrong. And they will treat you as if this was not just their opinion and their feeling. Because the truth is that good and right are built into human nature, and no matter what you say about it in an effort to have perfect liberty you don't believe it actually.

Distorted by Desire

But the human capacity to know the good and the right is distorted by the human will to fulfill desire. I'm putting a lot of stuff at you. Some of it is pretty heavy duty. But if you can just get that one point now it will sum up a lot of what I'm trying to say. I'll say it again. The human capacity to know the good and know right is distorted by the human will to fulfill desire. We want what we want.

Divine Knowledge is Essential

[37:30]

And that is why of course a divine source of knowledge is essential to human life. And we've been told that over and over by people through history, from the Old Testament prophets, up to people today, who say we have to have biblical knowledge to survive, and so on. And it actually is true.

And that's because - going back to the last presentation - the human capacities to know are extremely limited, and consequently the things that we most need to know, including what is human nature, is not something that is readily accessible to us. So we can have Ph.Ds and great research institutes and still come out not knowing.

The Whole Law

Now Jesus sums up the whole law by referring to the essential aspects of the

human being. And he refers to the heart, soul, mind and strength; and loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind with all your strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself. Right. Very simple.

Now remember what was said about love. If you love something, you will its good; so to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength is to will what is good for God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. That's what it is.

That's not a simple thing because often your heart is one place and your soul is another. Your mind is one place and your body is another. And then your social relationships may be running on a different track.

Integrity and integration

So that's what we call the problem of integrity. Integrity means everything is integrated. So, for example, simple things - if you intend to do something, you do it. If you don't intend to do something, you don't do it.

Now do you recognize that that's exactly the opposite of the picture that Paul paints of the persons who is caught in sin in Romans 7? The things that I would that I do not. The things I would not that I do. That's the picture of the dis-integrated self.

Peter is a case. Peter said, "I will not deny you." Now, did he mean it? Of course he meant it. But there was something in Peter that he didn't recognize. And that something was something that was going to control his behavior.

And of course Jesus was teaching him very carefully when he said to him, you're going to deny me three times. Why three times? Wouldn't once be enough? No. Because if it's just once you could say, Whoops, I slipped. If you did it three times you'd have a hard time explaining it. Right. You're going to have to... And that's why after three times Peter went out and wept bitterly - was because he realized there was something in him that was not being directed by him, but was directing him. Jesus knew that. See.

Love towards God

So this could... This is an analysis of the essential aspects of the human being. If you love then that will pull them all together, but you ... That love has to be directed towards God, and then out of that comes love of neighbor, because I'll bet many of you know that if you don't love God - right? - you'll never love your neighbor. Right? And it has to come out of our love for God which comes out of his love for us; and then we discover love, and then we find we can actually love our

neighbor. OK. That's the way it works.

So indeed if you do love your neighbor you will fulfill the law. Because as Paul explains here if you love your neighbor you will not steal, you will not commit adultery, you will not murder and so he says all of these are contained in love.

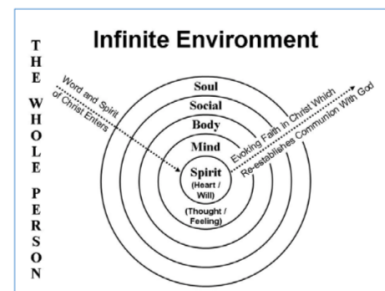
But wait a moment. Wait a moment. Wait a moment. How about the man who says to the police I just loved her so much I kind of had to kill her. Do you know that's actually said? See.

So what is love? And how does it work? And what is ... What else goes into the person other than what they call love?

Nature of a Human Being

Six Dimensions: Soul, Spirit/Will, Mind
Body, Feelings, Relationships

[Renovation of the Heart, p. 37]



So here's a picture now that draws out the essential aspects of the human being. This is human nature. When you look at this you are looking at human nature. These are the parts that go into the whole of human nature. And this human nature is situated in an infinite environment that has both good and evil in it. Mostly good.

And now the parts here all have to be aligned before we can be subject to the law of God. And that of course means that there's going to have to be an invasion by the word and spirit of Christ. This is the living power, a spiritual power in its own right. It comes into the heart. Comes through the mind. When that is accepted, the result is faith in Christ, which reestablishes communion with God.

The Spirit Trusts God

The primary function of that center part is to trust God. It can't do that on its own. It has to interact with the other parts.

So, for example, what happened with Eve in the garden. She received a solicitation to not trust God. Do you understand that? And that's a general form of all sin, is, don't trust God, don't believe God. Take it into your own hands. Make sure that you get what you want. That's what Eve did.

And it's wonderful to see how you see in the garden - there replicated the three things that John said was in the world: "lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, the pride of life." And you study and you see how all three of those things

show up. And their effect is to seduce the individual into taking things into their own hands and not trusting God.

And if you will try to analyze all of the standard sorts of things that we regard as wrong - theft, lying, and so on - you will find that they all come back to mistrusting God. So you need to look carefully at that picture and think about it.

Now once - and this is getting a little bit into what you studied last week, and what I think Luder is going to deal with in more detail in the last part of this week - once that spirit comes alive to God, because of the gospel that has lodged in the mind, then the individual begins the process of working with God for the transformation of the whole self.

The Mind is Renewed

So here's Paul in Romans 12:1, *"I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, submit your bodies a living sacrifice. Don't be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

Now as the mind is renewed these other parts are going to be renewed also. Questions like what is in your body becomes all important. I mean, what Peter did when he denied Christ was in his body and in his social relations. He didn't have to think about denying Christ. He didn't have to ask him. The question: Shall we deny? was already there. Just, whoosh, like that it came out. Now, he probably thought he was going to be facing some soldier with a sword. He may have been ready for that but the thing that tripped him up was a little girl. See - the social situation, but the body is ready to do, comes together. Acts on its own.

The Self is Transformed

So now then the transformation. The body, the social relationships, the soul. The soul is kind of like the computer that runs the whole show. You're not conscious of your soul, conscious of your spirit. The spirit is the executive center of the self. The soul is like the computer that runs the whole thing. You don't want to hear about the computer. You just want it to work.

On the other hand, if you do want to change it then the executive center is capable of going through a process of changing the computer, and that same thing is true; and roughly through the whole area of spiritual disciplines, things like solitude and silence and fasting and memorization and so on. That's what goes into the transformation of the whole self.

Well, we didn't have a lot of time to talk about that and I will talk about it a little bit later on but I hope you get the picture here now. This is human...

Here's what I'm saying to you. This is human nature. Everyone has this. If they're dead in sin, they don't have their relationship to Christ, but they can still hear the Word, and the Spirit can still move on them; but if they're dead in sin they don't have that relationship, so they turn in on themselves; and basically they begin to worship their own will, their own desires, their own body and so their whole life is devoted to themselves.

Now that's the nature. What's the role?

II. Role of a Human Being - "*Dominion with God*" [46:50]

I want to take you through some Scriptures here that are extremely important in understanding the divine conspiracy.

See, the divine conspiracy is not just for the greatness of God, just to steamroller everything. It is to elicit love and obedience through the development of character, so that out of human history comes a certain kind of community that then is going to have a role forever in the universe. That's the key to understanding this. This is what human history is about. This is why it's worth the awful things that have happened in it.

So you begin with **Genesis 1:26**. What does that say? That's what I call the creation covenant. That's where God says, Let us make man. Let us make his ... Let us make him in our image - and in the next clause tells you what that is. Let him have dominion.

Be Responsible for Creation

Now if you don't like the word dominion - and there's a lot of reasons why you shouldn't, because it's been so corrupted by human self will - just read the word responsibility. Let us make man in our image and let him be responsible. And then you see the assignment that was given to human beings to be responsible for the earth. That means everything on it. The people put in terms of plants and animals and all those sorts of things. And of course that's still built into human nature. That's why human beings can't stop thinking about all the wonderful things they're going to do.

Do you know at present at my university there are people spending your tax dollars trying to figure out how to reforest Mars? Did you know that? And at other schools they're going to reforest Mars. How can you do that? Well I'm not betting on it being done any time soon but the point is you have people ... Why do people think about things like ...?

Three whales get trapped in the ice floe up near Alaska. What do human beings down here think of doing? What do they think of doing? Getting them out. Why should they think of that? Well there are a lot of silly reasons, but basically it's built into human beings to be responsible for the earth.

And this is the this is the foundation of a genuine environmental ethic. Where you wind up not just hugging trees but actually thinking about the world and being responsible for the world. Very important. Now, is this a lost thought? Because we fell did we - are we off the hook on that one? No. We're not.

Psalm 8 - The Nature of Humankind

[50:00]

Look at Psalm 8. This is a psalm that is provoked because the psalmist is impressed with the greatness of God on one hand, and the fact that God cares about human beings - namely himself - on the other. And so he asks the question, and if you haven't worked this through you'll find it I think intriguing to look at.

The psalm starts out, *"O Lord our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth. You displayed your splendor above the heavens. From the mouths of infants and nursing babes thou hast established strength because of thine adversaries."* (Psalm 8:1-2)

This ...I wish I had time to launch into that. It's a beautiful expression of the inversion of the kingdom of man and the Kingdom of God, and how infants and nursing babes testify to God in the face of those who oppose him. Now he says in verse 3, *"I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars that thou hast ordained."*

Now here's the big question. "What is the human being that you even think about him?" (Psalm 8:4) This is actually a large issue in ancient thought. Did God think about human beings? And most of the people in the Greek world thought, no, God doesn't even think about human beings, doesn't think about them one way or the other. That was actually a big step forward, because the previous stage had been the stage that you read about in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey where you might just meet a god around any rock, and he might just turn you into a turtle. You know how that goes, right, in Homer?

And so it's a great relief to many people to think that God doesn't even think about human beings. That's one of the great difference between the Jewish tradition - is the Jewish tradition says that God not only thinks about human beings - he cares about them.

So now what is man? That's the question. What is man? What kind of thing is he that you take thought of him and the son of man that you care for him? You made

him a little lower than God. You crowned him with glory and majesty. You make him to rule over the works of thy hands.

Create and Share

OK, so what is the function of the human being? To rule. To rule, to bring good to pass in creation. And so that's very natural for human beings - unless you get a very soured human being - they want to do good and they want to share it. A little child wants to do that. Get a little child - as soon as they can do anything, they want to make something, and then they want to give it to you. And if you haven't had little children yet, get ready because you'll have to have a special drawer to put all the stuff in that they made to give to you. And that's built into their nature.

People, as they grow older, they want to leave the world a better place. They use that phrase and you see that's built into the human being. That's the way it is with human nature.

You made him a little lower than God, you crowned him, you made him to rule over the work... Now in those days about all they had to rule over were sheep and oxen, beasts of the field, birds of the heavens. You don't...

Now if it were written now it would be things like electricity, computers, airplanes - most of you have probably never in your life ruled over a sheep. We don't live there anymore do we? We live someplace else. The sheep don't normally get where we live, so we don't rule over them, but we do rule over things. And much of that is human creations in their own right, tools and instruments and things that have been made by human beings.

But being made by human beings is to take the stuff that God created and make something of it. We don't create ex nihilo, we create out of things that God has already made. And among those are things like atom bombs and all sorts of things - vaccines. That's the human role. That's our task.

So now we want to understand that this is something that's to be done under God. God made us in such a way that we would relate to him, and then relating to him we would be able to rule. We can't do it on our own. We still try but our efforts are thwarted by our limitations and by our lack of good will. And you can see that everywhere you go.

Cooperate with God — Isaiah 63:11-12

Now part of that is acting with God in leadership. This passage here, Isaiah 63:12 worth taking a moment to look at. This is about Moses and how Moses did his work. Because the cooperative aspect of our work with God is essential to what

we're doing. We can't do it on our own.

And here in Isaiah 63 you have a person who is reflecting on how God used to work with the Jewish people, and he hadn't been doing that lately. And it was because the Jewish people had rebelled and walked off from him. But then, verse 11 he says, But then his people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock?

Now he's not asking: Where is Moses? He's asking: Where is God who worked with Moses? Where is he who put his Holy Spirit in the midst of them?

And then this next clause or phrase: "Who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses." (**Isaiah 63:12**) Now think about that for a moment. At Moses' right hand. That means Moses acting. But when Moses acted, who made it happen? God did. So the picture is Moses' right hand and God's glorious arm going with Moses. That arm goes when Moses' hand goes. See, that is the way that we were meant to live on the earth under God. God never set us up to be responsible for the earth in our own strength.

Before Adam sinned he didn't sweat, because he wasn't acting in his own strength. After he sinned he had to act in his own strength, and God said to him: You shall eat bread by the sweat of your brow, and since then human beings have devoted most of their time trying to figure out how to eat bread by the sweat of someone else's brow. Because sweating is, in a manner of speaking, not cool. It's not cool. So you have commercials: Raise your arms if you're sure. Sweat is not good, it's not cool. But it's going to be sweat if you have to do it in your own strength. Now that's important to understand.

So like when Jesus in Mark 4 sees this fig tree that isn't doing, right? He doesn't send Bartholomew back to the shed to get a chain saw, does he? What does he do to the tree? He speaks to it. Now, by speaking he brings into play the power of God. See, Jesus acted in the power of God. He spoke in the power of God because he was totally in line with the Kingdom of God.

Work in the community of God

Now that wouldn't be good for people generally to be able to do that. You can just see someone going down the street cursing the trees. Probably other people would like the trees to stay there. So we have to understand that when we work in the Kingdom of God we work in the community of God. Jesus was prepared to do that. Moses had a lot of opposition but when he acted God acted with him.

Luke 16 Unjust Steward & **Luke 19** Parable of the Talents [59:30]

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Now in Luke 16 and 19 you see discussions, for example, of the "Parable of the Talents" or the money that was given and how it worked. And let's see, 16 is this interesting case of the so called unjust steward, as I recall that and the language here in Luke 16 is very instructive.

You remember the parable of the unjust steward, the fellow who wasn't doing right by his boss, and the boss fired him and the steward then found a way to help himself and help his boss. So he cut deals with the people who owed the money, and the boss at least got something rather than losing everything - and the boss was glad for that, and then the unjust steward at least had a possibility of a job with the people he'd cut deals with.

Now you may think that's a pretty shabby way of talking about the reality of the Kingdom of God but Jesus uses real life circumstances to illustrate important points. And so here he says - now we're talking about ruling - OK, ruling because ruling is the vocation, the calling of man.

Verse 9 of Luke 16 he says, *"Make friends for yourself by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings."*

Now the friend that you're making to yourself here is God, obviously. So you should use money as a way of advancing God's cause. That's how you rule.

"He that is faithful in a very little thing..." What's the very little thing? Money. Money and prayer are the two first steps in Kingdom acting. We'll come back to that later. *"He that is faithful in very little is faithful also in much. He that is unrighteous in very little is unrighteous also in much."*

See, that's ruling. You rule in the little things. You use what you have and among the smallest things you have is money. You may say that's me because you may not have much of it, but if you had a lot of it it would still be the smaller things in life. And you would use that in a way that you advance the cause of God for good around you as you ruled in that aspect of your life.

Human Nature and Jesus - Jesus is a Glorious Being [1:02:15]

Now Hebrews 2 shows us how this calling carries over in relationship to Jesus. **Hebrews 1 and 2** as you may recall is a passage where Jesus is put in the right place in the cosmos.

It starts out the book talking about how in times past God spoke to the prophets. Second verse in Hebrews 1, "In these last days he has spoken to us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also made the world."

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Now see that's standard teaching. We looked at it in Colossians. You can see it in John 1 and elsewhere.

And he is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his nature and he upholds all things by the word of his power. So Jesus is a glorious being, is what the long and short of it is. Much greater than the angels.

But skip to chapter 2 and verse 5 of Hebrews. God did not subject to angels the world to come, the future, the cosmos. The one the world were speaking about. And then in those following verses you notice he goes right back and quotes Psalm 8. And that's to make the connection now between the place that God had appointed human beings to, and how that relates to Jesus. So he quotes Psalm 8. What is man that you remember him and so on. Put all things in subjection to it ... under his feet.

Now that 8th verse is key for understanding where we are. Notice what it says. For in subjecting all things to him, now him there is human beings, not Jesus. In subjecting all things to him he left nothing that was not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

Would you agree with me that as the world now runs it isn't in subjection to human beings? Would you even agree that it's probably a good thing? Right? And what you know about human beings might make you hesitate to say, Let's just let human beings have charge of everything.

Now that the Babel imperative is driving humanity in that direction. Do you understand what I'm saying there? See that's what the whole thrust of research and development is among human beings. But not yet. And if you share my view of human beings you'd be thankful that there are few things that aren't under human control. Now when I was a child if someone had said to me, There are going to be multi-million dollar operations selling water to drink, I would have said, You're crazy. What did I know? You want to bet on air? So I think you might... I'm glad that we do not yet see all things subjected to him, and until there's a huge change in humanity I don't want to see that, folks. I don't want to see that.

Next verse, but we do see him - now that's Jesus - who has been made for a little while lower than angels, namely Jesus, because of the sufferings of death crowned with glory that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Now see Jesus comes into the human scene, and now he's going to pull them up eventually where everything can be subject to them, because they're subject to God. Now remember what I said to you, that God's intention for each of us is that we should grow to the point where he can empower us to do what we want. That's

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what this verse is talking about. Are you with me? You see what I'm saying? See, this is the role for the human being. This is what God made them for. He made them so that this whole cosmos would turn out to be something that is subjected to God through them.

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Who Are We?

[1:07:14]

Now **Revelations 22:5** - we're done with this particular part of the lesson. *"They shall see his face, his name will be on their foreheads and there shall no longer be any night, and the eye shall not have need, and they shall not have need of the light of the lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them and they shall reign forever and ever."*

Is that talking about anyone in this room? Who's the they? Well the they is you. Isn't that right? They is you. So Jesus said in **Matthew 11**, "Among those born of women there's none greater than John the Baptist but anyone in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than John the Baptist." Well, add that to your list of things to think about when you're thinking about human nature. Do you know that verse? Should we turn to it? I think maybe we'd better.

So look at Matthew 11. Excuse me. Here's what he says in the eleventh verse of Matthew 11. Matthew 11. You can remember that one. *"Truly I say to you among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist, yet he who is least in the kingdom of the heavens..."* That's plural by the way - the kingdom of the heavens - in Matthew it is always plural and that has some important point to that, is greater than he.

So now what about this fellow sitting down here with the backwards cap? If you met him in the hall would you be inclined to think he was greater than John the Baptist? He wouldn't even think that if you met him in the hall. Right? But on the authority of the scripture what are we to say about you? Can you say it?

Student: *"Greater than John."*

Dallas: Greater than John the Baptist. Why? Because when you live in the kingdom of the heavens as a disciple of Jesus you are related to something greater than John the Baptist was related to. Now, you can quarrel with this. That's up to you, what you do with it. But you want to keep that in the back of your mind when you're trying to think about your nature.

HUMAN NATURE is...

[1:10:15]

So here's the truth about you. Who you are and why you're here.

You are a never ceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.

Can you say I am a never ceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe? Can you say that with me? I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.

Could you say that to one another? You you are an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe. See this is the true dignity of the human being.

This is why they were worth dying for. This is why Isaiah 53 says he shall see the travail of his soul. Can you finish that verse? ...and be satisfied. Because of that, see. So you're spiritual in substance. You're never ceasing in duration. You are ruling or creative in destiny. Your life as a spiritual being is completed only by living in and from the Kingdom government of the heavens.

That's why Jesus' message is, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The best way to translate is, has drawn near. That was his message.

And you and I face the challenge: are we going to preach that? Or are we going to preach something else? And everything else that comes out of our work is going to depend on the message we preach. And when we look at the church as we see it now, visibly, what we see is the result of the message that is preached. And it isn't this one.

What is the Message?

[1:12:45]

I'm going to have time to worry over this particular point tomorrow in greater detail but I pause at this moment just so say, What do we tell people? What is our message? Dare we preach the message that Jesus preached?

See, repent means think out, think of how, think about your thinking. "Metanoeo". Think about your thinking. Have a thought about your thoughts in the light of this new fact that the rule of God is now immediately available for you to live in. Immediately.

And then you look at the Gospels, and you see that's what's being presented over and over and over again. People pushing their way in because they've discovered the presence of the Kingdom in the presence of the King. Jesus was a king. Right? I mean that's what Pilate put on his cross, wasn't it? Why did he put it on the cross? Because he understood that was what was being claimed.

In Ephesus, was it not, when you come there they say those who have turned the

world upside down elsewhere have come here preaching one king, Jesus. You don't have a king without a kingdom.

Living in a Kingdom

[1:14:09]

And one of the deep sicknesses of our theology is that we preach a Jesus without a kingdom. That's why we have a lot of Christians that believe in Jesus but don't believe in God. They don't understand who Jesus was. And so they don't really have confidence in God.

Repent for the kingdom of the heavens is now available. That's like walking along here with someone who knows this auditorium, and someone who doesn't, with the person who's looking at the building for the first time. And the one who's here says, Turn because the auditorium is at hand. That doesn't mean it's about to come into existence and didn't quite do it. It means it's there. And that's what Jesus...

Now then, the whole all of the Gospels are a manifestation of the presence of the Kingdom to people who will turn to Jesus.

We've talked some about love already. Just remember that to love is to will the good of the beloved. And to know what God wills for things then enables us to know what is good for them. Love can't be separated from God. And if we're going to fulfill our role we're going to live with love for all of creation.

Possessed by Love

[1:15:20]

And if you ever have time to read Jonathan Edward's old treatise on virtue - it's not long and it's a wonderful treatment on love as the principle of the Kingdom of God and of what we're to live in. When we come to the place where we are possessed by love then we are ready to rule. If we love God with every dimension of our being - I'll go back to our circle diagrams - that puts us in a position to be a fully functioning human being for the first time. Human beings because they are loved by God, love God, and through that love others. They are in a position to be a fully functioning human being for the first time.

And so the partial versions of love that do so much to harm human life, where love is confused with desire - and anger results when desire is not fulfilled and so on - that is done away with in every part of our being now. Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.

That is something that is increasingly true of us; and as that personal reality of love, which is God after all, possesses our being it enables us to live a free and joyous life beyond legalism. So we don't aim at doing the right thing. We aim at

being the kind of person who would do the right thing. And that's the kind of person who is possessed by love and who loves indiscriminately with everything they come in contact. And we fulfill the law because we're that way.

Free of Fear

And then that's where the teaching about perfect love casting out fear takes hold. We are able to live without fear because we know we are loved by God and that we love God, and through God we love others and that provokes others towards love of us. Now they may be so messed up that they won't, but generally speaking they will love those who are possessed by love. And so they come to the place where they can live without fear because they are secure in the love of God and they themselves are loving others.

In contrast - if you hear a line from C.S. Lewis again. If man is made ultimate, causal force will eventually rule and thereby abolish humanity by making everything subject to the thrust of desire. The desires of some few who are able to gain the upper hand by force. And if you've never read C.S. Lewis' *Abolition of Man* I do encourage - in the context of the discussions today - to read it, because he had absolutely prophetic insight into the meaning of the Babel imperative, that it meant to abolish human beings as free people devoted to good through love, and replaced them with people who are under the domination of people - other people who live only in terms of their own desires.

So, the divine conspiracy is God's aim to defeat this dreadful declension from God's world and God's Kingdom, by bringing out a world-and-history-wide community of people who have the character and power of Jesus Christ himself.

Human nature is built for that. The nature we have is built to become like Christ, to live in the Kingdom of God; and the process of spiritual growth is the process of doing that.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 2 @ 1:19:44** ~ ~ ~

~ 03 **God and His Kingdom** [YouTube link]

[1:14:00]

{There is no computer transcription of session 3. It was transcribed manually.}

Ministry in the Kingdom of God

So, the Kingdom of God is like leaven. It enters into a reality, works away and now, it has a life of its own.

"The teaching about the Kingdom of God saved my faith in Christ"

Mark 4:26-29 - "All by itself" principle

The part that saved my faith was "the seed sports up and grows. How it does he does not know." As a minister and a Christian, I do not have to make it happen. I learned the more I tried to make it happen, the less it would work. What I had to do was to learn to speak the Word and live in the Kingdom and let the results take care of themselves. When I would do that I would begin to see change in the people I was ministering to. **I had to get out of God's way and let the kingdom work and count on the life that is in the Word of the Kingdom.**

Progressively I think I learned not to try to get people to do anything, to just stop that all together. It was hard because I was in ministry in a Southern Baptist Church and I was expected to produce results.

* DL Moody to a staggering drunk. "Mr. Moody, I am one of your converts."

"You must be one of mine because you're clearly not one of God's."

I could get out of the business of making things happen.

Do I still win souls? Yes. It is more in terms of putting the sickle in, watching for people who need a little help at a certain transition. Most of what I'm doing is watching the seed grow. Plant the seed, watch it grow. **You don't make it happen. That is one of the most important things for us to understand if we are to participate in The Divine Conspiracy as leaders and ministers to have confidence in the power of the Word of the Kingdom.**

We do need to convey the idea that there is a Kingdom of God we can seek and find through Jesus Christ. If someone wants to find the Kingdom, I should present Jesus to them. I should talk about Him. I should speak about *the unsearchable riches of Christ*. I should magnify Him and lift Him up and say the wonderful things about Him that are true of Him. In appropriate ways keep that before people's minds. That is the way to bring people to the point of understanding the Kingdom and to bring them to the point where they are prepared to enter the Kingdom of God.

Jesus taught about the Kingdom constantly. *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else that you need will be added."*

What a glorious promise! *Now what does it mean?*

The Nature of God

[7:20]

We must start with the nature of God because it is His kingdom. The Kingdom is a spiritual reality. The Word of the Kingdom is a spiritual reality - it has a life of it's own. John 6, Jesus insulted the Jewish people by saying they have to eat His flesh and drink His blood (**John 6:63**) "*The Words that I speak to you are spirit, they are life.*" Through the words He spoke He communicated His substance as a person. What does that mean? You participate in His substance by taking in His word. They are "Spirit", they are "Life".

1. God is Spirit - Exodus 3:14

[9:00]

I Am *that* I Am. My being rests on My being.

I do not depend on anything else. Totally self sufficient being.

Everything else that is physical depends upon something else.

With that you don't have God. What characterizes God as Spirit.

John 4 - Spirit - God is something that is self sufficing, self dependence.

Your free will is your spirit. It is free because it is not determined by something else. It's extremely important because that's the part of you that relates you to God - your will, your heart. If your will is tied into God, you take on the glorious features of God's Spirit. By tying your will into God, you are in a position to carry out your responsibility before God to govern on His behalf. Makes you count uniquely for what God is creating in the world and sustaining it.

Spirit is un-bodily, personal power. Your spirit is not bodily. That's why the learned world, the professional world will not talk about 'freedom'.

* Divorce - 50% of marriages end in divorce. It is rarely said, "This is because people choose to get divorced." They will think in terms of causes. Causation is the only category of analysis of human life. That is one of the reasons why moral knowledge disappears because it has to do with the will and the character as coming out of the will. Whether or not you are a good person or a bad person, do what is right morally or do your duty, that is is a matter of your choice, not a matter of causation.

* If you are going to shoot someone, you have to have a gun. There is some causation involved. You can have a gun and not shoot anyone. An action requires more than just conditions which make it possible. It requires a choice.

The category of the *spirit* is a scandal to the modern world. You have to understand that as nothing less than a straight forward assault on the 1st & 2nd of

the Ten Commandments. That goes back to what we were talking about earlier that this is a world not acknowledging the presence of God.

2. God is Life Giving - John 5:26 - God gives life, sustains life [15:27]

Life is self initiating, self sustaining, self directing activity.

God is the only one who has that kind of life. We have some measure of it.

* The goldfish is alive...for now. A plant, a seed has some degree of life.

The basic reality — "God is in Himself a sweet society."

What was God doing before the creation of the world?

He was enjoying themselves. **John 17:5**

"The glory I had with You before the world was."

Glory - great power, beauty, richness of their relationship.

God is too Many to be One, and too One to be Many.

* Casual Sex is a corruption of the personality. Using "Hook up" for sex.

That's a reflection of the broken idea of personality.

"Becoming one with a prostitute." (Paul)

"Casual sex" is simply a perverted idea of what a person is. I can't be that close to a person and be "casual". You get out of sexual temptation by understanding what the other person is and understanding the kind of relationship that is meant to hold between persons.

Our problem with the Trinity is not some much with the Trinity but understanding persons.

John 17:22-26 - *"The Glory you have given me I have given them that they may be one just as we are one."*

["Glory" is a relational description.]

The Love the Father had for me before the foundations of the world. That is the nature of God - God is love.

"Love one another as I have loved you." (**Jn 13:34-35**)

You might well wonder, "Do I really want that?" Sounds pretty smothering. "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" song. What is the nature of spiritual reality? You feel a threat - because you're saying, "how am I going to sustain myself if human relations are that tight?" It's scary.

Love comes from the Father, Son & Spirit into the life of the individual with freedom but not freedom in a matter of atomism and individualism

"I will love you forever" in marriage. We don't know how to be married.

"Forever" - you can only do if God enables me to do.

* Homosexual marriage? Why not if that's all "marriage" means?

The Trinity extends its kind of love thru the redeemed community.

I Corinthians 13:13 - Expression of the profundity of the Trinity. It is a spiritual reality. It requires a person submit themselves to God and receive from Him agape.

If you do not understand this is what love does not what you do, if will nail you to the floor. You are not going to do this. Love is going to do this. You submit yourself to "love" (to God). Love doesn't just mean desire. When the desire is gone, what is left?

When we think about the Kingdom of God, we have to understand that out of God's operation He will bring a group of people who have the quality of the Trinity in terms of their unity in love. Those are the people whom He can empower to do what they want. [26:00]

To bring out of history a community of every tongue, tribe and nation to play a major role in the future of the universe.

Ephesians 3:8-10 [26:55]

v.8 - *"Unfathomable riches of Christ of the mystery hidden in God."*

"Mystery" - Not something you can't figure out. A mystery in the New Testament is something that has been hidden and is now revealed - God's world-wide plan of redemption to include all nations & tongues.

v. 10 - *"that the manifold wisdom of God now may be made known through the church to the rulers & authorities in Heavenly places (angels)."*

Spiritual beings do not understand the greatness of God but they will understand the many sided wisdom of God thru the church to the rulers.

Ephesians 2:7, *"in order that in the ages (eons, millennia) to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*

*["ages" see also **Revelation 5:22**]*

This means the Church is a revelation to the universe of the greatness of God. God's ultimate intention is the Kingdom of God and human beings place in it.

[The Church - the gathered group of people living in the Kingdom of God]

I Corinthians 6:1-3 - A shocking church not able to adjudicate disagreements in the church. Let the kids make the decisions. We realize the church in the New Testament is very different from what it has become in other times. We shall "judge" angels. The judge in the Bible not just trial but also includes positions of government over the angels. (See the role of the Judge in biblical times.)

Rev. 22:5 *"Thru the ages, no light, lamp, sun...they shall reign for ever and ever."*

3. God's Ultimate Intention for Us is Unknown [33:00]

* Streets of gold - Whoever made this Earth can turn out streets of gold without any problem. Just rearrange the elements that make up gold.

* Turning water into wine. If you made the water in the first place, you can do wine.

* Gates of pearl just needs a bigger oyster. People who are troubled by this are not long on logic, they are short on imagination, if you assume God. If you don't assume, forget it. All that is left is human beings and nature as they know it.

- The nature of the human will is never meant to run independently of God

God's ultimate intention for us is declared and stands out and that is a part of His Kingdom for us. We will move into that as time goes by.

The Kingdom of God Throughout the Bible

[36:00]

The unity of the Bible is the progressive with-ness in God's relation in His kingdom to human beings individually and in groups. [\[With-God Life\]](#)

Think of how God's with-ness proceeds from Genesis to Revelation.

* Adam & Eve - Did God just drop Adam and Eve in the garden and leave them? No. It was His intention to be with them. They hid. In order to respect what He is aiming at in human history, He allows Himself to hide from them. Humanity begins to develop. It goes down all the way to the point that God says, "I am sorry for making human beings."

* Noah comes in; The destruction of living things on the earth. New covenant with Noah established. Then individuals are selected for a special relationship with God.

* Isaac - Look at them in terms of being with God. God was with Isaac in such a way that goodness was manifested to such a degree that his neighbors were scared of him. He prospered to such an extent, they asked him to move away. He moved then they wanted to make a covenant with him because they saw **God was with** them. **The "with-God" principle.**

* The People of Israel and the Tabernacle - (**Exodus 29:46**) So **God could be with** His people without destroying them. God wants to be dwell among His people. But it isn't a simple operation. He has to arrange the circumstances for this to be done. This is one stage. Now he has agreed of a group of people, the tribe of Israel. He arranges a new way to be with Him - the Tabernacle.

What does that mean? Try to put yourself in God's position. Suppose you were this great being by presenting yourself to a person could totally destroy them. That's the difficulty. How can he be present without destroying them? That would mean allowing them to make choices to come to a place and a routine to meet Him. They were scared of God. Remember after Sinai, the people pleaded that they did not want to see God again. You speak to Him and then come talk to us. The general term is mediator. God is working out means of mediation so people could come to and go from Him. That's what the Tabernacle is about. Before the

Tabernacle, they had altars but that was not something that allowed a people to come to God in a way that they could have a life together in His Kingdom.

God wants to dwell among His people. (Rev. 21: That's how the Kingdom is manifest.)

How this developed through the Old Testament Temple, Destruction, Exile, then transfer of mediation from a building the Tabernacle to the Temple to a written Word and the Rabbinic Judaism that dominates at the time of Jesus. Now it is the Torah and the rituals of family and Temple that continue the process of mediation that continues up to today.

[44:00] Christ came to break God's kingdom out of cultural captivity. The big issue in the book of Acts is whether or not you can be a Christian and not a Jew. The word Christian emerges in Antioch of Syria that you could not longer treat people as Jews because there were now Gentiles. The expansion into the whole world is disciples from of all nations. [Is he doing that again today with the Christian Church?]

It is almost impossible for us to think today what that meant. The system of mediation that had been present up to the time of Jesus was now set aside. The new system of mediation was one simple thing - Jesus. Paul says, "*There is one God and one mediator the man Christ Jesus.*" The whole thing is thrown open to all nations. All that is required is simply the presence of Jesus. The Kingdom is present with Him. You have Him, you have the Kingdom.

There was a whole battle that went on among the Jewish Christians. And there was a battle among Jesus & the Jews. The battle became very hot. Jesus said things that would get him killed. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "*You compass land & sea to make one proselyte and when you got him you make him two-fold more a child of hell than you yourselves are.*" (**Matthew 23:15**)

This set me on my ear as a young Southern Baptist minister. How am I bringing people into the Kingdom of God? (It may turn out you're just trying to make Southern Baptist) I had to think about how I am bringing people into the Kingdom of God. If you bring people into the Kingdom of God, that presupposes a different view of what disciple means. Frankly, there wasn't much said about being a "disciple" in that setting. That's a part of the whole idea you can be a Christian without being a disciple. *You can be a Baptist without being a disciple. I knew a lot of them.* I was clawing my way of that position myself. That's a part of realizing that God now has opened the door in a new way and taken the Kingdom of God out a strictly cultural and institutional setting and put it on the basis of a personal relationship of being with God.

We can not underestimate this. When we think about social Issues & social justice, the real issue is "loving your neighbor as yourself."

What happens if your neighbor is not one of your kind?

Colossians 3:11-14, *"No Greek, Jew, Circumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, Slave, Free, but Christ is all and in all."*

Distinctions are blotted out. * Scythians are the bottom of the barrel of humanity. God's intended "with-ness" goes beyond all human barriers. Human barriers continue to be among the things that cause the most evil and grief among human beings. * Genocides * World Conflicts

The Church itself is presented as the dwelling place of God. God has designed His people as His dwelling place and that is going to continue throughout eternity.

Rev. 22 takes you to back to that.

The Problem of Meaning in Human Life

[49:50]

Life in the Kingdom of God solves that problem. Why do things matter? What do they lead to? Do they lead to anything that is of enduring worth? If things are meaningful, they carry you. "Meaningful work" is work that counts for something that makes it much easier for you to get up and do it.

The mark of the presence of meaning in life is precisely a kind of energy and direction that makes life not something you have to carry by willpower. You're able to more joyously in a stronger way to do the things you need to do because they have meaning. They lead to something.

The Kingdom of God comes and says, "Enter the Kingdom, live in the Kingdom, allow your life to count for things that are good, permanent, enduring, lasting forever." That enables one to being to live on a different plain.

That presupposes the Kingdom is real. It is not just imaginary. As you interact with the Kingdom, that carries you, gives you strength, gives you direction and **that means power that has to be learned how to deal with.**

Lk. 11:20 - Jesus, *"If I cast out demons, know the Kingdom has come upon you."*

- * That power that is seen in His life should also be seen in the presence of His people.
- * Signs & Wonders are not the gospel but they are the natural expression of the presence of the Kingdom both they are given to Christ's people to meet real needs.

Threefold Ministry of Jesus in the Kingdom

[52:30]

Matt 9:35 - Preaching, Teaching & Healing (Manifest) the Kingdom

Proclaimed - Announced, "The Kingdom is at hand." He did not bring it into existence but He proclaimed the new availability.

"The Kingdom is not in word but in power" I Corinthians 4:20

The capacity to do things. The Word of the Kingdom produces a kind of life or a results.

Spirit is un-bodily (non physical) personal (thoughts, feelings, will) power

It's personal - not the vague kind of "force be with you". You don't learn to manipulate it. It's not spiritual laws that you work. That's a form of idolatry. Spiritual reality is not subject to your will. This is a personal relationship. Jesus is living in a relationship to a personal reality which is the Kingdom of God. That's why we don't have mechanical results. It's a personal negotiation and a personal relationship. That gives you involvement in a meaningful life that is lived in the Kingdom of God. Your life is part of an eternal life and the results that are gained lasts for eternity.

Compared to the Secular view - Nothing & nothing. Nothing that comes of it lasts. It's all over. The sun will become a giant red ball and that's the end of the earth.

* "Tolstoy Complex" - *Confession*. After much success, it all is nothing and amounts to nothing. If you like what you do you can live on that. More than just "liking" what I do in the immediate delight of what I'm doing. Meaninglessness that lies ahead makes it hard to go on.

* Myth of Sisyphus (Camus) - *"Roll the rock up the hill. Watch it roll down. Roll it up again."* If that view is true, so be it. We have to accept it. We can be brave, we can be tough, or as Camus suggests, commit suicide.

The presence of Jesus and His Kingdom shows that this is not true.

The Meaning of Life for the Believe in Christ

[57:25]

What is the meaning of life? The love and purpose of God for us. We are embedded in His eternal life. What makes our life eternal is involvement in His eternal life. In **Romans 8 (29-31)** you have these marvelous verses that spell this out. Paul has just said that *"all things work together for those that love God and are called into purposes."* That's life in the Kingdom.

"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..." See that's purpose, that's meaning.

"...that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who is against us?"

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Then he goes on to describe the path of life a person has who is embedded in the Kingdom of God. All the hard things turn to our good. Now, you can't have that unless you have a vision of life in the Kingdom. All the hard things turn to good. Even aging—the body breaking down. This passage in **II Corinthians 4:16**, "*even though our outward man is perishing. Our inward man is being renewed day by day.*" The trials of the present time are nothing compared to "*the great weight of glory which they are working.*" He talks about how we are inwardly renewed as we look "*not at the things that are temporal but at the things that are eternal*" and how the temporal things are visible, the eternal things are invisible.

All that fits in to this picture of a meaningful life in the Kingdom of God. We look forward, we are carried forward by meaning. Drama is a word that we need to learn to use. We should be living a dramatic life. It helps us I think to really come to grip with how our life is going. Is there drama in our lives? "Drama" refers to the ups and downs of meaningful existence in pursuit of good against opposition. That's what drama is. Some of us may feel like we could stand a little less drama because the opposition may be pressing us very hard. But, living in the eternal Kingdom of God now is what gives us this framework.

Jesus' Teaching on the Gospel of the Kingdom

[1:00:33]

Matthew 3 - John the Baptist, "*Repent, the Kingdom of Heavens is at hand.*"

Matthew 4:17 - Same message, same words from Jesus

Matthew 5 - Beatitudes - Teaching about the Kingdom. The order begins & ends with the Kingdom. The Beatitudes are basically a proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 9:35-38 - Jesus went about preaching the Kingdom of God

Matthew 13 - Parables are stories of the Kingdom (parallel passages in Luke)

Matthew 11:12 - The transition into the Kingdom from the Jewish system. Until John the Baptist, the Law & the Prophets were proclaimed as the officially appointed doorway into the Kingdom of God. Since John the Baptist, the gospel of the Kingdom is preached. [Jesus began His public ministry when John was imprisoned. He knew His was the only voice.] People came by force into the Kingdom.

Luke 16:16 - Kingdom followers do not stand on Jewish proprieties.

Matthew 8 - They charge in.

* Leper — "*Jesus, if you would, you could make me clean.*"

Jesus touched him with a human touch. The leper bulled his way in.

* Roman Centurion — He understood Kingdom power.

Matthew 21:43 - *The Kingdom shall be taken away from you and given to a people producing the fruit of it.* That's what happened in the book of Acts was a description of how **Matthew 21:43** was carried out. The Kingdom of God was not in the Jews' peculiar possession to make it available to the world. [1:06:35]

John 3:5 - "To enter the Kingdom you have to be born from 'above'."

"Above" - Entry into the Kingdom is not mediated through any human institution. The whole passage as an illustration of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and how it now bypasses human institutions entirely.

"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." **Romans 10:13**

The Church and the Kingdom [1:08:47]

The church does not omit the kingdom. The kingdom is present in the church.

Romans 14:17 - *"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."*

What happens in the church that keeps us from being a discipling body of Christ? We are distracted. These people were distracted about eating. Paul says, "Don't worry about that." Eating comes up over and over.

When in church matters we want to understand that the Kingdom of God is manifested by a kind of righteousness or goodness, peace & joy that can only be supernaturally produced.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God is the announcement that God is here that anyone who wants to find Him can come through Jesus Christ and find the Kingdom of God.

Seek the Kingdom of God [1:11:00]

Matthew 6:33 - How do you seek the Kingdom of God?

Find out what God is doing - the Kingdom - and do that.

How do you find out what God is doing?

Observe Jesus Christ. Look at Him. Listen to what He said. Watch what He did. That's what God is doing. Now do that where you are and you will find the Kingdom of God and the kind of righteousness that God has. When you find that everything else you need will be provided. *Good night, what a statement that is!*

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Look at the 23rd Psalm - *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack."*

Same thing? Sure! Now we have a face on the Shepherd, a person to point to and say, "That's where you can find it...Jesus Christ." We can't just rest in the name. We have to move to the reality and the presence of the Kingdom.

Prayer

[1:13:14]

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 3 @ 1:14:00** ~ ~ ~

~ 04 [Kingdom of God](#) [YouTube link]

[1:53:00]

Opening Prayer by Dallas- [\[powerful request to honor the name of Jesus\]](#)

Now Lord, we ask for help again as we come to look into your Word, and try to understand the tremendous thing that you turned loose on the earth when you came and lived and taught, and gave your life on the cross, rose from the dead, founded the church - lives in the church and continues today to be here with us.

Now the truth is that none of us here probably have the foggiest idea what you want to accomplish with us. And so we give that up to you and ask you to have your way in what is said and what is done not only this evening but in the times we are together here this week and then putting it into practice in our lives.

So give us what we need Lord, in the way we need it. Move us on in the path of discipleship and glorious union with you in this life and forever. We ask you to that to honor the name above all names, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

I. The Substance and Essence of the Kingdom

[1:15]

Finishing up what we were talking about last time now, the substance and essence of the Kingdom. What the Kingdom is. Now this is the great problem that faces people who try to talk about the gospel.

Thank you very much, Pete. That's better.

That try to talk about the gospel, and especially about the Kingdom. Talk about the Kingdom becomes invariably enmeshed in social and political issues. That's not new. That's the way it was in Jesus' own day. They could not conceptualize what it would mean for him to be king other than as the king of a political order. And you may recall in the first chapter of the book of Acts as they go out and walk out to towards the mount of transfiguration, Jesus is getting ready to become no longer visible to them. **Acts 1:6-11** And he's ascending back to the place where he is at the right hand of the father even now.

That's a real place, by the way, in the universe. We don't know where it is. We wouldn't know what to do with it if we did. We'd just try a Babel thing probably, except this time it would be a spaceship. Try to get a spaceship to go there. I wouldn't want to approach it. Really. That's a real place, and Jesus is still there. But he's also still here. And the continuing incarnation of Jesus is in his people.

But as they went out you may recall on the - in the first chapter of the book of Acts, Lord will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel ? **Acts 1:6** Now what they meant by that was, are you going to get a government in Israel that is

capable of whipping everybody? That's what they meant by it.

And you know, having observed what he could do, they had good reason to believe that if he wanted to do that, he could make it happen. We talk jokingly about people who can walk on water. He really did it. He understood how to suspend gravity. Just think of what he could have done with his powers in terms of weapons and so on. Well, that's pretty scary.

A different way

Now, he knew that nothing would be gained that way. And that's why he took a different route. Just to reassert yourself in human kingdom, as that was understood, would do nothing for the project of history. The one that God had put afoot and was carrying through with - as I've referred to as the divine conspiracy - he knew that.

But still in Acts 1:3, and we're gonna take a little walk through the book of Actstomorrow, because there's a real hermeneutics problem here that we need to address. Some people think that Paul preached one gospel and Jesus preached another. That Paul preached a gospel of forgiveness of sins and the church, and that Jesus preached one about the Kingdom of God and so forth and so on. And there's just a whole wilderness of confusion - and many, many great forests have been sacrificed to publish books on this topic. And it's really sad because they just can't get it out of their head. It's gotta be a political kingdom.

[* see #6 28:20-33:20]

Now here's what I'm saying to you, and it's extremely important to get this. Because you have to be in a certain manner an ontologist if you're gonna understand the Scripture. An ontologist is one who understands being, what it is for things to be and what kinds of things there are. And we talked about the Trinitarian nature of God, a spiritual nature of God and so on. And what we have to understand is that the Kingdom of God is simply God's ruling. It's his ruling. It's his governing. That's the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is simply His God's ruling - His governing. [5:00]

And what Jesus came to preach is not that there is a Kingdom of God. What Jesus came to make available was entry into the Kingdom of God. See, when you see the record of his message, his message is never - there is a Kingdom of God! Well, people would have looked at him like he was an idiot. I mean, yeah, what else is new. Everyone knew there was a Kingdom of God. They knew that. And they were looking for it to come as a political reality on earth, because they had confidence that the promises of God to the Jewish nation would be fulfilled. That's why they were sure that it was gonna come. That's why every so often you'd have a bunch of people get up and get an army and say - let's go do it now.

But the basic reality of the Kingdom of God is simply the person of God and the instrumentalities by which he rules. If we had time we could talk about those instrumentalities. They are of course God's own direct action. They're his Spirit. They're his Son. They're his Word. They're angels. That's why, you see, God is called Lord of Hosts over and over in the Old Testament. It was because he was recognized to have this incredible army of angels. Hosts were angelic. There are probably more angels than there are numbers. There's a whole lot of them. There's a lot of numbers too, aren't there? But still that's the nature of God is to create at that level.

Three Kingdoms

[6:55]

And there's the church. There's other people who are godly people who serve God. Those are all part of the Kingdom of God. And then of course there's your kingdom and mine, and the biggest threat to the Kingdom of God in my life is my kingdom. And then there's the kingdom of darkness. And these three kingdoms are what make up the scene of battle in human life. And when you look at all the terrible things on earth and you say - why are those people in the Sudan doing that to those other people in the Sudan, and so on, you have to understand these are kingdoms that are carrying out the will of human beings or darker agents still. And the will of the human beings and the darker agents are against the will of God.

So now you almost have to pause over that for a moment and say let it soak in. The Kingdom of God is God acting.

Now some of his actions are not things that he has to attend to all the time. For example probably the arrangement of furniture in your apartment or house expresses your will. But you don't have to stand there and hold the chairs in place, right? They can express your will without that.

And God's will is expressed in arrangements that he has established, laws that he has laid down so that things behave in certain ways and then creation runs by those. And for our part a good deal of the responsibility we have as human beings is to learn those laws and how to live by them and how to be responsible in the production of good that is appropriate to human beings given the nature and the place that they have that we've talked about. So now the only thing outside of the will of God is rebellious human and angelic wills. Those are the only things outside. Everything else conforms to the will of God.

And another thing we need to say about the Kingdom before we go on is - is it is not in your heart. It ain't there. It's in reality, and your heart is in it, if anything. But there's a... People bounce back and forth from saying that it's a political order, to it's being just sort of little warm thought in your heart. And it isn't either one of

those. It is God reigning. It is God ruling. So those are things we need to make sure that we keep in mind.

Language and Reality in the Kingdom

[9:48]

Now we don't want to become sticklers about the language. That is to say we don't want a new - start a new Kingdom of God denomination or something like that. You know. And many times in the history of the church you've had the reality of the Kingdom without the language. One of the clearest points of that was soon after the Protestant Reformation, and there have been other times. I mean they talked about the Kingdom of God, but that was not...they did not make it the center of their presentation of the gospel. What is essential is not the language but the reality.

And around the time of the Reformation and afterwards during the time of the Puritans in England and of the Pietists and a little bit later in Germany, they had an understanding of the offer in Christ to be something that included your whole life. And that is the crucial point...

If you're preaching a gospel that does not mean redemption for your whole life, you haven't got the right one.

[10:53]

Listen to these words of Paul after going through that wonderful presentation that we talked about about the Scythians and the Greeks and the Jews and all of that, he goes on to say that Christ is all and in all. (**Colossians 3:11**) And then he says, "Put on therefore as the elect of God holy and beloved, bowels of mercies and kindness and long suffering humility, and meekness of mind, forbearing one another, forgiving one another. If anyone has a quarrel against anyone, as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Colossians 3:12-13 Isn't that wonderful? Wouldn't you like to join, to be in a church like that?

And above all these things he says, put on agape. Divine love which is the bond of perfectness of the perfection. These wonderful progression you see like in Romans 5, 2 Peter 1, and Colossians 3 always culminate in love. Agape is a capstone. Ties a ribbon around it, you might think. It's the bond of perfectness.

And he says, and he goes to say, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts to which you are also called in one body and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly and always teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your heart to the Lord." (**Colossians 3:16**) Why don't we do that?

And then cap that wonderful passage off that runs from **Colossians 3:1-17** and you know, if you haven't memorized it, I really encourage you to memorize that. It'll do a lot for you. Verse 17: "Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the

name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Now that's not the only place that says it, but this is one of the best statements as to what it's all about. So think about it. Whatever you do in word or deed, now that pretty well covers it doesn't it? Can you think of anything that's left out? Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what does it mean to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? It means do it on his behalf and from his resources. Whatever you do. See that's the inclusiveness that we're talking about. And that is the reality of the Kingdom. That's the vision of the Kingdom of God, and we want to live in that.

But, what I'm saying now is we don't need to get sticky about the words. We want the reality. And the language and the concept of the Kingdom of God is very helpful, and we do also have the fact that that's how Jesus that's how he put it.

Trust the Kingdom of God

[14:02]

But the Kingdom of God is all inclusive. It takes in everything. It means we can trust God with everything that whatever we let him have charge of in our lives he will take that into the Kingdom of God.

Now remember how can you...can you translate that for me? That means he will take that into his ruling and reigning. Now that's why the stuff in say **Matthew 6** which Jesus you know talk about the birds and the flowers and all that sort of stuff. And you wonder what's this guy talking about? You say well maybe we'll set that to music. Make a song out of it. It's so pretty. No it's sober reality, see? It's one of those many cases of Jesus where you just wonder, could this guy possibly be real? What's he talking about? He says don't be concerned about tomorrow. My advice to you is just trust God. Don't worry about things. Anything!

["Wealth" - Matthew 6:19-34" [DC #12 21:10-29:40](#) p. 102]

That's what it means to trust Jesus is to believe that he's in charge of everything that you let him be in charge of. And if something happens that you don't like, he'll bring something good out of it. Something happens that injures you, he will turn it into something good.

So you can sum it up by saying - I like to use this language because I think the Lord gave it to me quite a long time ago, and it really seems to make people squirm. What he's really saying is, **"This world is a perfectly safe place for you to be."**

[15:50]

Now how can you say that to someone who's suffering and dying and being martyred or something of that sort? Well, that's how big the Kingdom is. And we're gonna talk more about how that works out. But the important thing is to realize

that wholeness. Don't worry about the language. If you've got a better way of putting it, that's fine. You won't have any quarrel with Jesus about that or with Paul. It's perfectly all right to put it in other words if you get the reality. The reality is now that I'm invited to take everything that pertains to me, bring it to Jesus, put it at his feet, leave it there.

You know the old song, If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold, and you have to get along with meager fare. [\[Lyrics to "Leave it There"\]](#) You know those words? Just remember in his words how he feeds the little birds. Bring your burden to the Lord, and leave it there. Now, when you're worrying, you're not leaving it there. You go pick it up, and turn it over and look at it and lay it down again, maybe. Just leave it there. Take your hands off it. Go and do something else.

Now that's what Jesus is teaching when he teaches in the Sermon on the Mount. And when he says don't be worried about anything, lovely language there.

Don't be anxious

[17:30]

Excuse me. Let's just look at some words there from the sixth chapter. He's carrying on about these birds again. And he says verse 25 of Matthew 6, "For this reason I say to you don't be anxious for your life as to what shall you eat or what you drink, or for your body as to what you should put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?" Now some people don't know that they are. "Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow, neither do they reap nor gather into barns and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are they not worth much more...Are you not worth much more than they?" **Matthew 6:26**

Now an interesting exercise is try to price someone in birds. How many birds would you think someone is worth? How many birds are you worth? Two crows and a cockatoo. See, Jesus is saying - look, God has an order in which things fit. And you're a part of that order, and you can trust that. Which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? What does...what good does it do by anxious being anxious, what does it do you?

He goes on to talk about these - the way God care for things. So verse 31, "Don't be anxious then saying what shall we eat, drink, what shall we clothe ourselves with? For these things the Gentiles eagerly seek." Now remember Gentiles means people who don't know God. People who don't know God are the ones who spend their time worrying about what they're going to eat or drink. Excuse me.

Put the Kingdom First

But seek first, that is put it first, to be involved with his Kingdom. Seek first his

Kingdom. Now that means find out what God is doing and do it with him. What is God doing, do that with him.

Now, I like to suggest wordings for language that we don't commonly associate any meaning with. So now what do you - what meaning do we normally associate with, seek first the Kingdom of God? Well, I mean you would face that challenge. What do you associate with? And for most folks I think, they don't associate anything with it. Think pretty thoughts. Or maybe, you know, sing a Beatles song or something of that sort. And just sort of emotive.

I'm suggesting to you that this means to find what God is doing and do it with him. And a good key to that of course is to look at what he says in the Law and in what comes forward in Jesus. And when you do this, all other things will be added.

Now you might want to put a cross reference there to **Joshua 1:8**. Here's a verse that runs parallel with this. Psalm 1 also runs parallel with it, if you remember that. Joshua 1:8 says, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, and you shall meditate therein day and night." No time out for watching "Friends" [TV show]. You have to give that up. What's that gonna do to your life? You end up...probably you're gonna do better to have the law running than Friends running.

I mean all of these weird things that they have on television - "Seinfeld". You ever look at "Seinfeld"? What a vision of the good life! I think the 23rd Psalm is better than "Seinfeld", don't you? No commercials. This book of the law will not depart out of your mouth. But you shall meditate, and really the idea there is you'll kind of be muttering it. Meditate day and night. That's why it says it won't depart out of your mouth. That you may observe to do according to all that is written therein. Then you will make your way prosperous and you will have good success.

Why? Because by doing that you have aligned yourself with the Kingdom of God.

Align yourself with God

[22:35]

See, the whole human project now is to get the human being aligned with what God is doing. That's God's Kingdom. And that includes of course things that we do in ministry. It would include all of the things that we associate with manifesting the presence of the Kingdom. It would include dealing with demons if that's necessary, dealing with sickness if that's necessary.

Doesn't mean you're always going to win, because you're not. You know Jesus didn't misfire, but probably you and I are so limited. Actually I don't know what it would do to me if I never lost. I mean, can you imagine a person who, whenever they pray for anyone they just get healed. Well, Jesus was like that. But frankly I

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would be afraid for me if I came even close. I don't, so I don't have to worry about that, but I see enough of it that I know it's real.

But it also applies to just things like driving down the road. That would be included in whatsoever you do in word or deed, wouldn't it? Driving down the road. So I do that in the name of Jesus. Transforms everything.

Sometimes I'll drive all the way and just sing, Hallowed be thy name. Hallowed be thy name. See, a good thing is to get a good phrase and just keep it floating for a long period of time. Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, they will be done. Just keep that circulating. See you can teach yourself to pray without ceasing by using the word of God and just letting it run. Become a part of your body.

Some of you know about what is called the breath prayer of Russian Orthodoxy. Where you repeat - you have people who train themselves in such a way that by their very breathing they are accustomed to saying - they use a phrase, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me. I think that's a little morbid myself. And I have done that, and you can do that. I think you can substitute some other language.

"Hallowed be thy name", is wonderful. Just try it, OK? Just try it. Train yourself to just say Hallowed be thy name while you're living through all the things you live through. See, that will help you do what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus says seek first the Kingdom, and everything else will be added. See that's the promise of the Scriptures. That's the reality of living in the Kingdom of God.

And so Jesus adds a little joke here at the end of **Matthew 6**. You know he does inject a little humor into things. And this is one of those cases. He says don't be anxious for tomorrow, because tomorrow will have enough evil to provide for tomorrow. And you won't have to borrow any of it for today, because you'll have enough today to last you till tomorrow. So just leave it over there. See?

And that's what he's saying, for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. So he's just trying to inject a little humor, a little pleasant humor into this situation. You don't need to borrow troubles from the future, because you have enough today. That's the way the days are. And he's just saying turn it loose. Turn it loose. See because you're living in the Kingdom of God. So that's a...that's the picture that we want now.

Understand your forgiveness

[26:18]

Now if you can get that - as I mentioned, right after the Protestant Reformation, people, the whole issue of forgiveness was so big that it included everything. You

read an old book like John Owen's book on *Forgiveness of Sins*, you'll see that forgiveness just included everything. People were so into the release from bondage to sin, and they didn't just think of forgiveness in terms of getting the guilt off but rather getting the sin off. Do you know that old hymn that says, "Be of sin the double cure. Rock of Ages cleft for me let me hide myself in thee." Remember that part where it says, "Be of sin the double cure? Cleanse from wrath and make me pure." [[Lyrics to "Rock of Ages"](#)]

All right. So it isn't... Or the old Wesleyan hymn, "He breaks the power of canceled sin." [[Lyrics to "Oh For A Thousand Tongues to Sing"](#)] See, sin that has been canceled before God can still have power over you. But full redemption in Christ means you walk away from it. You don't even need it any more. He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free. And that understanding was something that really was Kingdom.

Even though they didn't use the word because it was all inclusive of life. And that's what we're aiming for is that kind of all inclusiveness.

We want to understand that every moment can be holy. And when read our things that people often know like Brother Lawrence's *Practicing the Presence of God*. And so one of the reasons that grabs people so is because it presents the whole life. And that theme of practicing the presence of God which goes back before Brother Lawrence is a way of understanding Kingdom reality.

All right. Well we'll have some more work to do on that.

II. Paul and the Gospel - "The Riches of Christ"

[28:30]

But we want now to turn to Paul's wonderful vision of his work as being a work that involved the proclamation of Christ. And if we proclaim Christ rightly, the effect will be to ravish people with the reality of the Kingdom. And that's how you make a disciple. You make a disciple by ravishing people with the reality of the Kingdom.

The greatest opportunity

See now that's why Jesus gave you the two parables. The parable of the treasure in the field and the parable of the great pearl. (**Matthew 13:44-46**) Do you remember those? Now here again I'm gonna scoot on, because I'm just going to count on you knowing the scriptures so I won't go read those. But you remember you told a parable.

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He said, "The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who found a treasure in a field." Maybe oil or gold or something of that sort. And so he just covered it up, and he ran and got all his resource together and bought the field. Right.

The pearl merchant had a lot of little pearls, and he found a great big beautiful pearl. And so what did he do? He went home, got all of his stuff together, all of his resources together and bought that pearl. Now do you think he was saying, oh I have to give up my little pearls! My precious little pearls! No, he wasn't doing that. He realized that this was his greatest opportunity. He was glad to give them up.

The man who got the field thought this was the big deal. I mean he was ready to do what he could to get to buy that field, because he understood it was an investment. Now you see, **once you understand who Jesus is and what it means for your life you realize that discipleship to Jesus is the greatest opportunity you will ever have in life.** That puts a different cast on things. And when it comes to reaching people who are not - who don't know this, see, if you understand that you're offering them the greatest opportunity they will ever have in life. Now if you don't understand it, they won't.

That's why the things I'm going to talk to you about tonight are so important. It's because actually it seems like very often people who profess the name of Christ do not understand the greatness of what they've been given.

The Riches of Christ

[31:02]

So now here's Paul, and Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians third chapter in the eighth verse, "Unto me who is the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable..." or some versions use the word unfathomable. You can't fathom it. It's unfathomable. That means you never reach the bottom. That's what unfathomable means. You can't reach the bottom. No matter how far you go, there's still more. The unsearchable riches of Christ. The greatness of Christ.

You may have seen a book by J.B Phillips called *Your God is Too Small*, and J.B. Phillips laid his finger on a chronic problem. And that is the failure to think God is as big as he is, and the failure to understand also the greatness of Christ. And so much of our problem when we go out to the world to try to share with them the good news, is we're not thinking big enough about Christ. We have a tiny Christ, a puny Christ, a Christ who doesn't compare well with others who might be in the race.

Now I don't want to come down on L. Ron Hubbard, but just to use him as an illustration because he's here. I mean just put L. Ron Hubbard down beside Christ. What do you think that's gonna look like? Well, actually L. Ron Hubbard is gonna

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stand by Christ someday, and you and I are gonna stand by Christ when the operation is over here, and we're gonna look at ourselves in the light of who Christ is. Everyone is. There's gonna be a comparison. You remember Paul talked about that in **Acts 17** on Mars Hill. So take the...

Often I'll have a young person who has found that I'm a Christian, and they make come into my office and say something to me like, "Well, I'm really surprised. Here you are a philosopher, you write all this crazy stuff and do all these things. Why are you a disciple of Jesus?" You know, they often don't use that precise language. That's what they mean. Sometimes they use the precise language. Why are you a disciple of Jesus?

My answer really is always the same. I don't mean to be smart-~~al~~icky about it. My answer is another question. Who else did you have in mind? Who else did you have in mind? I mean seriously.

Now once you get past the Buddha, Mahatma Ghandi, and John Lennon - except now nobody knows John Lennon anymore. Use to they did. They don't bring him up any more. That's about the end of the list. Who is to be compared to Christ?

Now everyone's following somebody. Usually they're following three or four people. Half the time they don't even know who they were. They...there's an amalgam. As we go through life first it's our parents, and then it's our peers. And then it's a performer or sports hero or then maybe it's a professor in some philosophy department or some other department. You know really, I mean that's the way it goes.

And I mean, when you - kids come into the university or in college they often find one or two professors that are really great for them. Didn't that happen to you? Certainly it was that way it was in my case. It was just a couple. And these were the ones that - boy - they really turned me on. But they got me working and I admired them greatly, see.

But for goodness' sakes, to set them down beside Jesus Christ? And yet often, in the order of human affairs, people don't get much above that. See, they're not looking high enough. They're not thinking about what's determining their life. You know it's a good question for each of us to ask. Who am I really following?

Now sometimes we're fortunate. We have a father or a mother. In my case I guess my paternal grandmother was of the most influential people in my life. This was an incredible person. And she was incredible mainly because she had lived a life of unbelievable godliness and goodness. And I'm very thankful for her, but again you can't put her...Christ down beside of her. See the goodness of people ordinarily is

quite fathomable, but generally you can't get to the bottom of Christ. No end to the riches. We want to talk about that some tonight and why that is there.

Paul's Unique Understanding

[36:40]

Now Paul you see had a personal standing here with Christ that was exceptional. For one thing he was nurtured on Israel and the glory of the unique covenant people. And he talks about that in various places like in **Philippians 3** and elsewhere. He talks about how he had come from the stock of Benjamin, Pharisee of the Pharisees, studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem, was ahead of all of his peers in persecuting the church and so on. So he starts out from a very exalted position as a Jew, and as one who knows God in that connection.

But then, as you recall, he had a personal encounter with Jesus that was history making, shall we say. Now I think you have had a personal encounter with Jesus, and that's right and as it should be. And there's no reason that that encounter should not be as life transforming as Paul's; but Paul's had some unusual features to it. Because Paul had special responsibility in teaching, and as I said earlier or maybe I didn't, I'm gonna say it now. Paul was really the first one who got it. He got the message of Jesus. That's why if you look at him and contrast to even the other apostles and their behavior, he really was distinctive.

He understood the lowliness of Jesus. He understood the humility, the fact that Jesus came to be a servant and not to be served. And he followed in that path. But see, underlying that was his experience of the glorious reality of Jesus Christ post-resurrection. He'd met him; and after he met him, as far as we can tell of what he tells us, there were long periods of time perhaps while he was in exile in Arabia; or maybe later on when he returns to Tarsus. And the tradition there is that when he returned there his own family drove him out. And there's still a cave down there close to Tarsus where they will show you - this is Paul's cave. This is where he lived after he was driven out of his family.

A New Understanding of the Gospel

And so there was a long, there were long periods of time in Paul's life before he came into public ministry, where he was, shall we say, personally tutored by Jesus Christ. And he understood that the gospel that he had been given was given to him by Jesus Christ firsthand. Now you remember he didn't get to be there with the other guys while Jesus was here in the flesh. And this was often held against him. But it is true for him to say as he does in I Corinthians 15 that even though he was like one born out of due season still the grace of God had worked more effectively in him than in all of them. (**I Corinthians 15:8**) Do you remember that statement that Paul makes?

I Corinthians 15:10, it says, "Yet even though I was born out of season still I work more effectively," and then he catches himself you recall, he says, "not I but the grace of God in me. I work more effectively than all did." And at that time I think probably that was the correct thing to say.

So Paul had that experience of the vivid reality, post- resurrection reality of Jesus Christ.

There are other things in his experience. We can't take time for them tonight, but if you look at what was his experience of Christ was you see that it was a very exceptional one. And this is a part of what he conveys when he talks about the unfathomable riches of Christ.

Paul is the one who understood the hope and intention of God for all of the people on the earth, and that's why he says to me this grace is given that I should preach among the Gentiles. So he had to fight the battle of - he carried the battle of the church beyond Judaism. And he is the one that enabled the church to say - yes, you can be saved, you can be Jesus' person without being Jewish. And that was a big step forward.

What are the Riches of Christ?

1. His Riches: Physical Cosmos - at the Disposal of Christ [41:25] [CREATION]

What are the Riches of Christ? [41:25]

OK. So now what are the riches of Christ? We want to spend some time on **four dimensions of the riches of Christ**.

1.) The Physical Universe [CREATION]

And the first one is that the physical cosmos belongs to Christ and is totally at his disposal. Now you know that's riches. That's real riches. Right. I mean the Psalmist tells us that the cattle on a thousand hills belongs to the Lord, but that is small cheese compared to all of the riches that go into the universe, the physical universe. (Psalm 50:10) It's all his.

Now this is one of things where you come in contact with a prevailing ideology. I mentioned earlier this book of Carl Sagan's called *Cosmos*. He opens that book by saying the only thing there is, is the cosmos. That's the only thing there ever has been, and that's the only thing there ever will be. Well, you know there's one sense in which that's true, really true if by cosmos you mean everything that exists. Well then, it's true that everything that exists is all there is. It's not very

interesting. Right. He didn't mean that. What he meant was the physical cosmos is all there is.

Now, we have a much better appreciation now even than when Sagan talked about the reality of the physical cosmos. But it's all his, you see. This is part of the riches, the unfathomable riches of Christ. He manifested that when he was with us here in the flesh. He manifested it to his disciples and very often they really didn't know what to make of it. They didn't quite understand it.

Power over Matter

[43:12]

There was an interesting picture here in **Mark chapter 6**, and this is after Jesus had fed a bunch of hungry people. In verses 35, 36-38, or 44, sorry, through 44, and it's one of the occasions in which he produced food. He started with five loaves and two fishes. And broke them looking up into heaven - looking up towards heaven. Verse 41 says. And the reason Jesus, by the way, looked into heaven when he prayed- and you'll see that he often did - was because the one he was talking to was in heaven. So he looked at him.

You don't have to bow your head by the way and close your eyes when you pray. You know that's something that was invented in Sunday School classes to keep kids quiet. You can look around. You can look at what you're praying for. You can look towards God. See? So act as if somehow this is all here, because it actually is. See. And I remember a young lady once that I - totally revolutionized her prayer life. She was talking on how boring it was. So I said try praying with your eyes open. It totally revolutionized her prayer life.

It's shocking to people often to hear this. Billy Sunday when he prayed would pace around on the platform with his eyes wide open, and looking here and there and praying as he went. Well, there's nothing wrong with that. Jesus didn't say, now bow your head and close your eyes. That isn't in the law of Moses.

And we have to be real about this business. Jesus looked into the heavens and he prayed. And they fed all those people. Five thousand men. The reason it mentions men is to say it wasn't counting the children and the women. There's a bunch of people there. He fed them. Well, how did he do that? Well, he knew how to produce matter. He knew how to do that.

Power Over Energy

[45:20]

Now watch this. They get in the boat and they start over in...he sends them over to the other side of the sea in verse 45, and if you haven't seen this, you might want to follow this. So he goes up in the mountain to pray. Now they're out in the middle of the ocean, middle of the Sea of Galilee in the night, the fourth watch. That's pretty late. And they're having a hard time rowing. And here comes Jesus

walking on the water. You see he was the master of all of that. Stretch your mind on this folks. OK? I mean it takes effort to think this out. That he actually could do that and what that means about who he was.

Now we know a little bit about how to turn matter into energy. That's what you do when you put wood in the stove or turn on the gas jet, cook your eggs. You turn matter into energy, and that energy then transforms matter again. We find it very difficult to try and transform energy into matter. That's very hard. These big cyclotrons that you have in Switzerland. And they were building a big one in Texas and quit on it. Do you remember? It was too expensive. Well those were efforts to create just a little bit of matter by firing particles opposite directions; and when they would hit, they'd create just a little bit of matter for just a few seconds. Jesus knew how to do it without the machinery.

Well he should. He was the one who put it all together in the first place. Isn't that the story? That he made everything. You see when you come to deal with issues in prayer and you realize you're dealing with the person who did that, it strengthens your faith to know that with God nothing is impossible. Right? But you have to understand who Jesus is and the greatness of Jesus and the greatness of God the Father to understand why that works that way.

Power over Nature

[47:45]

Now look what happens here. When Jesus comes to them walking on the water, he first he scares them half to death in verse 49. And Jesus says to them, Take courage; it is I. Do not be afraid. And he got into the boat with them, and the winds stopped, and they were greatly astonished.

Now the next verse is the one I'd like you to think about. The next verse says, "For they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves." (**Mark 6:51-52**) OK. They were astonished that the storm stopped. Jesus says, what's the deal? Didn't you learn anything?

What's loaves got to do with storms? Why should they have not been astonished? Do you see the issue? They were astonished because the storm stopped. They should have understood...understood something from the loaves so that they would not have been astonished. Right? They should have said, ho hum. It's just Jesus. He does that kind of thing. Right? But they didn't get it.

They...It says their hearts was hardened. Now what that means is the stuff didn't sink in. Didn't sink in. They should have said, "Wow, Jesus is really in charge of all this stuff. So the wind stopped. Yeah, that's the way it should be." See we don't often put this together.

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I used to have a friend in the chemistry department at USC who was shall we say declined Baptist. He's since declined - re-upped, I'm glad to say. And he was a chemist. And he used to like to razz me a little bit. See, "Now Dallas, you believe that Jesus really turned that water into wine. He said, well if you know, if you did that it would require so much energy that it would melt the pots." Now I didn't have the heart to say to him, a Ph.D. in chemistry, that if Jesus could handle the wine, he could probably take care of the pots. See you have to understand who you're dealing with.

This is the one who has the key to physical. In fact he holds it all together as we read earlier from **Colossians 1**. You remember that passage. See the early disciples believed that the physical cosmos belonged to Christ and was totally at his disposal, because they had seen his power over nature and his power over death.

Power over Death

[51:05]

And one of the things that was most telling to them about the unfathomable riches of Christ was that he was resurrected. That he rose from the dead.

Again, you know, I have so many of these illustrations of Christian young man on the campus was talking to a professor in religion at Easter time and mentioned the resurrection. The man said, "Well you know of course that's impossible. That's contrary to the laws of physics." Well now this was a young man and of course he wasn't going to fly in the face of this distinguished professor anyway. You see all you have to do is say now will you show me the laws of physics according to which that's impossible? There aren't any. Because you see physics does not deal with reality as a whole. It deals with the physical reality and even that from a particular point of view. Right.

But things get thrown around whether it's Carl Sagan or somebody else, my chemistry buddy, or this professor of religion as if somehow this could not possibly be true. Let me tell you something that I'm putting in general terms. There's often an impression that somehow something has been found out that shows the reality of God and his power over the universe to be wrong. Nothing has been found out!

And I do this so often that I get bored with myself for doing it. You see, because I have to say to young people over and over and over again, now show me where in the science book it says - so forth and so on. It doesn't say it in the science book. And if any science book did say it, it would be rejected because everyone in those fields knows they do not say it.

See they blow it up and they extract something, and they say, well, this is a statement about all reality. No it's not. It's just a statement about matter, for example, and physical energy. It's not a statement about all reality.

Now see we have to keep that in mind, because when we start speaking about the Kingdom of God and about Jesus and we talk about them as spiritual, then we ourselves have to know and be sure that we're just not passing hot air. Right. We're talking reality. We're talking about something that's real. The spiritual world is real. It is a field of energy in that it does work. In fact it's the greatest energy in the universe. The word which God spoke to express his creative action is power beyond any comprehension. And that power is still working.

Well, I'm taking too much time here. Let's move on.
So, the riches of Christ...

2.) The Master of the Moral Life [54:10] [CHARACTER: GOODNESS - VIRTUE - RIGHTEOUSNESS]

The second thing to mentioned is Christ as the master of the moral life. Now Jesus is the one who above all understands moral reality and order and moreover is able to bring people to moral goodness. That is he doesn't just talk about it. He knows how it works. And we're gonna spend time tomorrow talking about some details on this.

But when Jesus for example begins to talk about moral reality in the Sermon on the Mount, he starts out with Matthew 5:20: "Unless your goodness, your moral goodness, goes beyond the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you can't make contact with the Kingdom of the heavens."

Now that's really important to understand, because what he's saying here is you're going to get down at the level of real goodness. And we know that that means real love, the whole all of those parts of the self that we talked about being permeated with agape love. Your body, your soul, your social relations, your mind - including your thoughts and your feelings - your will, itself all set in love. If you're gonna do that you have to be in touch with something that in enables you to do it.

And on the other hand if you're not going to move to that level, you can't contact what will enable you to do it.

See the righteousness described in the Pharisee was a righteousness which consisted in what you did, actually more importantly for them what you didn't do. So we'll talk about this more tomorrow but Jesus begins his illustration with, Thou shalt not kill. And the...the next one he talks about is, Thou shalt not commit adultery, because it moves right back to these two things that we talked about

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earlier - sex and violence. And we talked about why people turn to that. It's because they've turned to their body, and with their body they can do these things. And we talked about how even perversion moved on from that.

Power over Moral Evil

Now why does Jesus start there? See Jesus starts there because he knows that the root of murder is anger and contempt. So every year in the United States we have 25,000 - 30,000 murders, up and down it depends on the year.

So why do those things happen? People don't just think, well, you know, I think I'll go out and murder someone today. They don't do that. Well, maybe there are a few people that are so twisted that they do that. Maybe Jeffrey Dahmer or someone like that did that kind of thing. I'll just go out and murder and eat someone today. But most people - most murders happen because people are angry and have contempt for others.

Sometimes the person who gets killed is the one who has the contempt. Cause you know out here in Southern California you'd better be careful about whom you diss. You know diss? Well, diss is contempt. Right? So you diss someone here you maybe the one who gets the bullet. On the other hand you might put a bullet in someone, because you have contempt for them. You...

And so we use language like, I wasted them. Do you ever hear that language? Isn't that interested to apply to a human being? I wasted them. Well, you wouldn't say that unless you had already decided they were contemptible.

So now what Jesus does is he understands the roots of moral evil. And he understands that it is rooted in self-will that is thwarted and frustrated. And it gives rise to murderous rage, we say. So now he says, instead of talking about not killing people, let's talk about not being governed by anger. Let's deal with the root of the situation. And now that's where Jesus is the master of the moral world. He knows what to deal with.

Power over Anger

Now Thursday I'm supposed to get on a plane and fly to Cleveland. Now when I get on that plane I'm not gonna worry about not going to Detroit or Orlando or someplace like that. I don't go to Cleveland by thinking about all the places I'm not going. I just pick the one that's going to Cleveland, all the rest of it takes care of itself. See if you're not got the wrong stuff on the inside, you don't have to worry about killing people. It isn't gonna happen, because you're not that kind of person.

And thank goodness most people aren't that kind of person. They may have some anger in them, and most people who are not in Christ if they are pushed far enough can actually be brought to think of killing or even to do some killing out of hatred and anger. But for most people they're not pushed to that level so they don't kill, but they still have in them something.

So James says - remember what James says, the little brother of Jesus? He says OK. So you didn't kill anyone. But if you hate your brother, you're already a murderer in your heart. Right. Now see that's the analog to Jesus' teaching about adultery in the heart. There's murder in the heart.

See that so what you want to do Jesus understands is what you want to do is you want to get the murder out of the heart. You want to get the adultery out of the heart. So if you're not into cultivated lusting, you're probably not gonna have a problem with adultery. Now tomorrow we have to talk in more detail about the difference between the thought, the temptation, and the deed. And these are things that we have to be very careful about.

Jesus understood though, to make the present point clear, Jesus understood that what you do is you don't try to not do what is wrong. You don't go there because you're not even in temptation. If you want to avoid the deed, stay out of temptation. To stay out of temptation, you have to deal with the heart. Right. He understood that.

Understanding of the Soul

I've got a line here on the screen you'll see. The utter failure of the classical world disregard. The classical world, Plato and Aristotle and some others later on like Stoics and Epicureans who were still around when Paul got there you remember in Athens, they were all focused.

I mean that really the whole business of early philosophy was how to lead a decent life. How to lead the good life. How to be a good person. And it was thought that in order to lead the good the life, you had to be a good person. And there's a lot of discussion about that, and I have to work a lot on...on this in my work in philosophy. But the main point is simply that these early thinkers totally failed with this issue of being able to bring people to moral goodness. Actually they didn't understand moral reality.

One of the most beautiful books in the world besides the Bible is Plato's *Republic*. It's a wonderful book. I study it over and over with my students. I recommend it to you, because it's as relevant today as it was when it was written or even more so.

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And Plato's *Republic* looks like it's about the republic but it's actually about the human soul. It's a study of the human soul. And how the soul works and in particular it's devoted to the question, "How can we train and develop people so that their soul actually works as it should?"

Some of you may have read it. You know that Plato's view was the good person was the one with the balanced soul. In particular it's a soul where reason is doing its job. The appetites are doing its job, and the emotions are doing their job. And the idea is that the emotions are supposed to align with reason to govern the appetites. Well it's a...

It's certainly a fascinating theory and a wonderful story. And his view is, the way you get there is you develop an educational system in which people who are able to reason well rise to the top, and they then are able to get the emotions in order. And so that will handle the appetites. And then the state would also reflect that same order.

And then Aristotle basically has the same theory except he's...his view is that you don't get this by education. You get it by legislation. And what you do is you organize the government in such a way that it establishes institutions that shape souls that are good. And then people do the things they're supposed to and so on.

Well, of course, it didn't work. And when you look at the history of Greece and the history of Athens and you see the miserable thing that it fell into, the Greeks couldn't stop killing one another. And actually Greek history as an independent deal up until very recently ended when they had to invite the Romans in to keep them from killing one another.

Understanding of Moral Goodness

[1:04:50]

And the world in which the people before Christ existed and then the world in which the people after Christ's time existed, the Epicureans, was one where people were just striving to somehow get a hold of moral reality. And they never could do it. And that is why the Christian teaching by the time of St. Augustine especially but even earlier, that is why the Christian teaching won the hearts of the ancient world. It was because it presented the beauty of Christ and the goodness of Christ, but it didn't just do that. It showed people how to actually have it, how to actually do it.

Now that may be hard for us to conceptualize, because we're a long way from that. And we don't take that as a major project, and I hope that you...I hope you say that dummy up there is saying another false thing, because we have to talk about this tomorrow. I say we don't undertake it seriously.

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Moral education is a non-entity. We have a few little things like "Character Counts" for kiddies in middle school. And that's a good thing, but when those kiddies go on to high school, they hit a moral wilderness, if not a moral sewer. And nothing steadies them or holds them, and there's nothing taught to them except a brand of secular legalism, secular Phariseeism. And that in general is what we run into.

And if you've ever hit the diversity mill or some of the other catch words that are used to express this kind of secular legalism in our educational system, you know what I've talking about. But you can obey all of that and still be a despicable person. And there's no basis for it.

Power for Pure Lives

[1:06:55]

Now this is where the track record of the Christian church, while it's very spotty, also makes it clear that there is a way of being a genuinely good person. And that is in following Jesus Christ and becoming his disciple and accepting his teachings.

Now you see...I mean when we...just thus far in our discussions you see how problematic that is. And I'm not trying to give you a bad time, but for example people seriously consider whether or not they would be willing to give up anger. Or even contempt. Now most people in this room are easier with contempt than anger. But, I often ask congregations or groups that I'm lecturing to in the university or other settings. If I had a pill that I could give you and you would never be unkind again, would you take it? If there was an operation that you could go to the hospital and have your anger taken out, would you do it? If that meant that you couldn't be angry again. Or your unkindness taken out, would you have that taken out? People seriously hesitate.

Suppose I had an operation that would make it impossible for you to lie. Wait a minute, you never know when you need a lie. Right. Would I want to undermine my strategy for living? So, seriously, as to make it impossible for me to get angry, be unkind or lie.

You know the story - I'm sure didn't happen - but we like to tell these stories about the little girl in Sunday School who was asked, what is a lie? And she replies, it's an abomination to God and a very present help in time of trouble. See that's why we maybe wouldn't like that have that taken out. You never know when you're gonna need to lie. Right?

Well, I'm not... I don't want to come down hard on that, but as an illustration. You see, Jesus Christ stands for a kind of purity in life that most people today would be very hesitant to embrace.

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And one of our reasons why like recently there's been a big brouhaha about business ethics. And in the wake of Enron and all these other failures. And I know I went...was down at Austin, Texas, a while with some other people looking into this matter of, what can we do?

Well, the truth is business ethics isn't ethics even. Business - what they call business ethics - is how to stay out of trouble. It's not how to be a good person. No one's talking about that. It's how to stay out of trouble with your clients, with the law, and with your fellow professionals. That's all they really talk about. They throw a little theory around, but the one thing you will not see is teaching in how I can use my professional status to be a good person. You will never see that discussed, but that's really the only issue. Because if you're interested in being a good person when the pressure comes down, you'll be able to find ways of avoiding the regulations.

Power for Repentance

[1:10:44]

That's the failure that's implicit in all forms of legalism. Jesus knew that. And that's why Jesus doesn't deal with actions. We'll...sorry to say this again, we'll have to deal with this more in detail tomorrow just to - or just to maybe it's Wednesday. Just to make sure that we get a good view of exactly what he does do. And he understands the order in the moral life, and he understands how - and he understands that you have to bring people to moral goodness through repentance for what they've done. And that's a sound psychological truth.

Any of you know the Twelve Steps of AA? And you remember what a big place is played in the Twelve Steps with confession and repentance and restitution. And there are efforts to lighten up on that a bit, you know. But the original twelve step program was a gift of God to people that the church should have been helping, but it could not because it was caught up in self-righteousness. It didn't want to deal honestly with people who were having problems with alcohol. See that's the curse of the church is this idea that well you gather up the respectable types, and you put on a good front. And you set a good example and you have money and all this sort of thing.

No, no. What about the people that Jesus hung out with? See this...this is a story that is not new. And many of our organized churches in this country have gone down the drain, because the neighborhood is changed, and they don't want those kind of people that are living right under their windows. Am I right about that? See. I've watched this for years. There're plenty of people to fill the churches. You know if all our churches and synagogues were filled on Sunday, you know what percentage of people would be in church? 3 to 5 percent. We're not short on people. We're not short on people in need. What we need to do is to minister to the ones who are there.

And that was Jesus's way. But he didn't go through...through the collection kind of sorting out and say, well this one is not the kind that we want. He took people where they were. That was a part of his moral vision. And that's why people were drawn to him.

Well, let's go on to a couple of other things. Number three here. What is the - what are the riches of Christ?

3.) The Future of Humanity [\[CALLING\]](#) [1:13:35]

The security and glorious future of the individual. The individual human being in Christ. So that's why we have these great passages now, and we can't go over all of them tonight. But for example **Luke 12**, that's again that's the Lukian version of something that I read to you out of **Matthew 6** about not being anxious.

Listen to these words of Paul, "be anxious for nothing." This is **Philippians 4:6**, "Be anxious for nothing but in everything with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God will set a guard around your hearts and minds. Beautiful teaching. Then he goes on to say, he goes on to say, Finally brethren whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there's any excellence, any worth of praise, let...set your minds on these things. And he says, the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me." (Philippians 4:7-9)

That's how he preached this. It was what you see in me. Do those things. Practice those things, and the God of Peace will be with you. See he not only tells you what to do, he says watch me, I do it that way. Be anxious for nothing.

Caring Provision

Matthew 18:10 is a beautiful passage. Jesus is talking about children and what happens to children. And you recall how often he returned to their, to that subject. And how I'm sure it must have been important to him, because he knew the terrible things that happened to children. And he says in that passage, after warning people about hurting children he says, Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Now you have to back up and ask yourself what in the world does that mean? Right. So you have to try to give something. Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

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Well, I suggest to you that that means that everything that happens to a child is attended to by God. And he has individuals personally responsible to see to it that children are cared for in the Kingdom of God on this side of death, or the other side. And this is a staggering thought, but it's one you must think. If you are to believe in the goodness of God, you have to believe that he not only takes care of sparrows, but he takes care of children.

And you say, how can that be when you look at what happens to children in this world? Then you have to make that up by saying it is because no matter what happens to them in this world, the goodness of God sees to it that those children continue to exist and in conditions which make them thankful to be no matter what happens to them. You have to go beyond death.

Freedom from Death

Jesus says you never experience death. Well, once again what does that mean? Do you know this passage John 8:51-52? Many people know **John 11**. This is what Jesus says at the tomb of Lazarus. They know that one. "He that believeth in me thou he were dead, yet shall he live. And he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (**John 11:25-26**) Never die? Aren't you planning to die? John 8:51 and 52, he says that, Those who kept my word will never see death. And again will never experience death. And he really blew the audience out of the building when he said that, and you read that passage it's very...

What does that mean? Never experience death? The riches of Christ, are they so great as to include that?

You know Amy Carmichael? You ever hear of Amy Carmichael? Wonderful missionary to India who knew what suffering was and was triumphant over it. The book of hers called *The Gold Cord* and in it there's a little piece called *Three Tender Mercies*. I want to read you a story from that, a few paragraphs.

"Her name was Lala. She was five years old, a Brahman child of much promise. (Amy Carmichael was in India.) She had sickened suddenly with an illness which we knew from the first must be dangerous. We couldn't ask a medical missionary to leave his hospital a day and half distant for the sake of one child. But we did the best we could. We send an urgent message to a medical evangelist trained in Naior who lived near her, and he came at once. He arrived an hour too late, but before he came we had seen this.

It was in that chilly hour between night and morning. A lantern burned dimly in the room where Lala lay. There was nothing in that darkened room to account for what we saw. The child was in pain struggling for breath turning to us for what we could not give. I left her with Mabel Pannanbal and going to a side room cried to

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our Father to take her quickly. I was not more than a minute away, but when I returned she was radiant.

Her lovely little face was lighted with amazement and happiness. She was looking up and clapping her hands as delighted children do. And when she saw me she stretched out her arms and flung them around my neck as though saying goodbye in a hurry to be gone. And then she turned to the others in the same eager way and then again holding out her arms to someone we could not see, she clapped her hands.

Had only one of us seen this thing we might have doubted, but we all three saw it. There was no trace of pain in her face. She was never to taste of pain again. We saw nothing in that dear child's face but unimaginable delight. We looked where she was looking almost thinking that we could see what she saw. What must the fountain of joy be if the spray from the edge of the pool can be like that? When we turn the next bend in the road and the sorrow that waited there met us, we were comforted. Words cannot tell how tenderly by this that we had seen when we followed the child almost to the border of the land of joy."

I ask you did this child see death? What's it gonna be like? Well, I want to suggest you among other things, for example, you won't know that you have, as we say, died until much later. So if you're planning on seeing death, give up. You won't. See? And that is the basis upon which the early church understood that Jesus had abolished death.

Look at **II Timothy 1:10**. Take time to look at it and mark it. Because what I find is people generally do not pay attention to these verses, and the ordinary rule of people in the Christian churches is to avoid death and the topic of death like a plague cause they're scared to death of it, and they don't know what to do with it. And they won't even talk about it. Have you got **II Timothy 1:10**? Read it real loudly to us, would you please?

Sure.

"But it is now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Dallas: Who has what death?

Student: Destroyed.

Dallas: Destroyed it. And brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. See. In other words now, for the first time, we understand what life and immortality are, because Jesus has brought that forward. Are you with me?

4.) The Future of the Universe [\[CAPACITY\]](#)

[1:23:55]

One more thing the future of the created cosmos, this is a part of the riches of Christ. The incredible greatness and beauty of the physical cosmos is something that will never pass away. Don't worry about it going out of existence. It is not a self contained system as we have already seen in our discussions. It is sustained by the power of God.

Now astronomers tell us that there is in the universe, oh somewhere around 92% to 95 - or 4 or 8, you know how these go; a few billion here or a few billion there doesn't change it that much. But they tell us that 90 some percent of the universe consists of what they call cold dark matter. Now they have no reason to believe in cold dark matter, except it would explain how the universe that is visible warm light matter behaves.

So they - problems like, why do the galaxies distribute themselves the way they do? They can't explain it. They can't even explain on the hypothesis of the - of the primal soup that existed before Adam's form, why the universe began to clump in certain ways. See, they can't explain that.

The truth is we know almost nothing about the ultimate nature of the physical universe.

Mysteries of physical nature

I want to suggest to you that the cold dark matter that explains the behavior of the physical universe in this way is actually God. That this is the Jesus who upholds all things by the word of his power. Now you say, how do you know that?

Well, I'm open to anything that can be scientifically demonstrated, but one thing that this not going to be scientifically demonstrated is the ultimate nature of the universe. We have to go at it through the laws that we can discern from the behavior of the things we can observe. But no one is able to explain why we have the laws we do, and any cosmologist will tell you that. And if they could explain the laws that we do, they would never be able to explain the origin or the initial conditions under which those laws began to apply.

And that's not in the purview of science as we know it, never will be. And I realize of course that you need to question that. You need to think about it. But I'm just saying, I'm saying that the universe... Actually the greatness and beauty and the future of the universe is secure, and it will if anything just get greater and greater. I don't say that because I have an insight into astrophysics. I say that because I

believe in the God who made the universe. I believe in him because he has intruded on this universe in the form of Jesus Christ.

There will be a new heaven and a new earth. The one we've got is in pretty bad shape. The new heaven and there will be a new Jerusalem. And you get kind of an outline sketch of that by looking at **Revelation 21** and following. That's a part of the riches of Christ.

The Ultimate Questions that Face Human Beings [1:27:55]

[See Session 6 @ 17:50ff Session 7 Q's #1-3 - 0:00-34:00]

Let me give you these questions, and we're gonna return to them tomorrow. The things that I say great teachers but actually great talk show hosts wind up talking about the same thing and small talk show hosts. These are the four questions that face human beings. And they are faced with them just by the fact that they live. And these questions are the nature of reality.

#1 — What is reality?

What is real and what is not? What do you have to deal with in life?

Now we started talking about that this morning. This issue of knowledge and how knowledge and truth helps us come to terms with reality. Being Christ's people, Christ's man and woman in this world means that we affirm the reality of the Kingdom of God. What is reality? It is God and everything that comes from his hand. Jesus affirms that and teaches that.

#2 — Who is blessed?

Who is well off? Who is - who has the good life? Who is blessed? And the answer is anyone alive in the Kingdom of God is blessed. They are well off. Again we'll work on that further tomorrow. This today is in many respects just a kind of general outline and introduction of things.

So for example, what about the poor? Well, Jesus said blessed be the poor, because they're poor. And being poor is a wonderful thing! Did he say that? He didn't say that, did he? He said blessed are the poor, for they too can have the Kingdom of God. And blessed are the poor in spirit, that is people who don't have any religious things going for them, not a smell of religion. They smell like fish like Jesus' apostles.

See all of his apostles were poor in spirit. They didn't have any thing going for them in the spiritual realm. It's interesting that he chose people like that to make

his messengers to the world. And it is certainly because he didn't want anyone talking a human fix to the world as the gospel. He wanted people who understood that the cure for the world is life in the Kingdom of God.

#3 — Who is a good person?

Who's a really good person? Anyone who is permeated with agape love is a good person. That's who that is. So then love comes forward out of the nature of God, brought to human beings. Christ shows you how to realize it, what it is.

#4 — How do you become a good person?

And then finally, how do you become a really good person? You become a really good person by becoming a disciple of Jesus. That's how you do it.

Now Jesus answers each of these in a manner far superior to anyone else. And when I make that claim, I don't make it bombastically or defensively. Just compare. Remember what I said earlier. You look at Jesus and you say, who else?

See Peter put that in language we preach from, isn't it right? You know when they all left shucked off and left, the crowds disappeared and Jesus said, will you also go away? And Peter used that language, ...to who shall we go? (John 6:68) Well, that's a real question, isn't it?

Now the people who live around here in Hollywood, in Los Angeles, they live in Manila, they live in Bombay, and they have exactly the same question. How does Christ compare to Krishna? How does Christ compare to Buddha? To L. Ron Hubbard? To - see that's the issue that we face. And he answers these questions now. *"And to us this grace is given, that we should preach to a pagan world the unsearchable riches of Christ."*

Presenting the Unsearchable Riches of Jesus [1:32:30]

So what is the one mistake above all that we can make? Fail to present Jesus Christ adequately. That's the one mistake. If you present Jesus Christ adequately, then what can be done for human beings will be done for them. If you don't do that, if you have a gospel that presents him in a some way that for example he's as an early advocate of the democratic way of life, the gentle cynic of the "Jesus Seminar". Well, you know the woods has been full of general cynics. We know what they can do. We know that early advocates of the American way of life can do. It ain't much.

But, on the other hand, if you just present him as a sacrifice for sin, you will also fail to present the unsearchable riches of Christ. And except in a world which is

key to the issue of the forgiveness of sins as the whole thing to be dealt with by human beings, except in a world like that, the message you present will fail to make disciples.

Make Disciples

[1:33:50]

See that's the question I have to deal with. Does the gospel I preach have a natural tendency to produce disciples to Jesus Christ or does it just produce more consumers of religious goods and services?

See, we have a non participant, spectator version, consumer version of Christianity in this country. And that's where we get people going from church to church to find a better service to consume. Not rooted in the body of Christ at all. Not focused discipleship and personal transformation. Not focused on living in the power of God in a way that you can bring that to bear on circumstances if you're in business or government or in your family or community. Where you can stand as Christ's person and expect the Kingdom of God to make a difference you yourself could never make if your life depended on it.

This is the time to be alive. I don't know if you know Simone Weil. She's not an outstanding example of a Christian, but a very painful and tortured person who was drawn towards Catholic Christianity towards the end of her life. She was from a very famous scientific family. Andre Weil the great mathematician was her brother. She was a French- Jewish family. But turned towards at least the Catholic Christ towards the end of her life. She said, you could not have wished to be born at a better time than this, when everything has been lost.

What does that mean? That means if we want to do something, we have to start with ground zero planning. That means we have to think about the job to be done without regard to the people who are already on the grounds and taking care of those people and looking out for them and making sure that they turn out to be right.

What is the Job to be Done? - The Great Commission [1:36:15]

Authority Over All — What is the job to be done? The Great Commission states it, and we'll be talking about that tomorrow. The Great Commission says, well, I mean you have to get the bookends of it. Remember this is a situation in which they had really taken a beating. They hadn't had a good time. They had hitched their wagon to the star, and the star went and got himself crucified. And the word was out on them. So they had sort of been ducking and hiding in the bushes. Now Jesus arranges to be with them a few times, and he goes ahead of them back to Galilee. There he has his last discussion with them apparently.

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And he says, "I have been given say over everything in heaven and in earth." Do you remember that? I've been given say. That's kingship. OK now if you want to turn to Matthew 18:18-20. you can do that. But just follow me now. Here what it says.

This is the resurrected Christ. "I have been given say over everything in heaven and earth. Well go back to **Philippians 2, Colossians 1** we read this morning. I've been given say. Now he says to them, "as you go, make disciples." (**Matthew 28:18-20**) He didn't say make Baptists or Catholics or even Christians. He said make disciples.

Make Disciples — OK now what are we talking about here? We're talking about ground zero planning. What are we gonna do now? The first thing is we're gonna make disciples and then as we make disciples they're going to be brought into the Trinitarian presence. Right.

Baptize and Teach — What does Jesus say? Baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I hope you don't think that means get them wet while you say over them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It means to immerse them in Trinitarian reality. Jesus said where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm in the midst. So that means when these disciples come together what's happening is not a program that they're putting on. They're not doing a performance. They're watching for the hand of God to move in their midst.

Now then when you've done that, then the last stage is you teach them to do everything Jesus said. Right? And then he bookends that with, and look I'm with you every minute until the job is done. It starts with I've been given say over everything, ends with I'm with you every minute, in between is the plan. What I've just given you is Jesus's plan for church growth. It is the most successful plan for church growth that has ever been on the earth, and in fact it is the most successful plan for any kind of group that's ever been among human beings.

If we preach the unsearchable riches of Christ rightly, we are ready to move into that plan. If we do not, we can never go there and we'll have to do something else. And my dear friends, that is the history of the church very largely doing something else. So you go down through the ages and you watch the ebb and the flow, and you come up to the present and you say what are we doing today?

Questions and Discussion

[1:40:30]

Chris: Could you give an example... You talk often about Jesus compared to Buddha or...

Dallas: Yeah, sure.

Chris:...Mohammed. Could you maybe take like one or two examples and say, OK this is what Mohammed would say, or his view of reality.

Dallas:Well, I mean to start with things like this: the Buddha died of food poisoning. He's never been resurrected. That's a big jump right there. Now if you look at Buddhism and look at what it's based on, you'll realize things like this. It's often shocking to people, cause people like to toy around with Buddhism especially in an academic setting. It's often shocking to realize the best thing that can happen to you if you're a Buddhist is that you would stop existing and never come back.

And I'm not making that up, I mean that's standard Buddhism. That's called escaping the wheel of birth and death, which means you're not reincarnated and you cease to exist as an independently existing thing. Right. Now we have Pavi here and he probably knows his stuff better than I do. And if I'm wrong, Pavi, you can must throw a book at me. But see that - those are just illustrations. Buddhism is not - shall we say, to use the language of some scholars - it is not a life of hearing teaching. It's a life denying teaching.

So, for example, the object of life is to abolish desire, and that's how you escape the wheel of birth and death. The fire sermon of the Buddha starts out with everything is full of fire. What is fire? Desire. How do you escape desire is the question, and then you have the "Eightfold Path" of teaching about right thinking, right words, right deeds and so on. And that does that.

So I just think you, if you look at it in terms of the metaphysics involved which is also another story of how you can arrange reincarnation on that story. If you don't have a self that has a continuity to it that's part of the metaphysics.

And then there's a moral side to it, the teaching about how to live. It is...it is not a life affirming doctrine. The whole story of the Buddha is, this is an awful place, and it is an illusion. The world is an illusion. The Veil of Maya it is called. And so enlightenment for the Buddhist is to realize that this world is an illusion. That means among other things you are an illusion. Or another way of putting this is to say you are identical with everything else. So I think you just have to compare them.

Other things you can do is compare the kind of Buddhist life at its best civilization, Buddhist culture at its best with Christian culture at its best. You compare the ones at worst, they're all about equally bad. Right because I mean Christian culture at its worst has been about as bad as it can get. Right. We just have to embrace that and say that's true. You can't deny that. I mean the awful things that Christians so

called have done, see. But all cultures are about equally bad when you look at the worst end.

But if you look at their good end, I think they're not all equally good. And when you compare them I think what Christ has been is far above the others. So you know, if one is wrong about that, you accept that. And that's the way I approach it. I mean if I'm wrong, show me. Let's talk about it. Give me what you know. That's the way I'd go about it.

Yes any others, any other questions or comments? I've blown your fuses. Anyone else. Here we go.

Why do we go wrong in our reasoning? [1:44:20]

Bill: It seems, and I'm maybe misunderstanding you, but that you're operating in a system devoid of any need of proof for anything and that is somehow a benefit or positive. In other words, you're stacking your options - what you've said a number of times is, show me the textbook, the experiment...

Dallas: Sure. I mean if, yeah.

Bill: ...And until you can I'm happy to go with what I know.

Dallas: Well, I think I have some other evidence. The reality of Christ both before and after his resurrection, and the reality of the Kingdom as experimentally known through finding what God is doing, on that assumption getting involved with him and seeing what the reality of it is.

Bill: So where, where is it then that we're going, that we seem to go wrong with? I think most of us probably get pretty stuck with people who want to argue with verification.

Dallas: That's one reason why we need to say these things and we need to get other people involved with it. Because, for example, I'm in a position where because of whatever I've done, that I can say, OK, show me. Because I know this. I've worked through this stuff, and I have no fear. I mean, Carl Sagan is not going to bring forth a physics book that shows that the physical cosmos is the only thing that has ever existed and will. There's just nothing there.

And this isn't something new. This is something that's been known since Aristotle. It's established on general logical grounds. It isn't a matter of further scientific research.

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So we're free to say, well, let scientific research go. See. We're not - we're not hiding or ducking or avoiding anything. And we will admit a fact that's established as a fact. Jesus's is not hiding. He's not running. If you could find a better way, he would be the first to say to you, take it. You know you can't imagine Jesus hearing a better way and saying - short of rubbing his chin, saying, "Well, you know that's very good, but it's not...it's not Christian." You know. He's not gonna say that. You could - if you believed that about Jesus, you couldn't follow him two steps. You know that he is on the side of truth, he is on the side of what's established, what's factual, what's reasoning. He's not dodging the facts.

What we have now is a secular system that dodges facts by making general assertions that they have no way to prove, but they have an authority that allows them to get away with it. So Carl Sagan spends millions of dollars producing a television series that is a beautiful thing to see. If you've seen it, you know that. If not, I encourage you to get a hold of it and look at it. It's wonderful. It just has all these falsehoods in it. It has these unfounded claims, and so that's why we need people, and I believe pastors need to think about...

See, one of the myths is that your ordinary pastor can't do all this stuff. They can too! Any sensible person can do it. You don't have to become an astrophysicist or a philosopher for that matter. You don't... Just follow the argument. But you see you have to have confidence that you can do this. That God is on your side. And that then will allow you to do the elemental work. You have to learn a little bit about what logic is, and so on, but you need that anyway. You don't need much.

What we need now is just go to education. The curse of our land is that we have all of these uneducated people with higher degrees. And they are uneducated. They don't know what good method is. They wouldn't know truth if they ran over it. In fact, they have almost nothing to do with truth. They laugh at truth. Truth is a subject of humor on the campuses.

What's big is research. And research is stuff you can get funded for. You can't funded for truth. But, you can get funded for research. You see that has to do with the authority structure that we live in. It doesn't have anything to do with truth itself or knowledge.

But things have now been so confused that we as Christians have to be prepared it to stand up and deal with these issues without becoming...we don't have to spend our years becoming experts in it. Just follow the argument, listen to it. A few people who, who really are able to think like Phil Johnson up at Berkley and who's our astrophysicist down here? I can't think of his name. I'm having a senior moment. [\[See William Craig\]](#)

But I mean there are lots of good people who are doing this. They are specialists, and they can do the work. And they're the ones that can show you why there really is not a good argument on the other side. So there's a lot to be done.

Now that's why I started with you where I did today. We... If we're gonna understand, as I see it, I mean here you are a bunch of you. You know it's shocking to me to look out here and see a bunch of young people. Most of the places I go I look out it looks like snow. It's true. It's not just a - I mean, they're no young people. And I'm thrilled to be here where there are young people. You're gonna do something about this. See. And I'm delighted to be able to talk to you, because now you can pick up and go on. Don't be worried about it! Just do the work as a Christian.

Follow the Bible

[1:50:20]

Follow out the teachings of your scripture, because your scripture is a profound book of knowledge. And if you treat it that way, it will respond in that way. If you treat it as a book where you go to prove that your traditions are right, you'll come back empty. Because, frankly, most of our traditions have no foundation. They're just stuff that's grown up. Peter called it the vain traditions of the fathers.

Most of us our denominations were born out of some kind of negativity. Just think of a group of religious people being known as Protestants. You know, what that - protest. You're known for protesting. Can you go to heaven on that? Get up there and say, well, you know God I protested. But you look at our various groups, they're all born out of negativity. Go to the Scripture to see what is positively taught about life and reality, and put it to the test. That's what we can do.

The Educational System

[1:51:30]

That gets us back to ground zero planning. Now we're gonna do something following Jesus Christ as if there was nowhere, no one already there that had to be justified for what they're doing. Do you understand what I'm saying? I mean take the educational system. I often say to people in the university and elsewhere, if you set out to devise an educational system, you would never come up with the one we've got. That's true.

And when you begin to look at it, you realize this is not ground zero planning. This is planning done with sort of an eye to an improvement here and improvement there, but the main thing you have to do is to take care of the people who are already in the game.

Am I making any sense? See now, you can't go about Christianity that way. If you're gonna take care of people who are already in the game, forget it. If you do

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your ground zero planning, and we'll be talking more about this, it will do the best thing you can for the people who are already in the game. Because many of them are good people, sincere people who want to follow Christ, but they are hindered by taking care of a lot of stuff that is irrelevant. And that's one of the beauties of the Great Commission which I gave to you now is that that strips all that away. Strips it all away. Now what are you going to do? Just do what it says.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 4 - 1:53:05** ~ ~ ~

~ 05 [Salvation Confusion & Discipleship](#) [YouTube link] [1:18:56]

The Central Issue of our Work - *What is Salvation?*

1.) Public Appearance of Salvation to All

Titus 2:11-3:7 (ASV) *"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."*

We're really going to be talking a lot about salvation today, what salvation is. And this is in many ways the central issue for our work. I know that many or most of you are involved in setting forward the work of Christ, and at the center of that is salvation.

What is salvation, by the way? See that's the question that I want us to mainly think about today.

Salvation in the New Testament

So here we go in **Titus 2:11**, "the grace of God that brings salvation." Now you may have a different translation from that. Yours may say something like, "the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation." That's OK. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared publicly. It is a public fact. It has appeared unto all men, teaching us that, if we believe Jesus suffered what we would have to suffer for the wrongs we have done, we will go to heaven when we die.

Does your version say that? Or does your version say something, "the grace of God that brings salvation has publicly appeared, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us... that we might go to heaven when we die." Oops. Did I make a mistake there?

That he might redeem us from all ungodliness. My ESV here says, "From every lawless deed, and purify unto himself a peculiar people who..." attended church faithfully. Oops. Another mistake.

Who gave regularly. Who witnessed. OK. That would be included, wouldn't it? They're zealous for good works. They just sit around, thinking about doing good things. They're zealous for good works. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Remind them to be subject to

rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed. To malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we once were foolish also, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our lives in making - in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

See, being lost is not a matter of where you're going. It's a matter of where you are. A lost person doesn't know where they are. If you're really lost you can't even use a map because you can't locate yourself on the map. This is the condition of lostness.

4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. 6 This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

A New Life

[5:25]

But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us, not on the basis of our deeds, that would be the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, which we have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy. And here's how he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior that being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Now **Titus 3:4-7** is a good picture of what salvation means in New Testament terms. And you will notice that the emphasis upon a new life, a new spirit, that is moving in us upon regeneration. And the first move is the move to new life, to being born from above.

We talked about life last night, or yesterday, and I said life is a kind of activity.

And I see most of the goldfish this morning are still alive, and if one is not, you will be able to tell it's not by looking at it. It will no longer have in it that feature of life - self-initiating, self-directing activity. Comes from the inside. The only thing that can move it will be from the outside.

A Recognition that Jesus is Lord

And the life that we are given in Christ is a new kind of activity. It begins with the acknowledgement that Jesus is Lord. And that's why in **I Corinthians 12:2**, Paul says no one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit. It's not talking about using the words. Anyone can do that.

But actually acknowledging, recognizing, seeing, that Jesus is Lord. That he is the one who is in charge of the universe. That he is the maestro of life, that he understands and has power to supervise and govern in his Kingdom - to really see that is something you cannot do on your own. That has to be given to you from God.

Faith comes from hearing, hearing from the Word of God. By grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves. The faith is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, lest anyone should boast. (**Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:8-9**)

See, this new project is going to eliminate boasting. There will be no pride in this new life. There will be a recognition that no one is in a position to boast because everything that's good, that they have received, has been given to them.

Salvation, Grace, and Passivity

And we have to work through that carefully now, because for many people - and one of the reasons we're in this non-disciple Christian thing, is because people have mistaken grace for passivity. And they have become passive.

And so they might come to your church and say, Do it to me. Thrill me with your worship service. Enliven me with your word. I am here to consume. So you lay the goods on the table now, and if you don't, I'll go somewhere where they lay better goods on the table.

And that passivity has generated a whole culture of consumer Christians. That is, Christians who think that being a Christian is a matter of consuming. They consume the merits of Christ. They consume services. They consume ministers. That has happened in more ways than one. And...

But they think that's their job, to consume, and they don't realize that what they're called to do is to participate, and that the reason they have new life in them is so they can live that new life out.

And so it's very important for us to have these passages like this before us when we begin to talk about the things we're going to be talking about today.

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God & Discipleship to Christ

[9:30]

Today we want to talk about the gospel of the Kingdom of God and discipleship to Christ. The gospel of the Kingdom of God, and discipleship to Christ.

Now, the assumption - if you disagree with me about these - or at any point you disagree with me, just say, hey - that's wrong!

Non-Discipleship Christianity

So we start now with this claim the now universal assumption is that you can be a Christian and not be a disciple. That's the universal assumption. Do you know of any church or denomination where you're told you cannot be a Christian unless you're a disciple? Anyone.

Now, you realize that this room has people in it who are really a cut above in terms of commitment. And if you're going to let me stand here with that statement, and none of you is going to say - Oh yes, I know a church where you have to be a disciple in order to be a Christian. Wouldn't you say that pretty well confirms the first statement on the screen?

I sound sincere, you know. I don't like to just rattle on. You get to be my age, and you talk as much as I have, you can rattle on endlessly. So seriously, you know, at any point you want to interrupt, please do. I tell that to my students at USC, and they hardly ever talk, you know. They just sit there. You're trying to get it down.

Do you know - it's an interesting thing about education - is you don't have to believe what you write on your tests. Did you ever think about that? I like to kid my students when they turn in a test - say, Did you believe what you wrote? And they laugh, because they know you don't have to believe what you write. You just have to have the right answer. You get the right answer even if you guessed it - you get credit, right? That's even true in seminary. You don't have to believe what you write - you just...

Now, is that also true in our churches? Is that possibly related to the situation that we're in?

Transformation is the Need

You see, the problem for the church is never that they need more people, more money, more influence, more education. Never. And it's very hard for many of us who have been involved in churches to realize that, because we often do need money, and people, and so on.

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But what I'm saying is, the basic need is never that. The basic need is for the transformation of the people who are there. Our problem is the quality of the people who are there.

And one of the real turn-arounds for me as a young minister, or at least one who was trying to be a minister, was the realization that I was not really helping people to change.

I was talking to someone... Talking to you last night when you drove us over, about being Southern Baptist. You know, Southern Baptists can't get saved again. That's forbidden. You can discover that you weren't saved in the first place, and get saved. That's permitted.

But if you once get saved, you can't get saved again. All you can do is rededicate yourself. And you can do that every Sunday night, if you want. Or twice on Sunday. And you know, it really did...

I was very young, and unbelievably green, terribly sincere. And it slowly dawned on me: I'm not saying anything to help these people change. That they... It isn't their fault that they come and rededicate themselves, and go back the next week. They need it again.

What are we teaching people that leaves us in this situation? You know? What are we teaching people? That's the real question for us.

Comment: *Some churches do teach lordship*

Dan: Thinking back to the first point, I am confident there are fellowships that use the language of becoming of a believer in Christ as your Savior and Lord. So I think that there are a number of fellowships that are teaching lordship as part of salvation.

Dallas: That's right, and that that's good, and we don't mean...need to get hung up on the wording. If you teach, like, Jesus really is Lord, that entails discipleship. See. And now, you have to be careful and not let that be just an admission of a doctrine.

But in... But if that in practice, and that is the - that's the real heart of the matter, because to say that Jesus is Lord is to say I am his disciple. That's... If you really understand that, that's the way to go with it.

The Loss of the Meaning of "Disciple"

[15:30]

Now, a part of our problem, the second point here, is the loss of any precise meaning of the word disciple. And that's what's widespread. And that's one reason why, by the way, the upsurge and use of the term spiritual formation has occurred in the last ten years or so, among... Big deal about spiritual formation. Well, it's OK.

But the reason people turned to that, I think, is because the word disciple had become so flabby and misplaced.

And I'll just give you a couple of illustrations of that.

~ Discipleship Confused with training

Among evangelical Christians, the parachurch organization that is most well known for discipleship is the Navigators. And when you looked at their literature some years ago, they are in a process of change about this.

When you looked at their literature, you discovered that Christians are divided into three classes. First of all, they're just Christians. And those were people I guess who said that they accepted Christ. Or they had prayed the prayer, or something of that sort.

And then above that were disciples. And discipleship on that program were people... I mean, disciples were people who could make Christians. And discipleship was a matter of learning how to do that. And I mean...

I don't want to knock Dawson Trotman and others who worked with that organization, where they had done many wonderful things. And when you look at what was done by Trotman and others to prepare people to win souls, make Christians, you realize that it was indeed a very meaningful form of training in Christlikeness. And they certainly - certainly Dawson himself - would never have suggested that making souls was just a - winning souls was a matter of learning a technique. You had to grow personally. That was very good.

~ Discipleship Confused with evangelism

And then the third category was workers. And workers are people who could make disciples. In other words, they were training people to be soul-winners.

Now, again, I want emphasize, there are so many...you know, one of the things about talking about all this stuff is...I have a friend in Africa who uses the phrase, I don't have time to tell you all the things I don't mean by that. All right? So, I'm

going to say things that are, in I hope a good sense, critical. Not judgmental, but critical. Because we want to distinguish and discern, and so the problem here is you get a version of discipleship that does not mean being a person who is a student of Jesus, learning to do the things that he said. Now some of that was mixed in.

Again, I emphasize, if you read in the early literature of the Navigators, you see that. But the Navigators themselves came to realize some years ago, and they're under the wonderful leadership they have, that they were producing people who were not Christlike. And I used to say institutions cannot repent, but here's a case of one that did. And just said, we've been doing this wrong, and we've got to move in a different way. And there was a struggle, there is a struggle in the group, but they're wonderful people. And they are devoted to Christ. And I believe Christ is turning them around. That's just an illustration now of how disciple comes to mean something other than a person who is a full time student of Jesus in the Kingdom of God. I'm going to try to put a positive spin on that...

~ Discipleship Confused with social action

A moment illustrated just another way, if you're familiar with Sojourners magazine, do you know that magazine? And again, a wonderful group of people. And...

But discipleship to them means things like service to the poor, political action, protesting and so on. Writing pamphlets, standing up for opposition to the government usually. Cause, you know, if you want to find... The government's nearly always wrong about something, you know? Benjamin Franklin used to say, Every man needs a wife, because sooner or later, something bad is going to happen that he can't blame on the government. Oh you have to think about that, I guess. So I mean, Lord knows, there's plenty of room for that, right?

And these go with versions of the gospel I will mention in a moment; but once again, what you see here is though these again are lovely sweet people, and please, I'm not...I'm very sincere in saying that. I mean it.

But that isn't discipleship. And you can be involved in those kinds of things, serve, social service, issues, service to the poor, protesting, correcting, criticizing, that's what... What'd we used to say in the 60s? Speaking truth to power. That's a good line, isn't it. Speaking truth to power. Well that needs to be done. Jesus did that, didn't he. But it's not discipleship.

~ **Discipleship Confused with church involvement** [21:55]

And so we really have a problem here. With the law, the meaning of discipleship in any clear New Testament terms, we fumble about trying to find new... Sometimes people will unthinkingly just suppose that discipleship means involvement in church activities. It could. That could be a form of it. But you could be involved in church activities and not a disciple.

See, that's the problem with all of these understandings, and others that may be kind of fogging around on the edge of your mind as I talk, is that they don't come to the central issue of transformation into Christlikeness.

Discipleship Transformation

See, what I'm saying to you is that, that is, what would make the church be what it is supposed to be, as the people of God, and do what it is supposed to do in the world, is the transformation of individuals into Christlikeness. People progressively coming to the place to where they routinely and easily just do the things that Jesus talked about. And I...

To help us pedagogically I like to just use blessing those who curse you, because everyone in this society who drives a car, for example, has plenty of opportunities to bless those who curse them. All right? And sometimes even our families, we have opportunities to bless those who curse us. So this is a good thing, it's a simple thing, and I will talk more about that later on.

But just imagine a place is that where you have a person who, when they're cursed... And by cursing here we don't need to think of something formal. I mean we're just talking about people who would just as soon you dropped dead. You know, who just saw you and thought, off with you.

Who diss you. People who diss you. Bless those who diss you. Maybe put a sign out front here, say we teach how to bless people who diss you. Could you do that?

So, now, moving then into that area, then we understand why there's no serious question of actually doing what Jesus said, because we're not making an issue of that. Right. Most of our groups will have an emphasis on some particular things that Jesus said, but not all of them.

—> **The Great Commission - Three Parts**

[24:25]

All right, now, last night we got to talking about the Great Commission. So, there're three parts now to the Great Commission. We want to look at them slowly and carefully.

Part I - Make Disciples

[["Church Priority #2 - Means to Make Disciples" Session 9 @ 1:05:15](#)]

And first of all it is make disciples. Now we're talking about the gospel of the Kingdom and discipleship and we want to connect those two things. And the Great Commission tells us that the first thing is to make disciples. Now that's why it's so important for us to know what a disciple is.

A.) The First Step - Be a Disciple [FOLLOW Jesus]

And of course if we're going to make disciples, surely the first step is to be a disciple. And that step is one which if we omit then everything - nothing else will go quite right. Because we will have people who are not committed to learning. See, that's the difference.

Like if you go to the university or school of some sort, and you sign up for a course in algebra. Well, you're committed to learning algebra. I hope you are. Actually, one of the problems is that often people who take courses are not committed to learning. They really don't know why they're there, and that makes it very hard to teach, because you don't have the commitment on their part. You walk up to someone on the street out here, passing by, and say I'd like to teach you algebra. That wouldn't be a long conversation. So you have to get the commitment.

B.) Form intentions [FUEL obedience to Jesus]

That's why I spent time yesterday talking about how you get people in a position where they see what's being presented to them as the pearl of great price. The pearl of great price. (Matthew 13:45-46) The treasure in the field. (Matthew 13:44) That's talking about getting to people to the position where they'll say, yes, this is the most important thing.

Now that goes with Jesus' saying, "Seek first the Kingdom of God." (Matthew 6:33) Seek first. That must be the most important thing. Now imagine if you had groups of people, together, who acknowledged the lordship of Jesus, and their whole purpose was to learn from him. That's the most important thing in their life. More important than anything else. Then you see you've got people who are ready for a different kind of operation to go on around them.

Just like if you have a student that is really devoted to learning algebra, you can tell them how to do it. And they will do it. And lo and behold, they will learn it. It's just that simple.

I learned that myself in going through my own education, it's that if you really decide you want to learn algebra and trigonometry and differential calculus, and so on, you just do the things that lead to that.

In fact, one of the great discoveries of my life occurred when I was in the third grade, and the teacher had sent home a list of three letter words. Cat, rat, dog, hat, and so on. And my job was to learn how to spell those.

And I can still remember exactly where I was, sitting up in bed, when my big sister Mary Frances said, All you have to do is repeat them. And I discovered, to my amazement, if I did that, I could spell cat. I could spell cat when I was in the front yard. I could spell cat when I was walking to school. Isn't that amazing? And it one...The mind is like that, the self is like that.

Now, I would like you to think the thought, that being able to bless those who curse you is just like that. That means, on the one hand, if you don't do the things that bring you there, it won't happen.

You cannot learn how to spell cat by grace. And grace will not force you to become the kind of person who easily and routinely blesses those who curse them, who easily and routinely turns away from cultivating lust, who easily and routinely does not have contempt for others.

Now I feel like we almost ought to stop here for a moment, and ask you to think about that, and tell me what you think. Because that's really fundamental truth about this whole business of discipleship. It makes people very uncomfortable, because what it means is this: If I am not a person who easily and routinely turns away from the cultivation of lusting, from contempt, from so on, it isn't because of the law of gravity. It's because I don't intend to become that kind of person.

I won't say much about literature, but on this particular I do want to recommend, because it's so important. See, what I'm saying to you is that people are not the kind of people that you might expect to see if you just candidly read the New Testament. It's because they do not intend. And I want to suggest if you don't know this book, you get a copy of William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, and you read chapter two. Because, see, this is kind of the missing link.

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What we're talking about, when we talk about making disciples, we're talking about making people who actually intend to do it. Understand what I mean? See, it's like...

I mean, it doesn't work this way because the whole idea of mass education has just corrupted our culture - but it's just like saying, you know, if you're in an algebra class, you should intend to learn how to solve equations. Now, the truth of the matter of it is, if you go into an algebra in almost any high school or college, and ask the students if that's what they intend, they'll look at you like you've got a hole in your head or something, y'know. Cause they don't know what they're there for. They'll say, "well, you know, I want to get a good grade. I gotta get these units, because if I don't get these units, I won't graduate. Someone somewhere decided in their superior wisdom that I should have units in this course."

That's what they know. And that's why they do so badly. Math education and other branches like language learning in our culture, you may know, is just abysmal.

I will tell you the truth, that at USC after many years - decades! - of struggling with the progressive shallowing down of the requirements of education that go with getting an education that everyone can get, we have no meaning for requirement in mathematics. None. And you might be surprised how few schools actually do.

Our culture instead, we have group therapy for math phobias. Did you know that? We have group therapy for math phobia. You can enroll if you care to. Most people don't enroll, because they just stay far enough away from it. So, there's a huge need of mathematicians in our culture. You can make a lot of money, have a good job, secure profession, but you got to learn how to do equations of the second degree, among other things. Now see, if you just want the job, you don't want to learn it. If you just want the grade, see that's...

Now. I've been led to believe that you really are doing something different. That you really do intend to do something different, in your churches. The key is intention. It is generating intention, and that is what discipleship is about. Discipleship is intention.

C.) Make Disciples by ravishing them with the Kingdom [Focus on Jesus]

That's why I said yesterday... We talked so much yesterday it seems like a month ago, but that's why I said you make a disciple by ravishing people with the Kingdom of God, and the way you do that is get them focused on Jesus.

It's amazing how little we actually hear about Jesus, and on the other hand about the soul, in our churches. Talk about those things; help people understand the

greatness of Jesus, what Jesus is doing. He's often presented in a very narrow perspective. Maybe just Savior and judge, something like that.

But we have to see him as we presented him last night, and though we talked long last night, really, well, Paul said, The unfathomable riches of Christ, right? So if you set out to talk on that, you're dead. You're gonna fail, you'll never be... It's unfathomable! That's what unfathomable means. That means if you focus on that you'll never run out of sermon topics. You'll never get to the bottom of it.

Present Christ. Lift him up in all of his glory, and with him the Kingdom comes. Because he is a great king. He is a great king.

Check self-will

Go to people and say, How're you doing with your kingdom? See, start there. Begin to work on their responsibility for their life. Cause they have a kingdom. Everyone does. People come with kingdoms.

This gentleman here was talking about his little four-year-old son. He has a kingdom, doesn't he? Yes. You cross it, and you'll see.

And that's good, see. Back to the topic of yesterday. Self-will is not bad. It's only bad if you exalt it to the top position. See, it's - but that we wind up, we wind up in human life normally with all of that. We're in real trouble with our kingdom. And real trouble. Things aren't going well.

Normally it comes in the form of the breakdown of human relationships. Often it starts between parents and children. What a heartache there is there.

You know, it is not for nothing at the end of the Old Testament, it is said by Malachithat John the Baptist, as we know him, a prophet, will come and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. (Malachi 4:6) Before the coming of the Messiah. Oh the wounds that are there, you see. These are kingdoms that are broken.

So then we bring people to look at Jesus, and we understand his Kingdom, and see the place of life in his Kingdom. And that's how we make disciples. And say, look, this is your greatest opportunity in life.

Part II - Immerse Disciples in the Trinity

[38:00]

Now secondly, in the faintly yellow print up here...

Secondly, we immerse these disciples in the Trinity. The Trinity comes to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we have much to say later on, if we can get to it, about what this means in terms of what we do together in the way of church services.

Now, church services are a primary problem in this whole project. And we know that actually without deep theological thinking, if we just look at the problems people have with what to do with church services. Everything from what kind of musical instruments we wear, to what we wear, how do we dress, what do we do when and what after that, and you have....

Church meetings and discipleship

Our whole visible church is racked over these issues, isn't it? It's partly due to the fact that there came a realization at a certain point in the past that just getting nice people together in a building and sitting them in rows and talking at them wasn't doing it.

So now what else do we do?

And they, you have great movements out of the Jesus people. Wonderful blessings of new denominations coming out, like the Vineyard, and Hope Chapel, and Calvary Chapel, and these other groups.

One of my colleagues at USC, Don Miller, has made a wonderful study of these as a sociologist, to understand why it is - while all of the other groups are dwindling, they're growing! And you look at them from the outside as he did, and you see, well there are some pretty obvious differences in what they do. And that means differences in how they relate to one another.

But still, the question remains, I mean. How do - because actually, though there are some differences here, this problem of discipleship remains an issue across the board. It has not been... The problem has not been solved.

And the temptation to program differently and so on, I think is a very strong temptation that...that we need to avoid.

Meetings that honor the Trinity

And the second clause in the Great Commission really is the key to understanding this. If you have a church meeting where people all sit in a row on irremovable

benches, and they play an organ, and have a choir with robes, and occasionally sing a little Bach - if in that place the people who are there honor the Trinity, and invite him to come and be there - I mean really be there -and get off of the idea of performance and program as solving the problem, what will happen is the Trinity will come.

And the truth is, it doesn't much matter what you do in the way of programming or not programming, as long as you honor the Trinity, the Trinity will come. Now, that will...

I don't think that will happen if you don't have disciples. One of the things we miss in reading the scripture is the order. You have to have disciples. And again, don't worry about the name. You have to have people who really honor Jesus as Lord.

People that honor Jesus

And when they come to church, they come in that attitude and spirit, and they come together with one another they're prepared to really love one another. They're invoking the presence of God over the whole thing. Then it will happen.

It has happened over and over. You look at the spectrum of church history, see people did all sorts of things in the way of having - of coming together. And it's hard to find a single one of them that God has not mightily blessed.

Now see, we humanly think - well, if he blessed that, that means he must favor that. No, no. It doesn't mean that. Probably means the people there are really disciples, looking for the presence of God.

The fact that God blesses something never - is never a reason to think he approves of it entirely. That he thinks it's the answer. It just means he's willing to bless it. I'm sure that it has to have some essential features, but the fact that God blesses a practice doesn't necessarily mean that it's the way to do it. There might still be a better way. Or there might be at a different time a way that is better, and so on. So let's keep that in mind.

Part III — Teach people to do what Jesus said [43:25]

Now then, once you have these two in place, you're ready for the third part. If you try to go to three without one and two, you will wind up with some form of legalism. And it will kill you. And it will kill everyone around you.

But now, if you have disciples, and you are living in the presence, coming together, living in the presence, submerging them in the Trinitarian life that flows in the

community of disciples of Jesus, then you can now teach them to do everything Jesus said.

So now, that is how discipleship and the gospel of the Kingdom comes together. Because if you don't preach some kind of whole life gospel, you'll never make disciples. You have to preach a whole life gospel, and I've used the word Kingdom and so on; but however that works, I talked last night about how we shouldn't make a legalism out of the language - Kingdom of God, and Kingdom of Heaven. Some people do that. We don't need to do that; we need to get the point.

And the point is, living now within the range of God's effective will. Whole life. Not religious things. We do that, and then non-religious things, we're on our own.

Discipleship is learning how to come from the position where we are running our own kingdom, and bringing increasingly our whole self into the Kingdom of God. So back to our circle diagram of earlier moments. The parts of the self that we distinguished there, are increasingly brought into the Kingdom of God.

Two Key Questions: #1 - What is a Disciple? [45:40]

All right. So now then, let's try to be very explicit about what is a disciple. I've given you some language here on the next screen. What is a disciple?

1.) A Disciple is one with Jesus and learning to be like Him

First take. A disciple is one who is with Jesus, learning to be like him.

Now, that's a general idea of discipleship that applies to everything. If you have a third grader in school, who is studying with their teacher, learning how to do, let's say, long division or what are the capitals of the United States, or what are the countries in Africa. What are the mountain ranges around the earth, and so on.

That is a typical case of discipleship. That little student is with the teacher, learning to be like that teacher, with regard to his or her knowledge of these things that they're studying. One who is with Jesus, learning to be like him.

Now discipleship is a matter of being with Jesus, so you have to be prepared to invoke him, invite him, and then as you do that you're going to experience his presence with you, and you're going to realize that you're doing you do not do in your own strength. Discipleship is not something that can be done merely by human effort. That's why going back to the Great Commission, a disciple living in the Trinitarian presence - see that's key. Can't go on without that.

And that is the meaning of the teaching of grace that we receive from the Scriptures. Grace means you can't do it on your own. You don't have to, see. So it's not an issue of that at all.

2.) A Disciple is interactive with Jesus

[51:15]

But we're with Jesus, and we experience him acting with us. I like to illustrate this in terms of carrying a log or something heavy. And you're carrying it in your own strength, and then all of a sudden, it's lighter. Someone has taken ahold of it, and is lifting with you. Or maybe then you have to lift a load which you know you can't lift, and when you bend down to pick it up, you lift it. Right. That's the difference.

And grace, that's what grace does. Grace makes a difference like that. And of course, if we really understand what we're doing, as human beings under God, we're constantly attempting to do things we can't do. I mean, that's not surprising or unusual. That is standard for the life of grace. The fact you can't do something has nothing to do with the case.

The question is, does God want it done? And are you willing to stoop down, bend - put your hands on that load, knowing you can't lift it, and start lifting, and watch it come up. Understand what I'm talking about? See, that's God with you.

That is, to use that wonderful verse I gave you from Isaiah, God's glorious arm went at the right hand of Moses, see. Remember that? Isaiah 63:12 God's glorious arm.

So, what did Moses have to learn? Well, God gave him baby lessons out there by the bush. Remember? (Exodus 4:1-17)

What is that in your hand, Moses? It's a staff. Throw it down. Becomes a snake. Now what if Moses had just stood there and held it? Well actually, Moses was so in the dark about all of this at this point, he didn't know what was going on. God was teaching him. Throws it down, becomes a serpent. Now he says, Pick it up. Well, picking up serpents is a challenge to your faith, isn't it? Moses picked it up. Next thing, Put your hand in your robe. Now pull it out. Leprous. Put it back in. Clean. Do you understand what's going on there?

Learning from him

See, we are learning...we are with him, learning to do things. Now, those are pretty spectacular things. Often we need those to help us. Sometimes we need them to help people, but often we need those in order to help us understand how interactive life with Jesus grows.

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Now I'm going to go back to John 17:3 again with you, and if you have...if you didn't yesterday zero in on that verse and start thinking about it and what I said about it, now's the time to do it. Because this tells you what eternal life is.

This is eternal life, Jesus said in his great High Priestly prayer, that they would know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. And what I said to you was that knowing in the Bible always refers to interactive relationship. So, a disciple is someone who is interactively with Jesus.

Now what that really means is - in practice is - something like this - that I never go into a situation where I assume that I am in control of the outcome. Never do that. That means, among other things, that if I have to do something that I think I can't do, I won't assume it can't be done. That means, among other things, that for example, if I think I know what's supposed to happen, I don't.

Giving up control

Like coming here talking to you. I have no idea what's supposed to happen. There's some things I have in mind, but I would never, when I go to speak to a group or run a service, or, I would say pray with anyone or minister- I never, try never, to assume. I should say I try never to assume, because sometimes my kingdom asserts itself without me thinking, and I start acting as if I were in charge. See, I - it would be very foolish of me to assume that I know what's supposed to happen.

Now I have some ideas, and that's OK. I have some hopes, and some plans, but those are always held in abeyance with the idea that Jesus knows what's supposed to happen. So, I obviously planned to do certain things. If otherwise, I wouldn't have done this PowerPoint. All right. But I don't assume that I know what's supposed to come out that, because I'm living interactively with Jesus, and I'm really very hopeful that a lot of things are going to happen that I don't even think about.

You remember what Ephesians 3:21 says that, "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think." That's out there, right? That's really out there. And, it's a great encouragement to see things happening that you didn't think about, isn't it. Yeah, sometimes it's a little challenging, but other times it's very encouraging. That he's in charge.

3.) A Disciple Lets Jesus lead

[54:20]

Another way of putting this is, I'm learning how to lead my life as he would lead my life if he were I.

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The reason I use this formulation is to put the emphasis where it has to be, which is on my life. My life is the one that is of interest here. I mean, it's not altogether harmful to say, I want to be like him. But we have to remember, he led his life. Now I lead my life. And now I have to get concrete about that. I mean, the very kind of person I am, that's my life.

So for example, it may be a challenge to you ladies to think about Jesus leading your life, but he could do that. He could be comfortable there. So what you want to learn, then, is how to lead your life as he would lead your life if he were you.

So suppose you're - some of the people I have the hardest time getting through to are investment bankers and lawyers. Because they have the hardest time in the professions, thinking that Jesus might actually lead their life. And if you've ever - if you know what the life of an investment banker is like... I often think of people being on the floor of the Chicago Exchange, doing futures in pork bellies. Actually, he could do that. He could do that. It's not bad work; it's important.. Any work that is important for others can be done in the spirit of love and in the power of the Kingdom.

Learning Kingdom Living

So, another...I'm an apprentice in Kingdom living. See. He's the master of living in the Kingdom. I'm the apprentice. I'm learning how to do that. It's the easy way of living.

Yes, that's what he said, isn't it. Matthew 11:28-30 , "Come unto me that labor and are heavy-laden, and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn, (underline learn), of me."

You know what a yoke is? It's not something in an egg. A yoke is an instrument by which animals - as we used to say, beasts of burden - combine their energies. And when you put a young horse into a yoke with an older horse to work, when you do that, that young horse at first does not know what to do. And, in fact, I'm a nineteenth century sort of person, and I was raised with horses, and cows, and things of that sort. They lived in the barn, and I lived in the house most of the time, but I actually worked them.

And you watch a young horse when they - you put them in the harness with a experienced horse the first time. And the usual routine is, they will be out ahead of the old horse, and the old horse will just be walking along. Say well, if you want to pull the whole thing you can, so go ahead. And then after a while, they slack off.

And then the single tree starts hitting their legs and making their life miserable in that direction, and takes them a little while to get on to that- not too long. Now

they figure, well, if I just walk with that guy over there, maybe this would work out OK.

That's what Jesus is talking about. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly of heart, and you'll find rest to your souls.

Living in his rest

I was down somewhere, some conference, maybe it was in Orlando. And a dear - it was for people who were head of student life on Christian college campuses. There was a dear, sweet lady, who had been a missionary and had served in so many capacities, and now she was- had been student life director of student life at a Christian school.

And I just remember this dear lady so clearly; she just got up and said, I don't know a thing about this rest he's talking about. I have no idea what he means. I don't know what the easy yoke means.

And see, that's very typical, because you don't have to know that in order to qualify for a position.

A dear man who's pastor of an Anglican church in Kansas City said in a recent meeting - kind of blurted out - he's a pastor, a very successful pastor. He said, They don't pay us to live. They pay us to preach.

So the performance becomes - and of course not just preaching, but all the other things you have to do as a pastor - that's what you're held to, is the performance. Whereas what Jesus is talking about is transformation. And we have to put that right up front.

Now, I'm not speeding along here. So let's... We're gonna have to come up to a break here, so let's end on this note.

The Gospel heard does not produce Disciples [1:00:40]

Where is the problem? Where is the problem?

And I want to suggest to you that the central problem is in the message preached. I want to suggest that our result is due to the message that is preached. Or at least the one that is heard, because actually, my experience is, you don't necessarily preach what is heard, right.

And I find that you can - that you can even come in and preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and people will hear you talking about going to heaven when you

die. Because that's all they've ever heard. And so when they hear anything that sounds religious, it translates into that.

And so, it's a real feat to succeed in getting through, but at least the one that is heard produces the result that we have. It does not have a natural tendency to produce disciples. So however you word it now, and there will be real barriers here because of...

A Debate Over Salvation

Lordship Salvation

Dan mentioned lordship, but even over that issue there - it's a huge outbreak of difficulties that come with that. You may know the lordship controversy, so called. And basically John MacArthur and a few others who said that you could not be saved unless you intended to obey Jesus. And then people immediately jumped on that, said that's works salvation. Ryrie, Zane Hodges, and others. I think - I never quite know what you're reading. So, in case you haven't read that, I mean there is a controversy over this, and it comes with the misunderstanding of grace, which we'll have to talk about later. But..

And also it turns out that that gospel of lordship as it is preached does not have a natural tendency to produce disciples either. And, I discussed this some in the second chapter of *The Divine Conspiracy*. You may want to look at it.

But here's the bitter truth. Your system is perfectly designed to produce the result you're getting. And now that language is from the language of business gurus, of which the woods are full. People who want to tell you how to make businesses work. And they use that saying, and there's...

This is a profound truth. Your system is perfectly designed to produce the result you're getting.

So, if you want a different result, you have to change the system. This goes with another saying they use, It is the mark of a disordered mind to think you can repeat the same process and get a different result. So we have to find the place of change.

Non-Lordship Salvation (Charles Ryrie in response to MacArthur)

Now Ryrie is the one who takes the non-lordship salvation position, and I think this will clear up a lot of things that we're, we're talking about here.

So Ryrie says in response to MacArthur, Some of the confusion regarding the meaning of the gospel today may arise from failing to clarify the issue involved. The issue is... Notice, the issue is, ...how can my sins be forgiven. What is it that bars me from heaven? What is it that prevents my having eternal life?

Sin and Guilt

Now notice all of those words are loaded. Having eternal life means going to heaven when you die, in this context. Now you have to bring that over against the New Testament.

The answer is sin. Now, actually he doesn't mean sin. He means guilt. And one of the systematic ambiguities is between - much contemporary theology - is between sin and guilt. And the issue there is whether or not Jesus removes sin, or just guilt. Now then you go back and read the passage I read to you from Titus, or 1 John, or almost any place, and see what you think is supposed to be removed. Jesus came, the gospel of Matthew says to destroy the works of the devil.

Now is that guilt? Jesus came to save his people from their sins, not from guilt. This is one way of stating the issue. There's no question, that for Ryrie, he means guilt, as you will see I think from the other things.

Forgiveness and Heaven

Therefore, I need some way to resolve that problem, the problem of how to go to heaven when I die. And God declares that the death of his Son provides forgiveness of my sins.

Now, he doesn't mean that. He means that if you believe that Jesus died for your sins, you'll be forgiven. See, if you don't take it that way, you get universalism. And that's why there was a huge battle over limited atonement in the past of Western theology, cause Jesus only died for those who will be saved. Because if his death provides forgiveness for everyone, then everyone is forgiven. That's universalism. There's just all sorts of little theological points that you have to be careful with as you go through this. Through faith I receive him and his forgiveness. Then the sin problem is solved. He means the guilt problem is solved, because he would be the first to tell you that Christians continue to sin. And I can be fully assured of going to heaven. Now see that's the issue.

Christian Life

Later on he distinguishes issues of Christian life from issues of salvation. He says, on page 74 of his book, You can believe that what he taught while on earth was

good, noble and true, and it was. You can believe he is able to run your life, and he is surely able to do that, and he wants to. But these are not issues of salvation.

That means you can still be saved, and reject those. Right? That issue, the issue of salvation is whether or not you believe that his death paid for all your sins.

And now actually the difference in wording itself is instructive and important. I don't have time to pursue all these rabbits, but you need to think about that. You need to believe that his death paid for all your sins.

Atonement

Now you see, that is the way the gospel is often presented. What is actually presented is one theory of the atonement. And that by believing in him you can have forgiveness and eternal life. That believing is what taps the resources, transfers his merit to your account in the bank of heaven, so you're paid off.

Now Ryrie says, When one believes, he commits to God. Well, commits what? He commits his eternal destiny. That's the issue, not the years of his life on earth. The non-salvation issues belong to Christian living, or relate to the Christian life. Not to the issue of salvation. I do not...these are his words, I do not need to settle issues that belong to Christian living in order to be saved.

Now what is driving Ryrie, what is driving him is the idea of salvation by grace. And so any time he thinks about a difference in this life, he thinks works. And that is where the salvation lordship, lordship salvation and non-sal...well you don't know quite what to call the other one. But that's, that's...how they join the issues.

Gospels Heard Today in Churches

[1:10:20]

All right. These are the three gospels that are heard at present. Now, I'm trying to take these from the viewpoint of the person who is sitting listening. And it's very - often very great difference between what is said and what is heard. But these are the three that are heard.

1.) Forgiveness Centered (Ryrie)

The first one is the one we just looked at in Ryrie. That the gospel, the good news, is entirely about forgiveness. Entirely. And the good news is that the beating you deserve has been taken by someone else. And if you believe that it has, then you won't get that beating. Your sins will be forgiven, and you'll be in heaven because they won't find any reason to keep you out. If you believe that Jesus suffered your sin penalty.

That is standardly the version of the gospel that you will hear among evangelical and conservative, not to mention fundamentalist, churches. That's what you'll hear. You'll hear that if you listen to the main people on television who have nationwide programs, presenting the gospel. Charles Stanley will say that. Who's the man at Bellevue in Memphis? Rogers. And I love both of those people. They are sweet wonderful people. And they don't mean it to come out this way.

But when they tell you what it is what you have to do, that's what you'll hear, number one. And then that will leave all the issues of what Ryrie calls Christian living unconnected, conceptually. No connection.

And you see various ways of trying to connect it. In the Reformed tradition, one of the ways that that is stressed is, you'll be so grateful that you will obey. And then of course they have congregations full of people who are not so grateful and don't obey.

Now, one of the reasons why that comes through, is because in the history of the Reformed movement, back in the days of Luther and Calvin, forgiveness was such a huge issue that people often when they received that, their lives were totally transformed. Now I'm not saying that shouldn't happen; indeed it would be wonderful if did happen. It just doesn't happen. And it doesn't happen because of the way things have developed up to the present point.

2.) Liberation Centered

The second one is basically the gospel of the left. Jesus died to liberate the oppressed, and you can stand with him in that battle. And you'll hear that preached, and ordinarily people who take this, well they don't say much of anything about forgiveness.

Right, I mean, take your Sojourners magazine, read it to see what it says about forgiveness of sins. Do you read Sojourners? Yeah. Well, I mean, is that right or wrong. See.

Now, on the other side, there's a big problem, largely a misunderstanding, because actually the people who go the route of number one do more in many respects for the oppressed than the other people. They just don't talk much about it. I mean, it was the people in the first group for example who broke the back of slavery in this country. It wasn't folks in the second group.

Now, is oppression bad? Did Jesus talk about oppression? He sure did. And it sure is bad. And we should be opposed to it. Is forgiveness essential? Forgiveness of sin? Yes. It sure is. You cannot bypass that. Reconciliation, justification.

[Dallas Willard's view] In my own view, I think it is right to think that regeneration comes first, and then justification. And then sanctification, and then glorification. They all fit into a pattern. Very natural progression along a continuous line. You don't get the way it's often presented now, justification's the whole deal, no one makes much sense of regeneration, and there's no natural progression to sanctification. And that's because of the way this is presented.

3.) Church Centered

The third one here is actually the gospel that huge numbers of people here... They don't really think much about these other issues at all. And that is just, do what your church says, and it will see to it that you are received by God. For short, take care of your church; it will take care of you. And of course the sacramental churches, so called high churches, often tend more in terms of that. I mean, you do the things that church says, in some cases beginning with birth and ending with death. You have rituals that are said, and you can be sure that you're OK.

Summary

But actually that is looking more to heaven when you die; three has more in common with one than it does with two.

Though there are a lot of interesting combinations that you can make, and I am talking to you as young bright people who are going to think about this, see. And you, and when you think about it, you have to take as your key what the scripture says. It has to be scriptural. If it isn't in the scripture, you don't do it. That has to be the rule, in my opinion.

Now that goes back to the things we talked about yesterday morning, about knowledge, and where do we get knowledge. And the scripture is the place that God has deposited in a public way, that knowledge, that we need, to have eternal life. And I don't mean go to heaven when we die, though that will take care of itself, right.

Gospels of Sin Management

See, if you get out of sin management, cause these really are all gospels of sin management. What are you going to do about sin? They're not gospels of regeneration and new life. New life now, in the present Kingdom of God, the present Kingdom of the heavens under the living Lord Jesus Christ. They're not - they don't deal with that.

See, it's often presented as somehow, if we had never sinned, we'd have no use for God. No use for Christ. And I've heard leading representatives of evangelical

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Christianity in this country say on their television programs guilt - grace is only for guilt.

See the misunderstanding of grace is another way of approaching this. And when you...and then you go to your Bibles and you do thorough inductive study on grace, it'll do as much as any other one thing could do to help you get all this straight, once you understand what grace is. And we're going to go on to that.

So, you have to think of yourself now in presenting yourself to the world - and we'll end up there talking about that, and presenting Christ to the world - is it primarily or only a problem of what to do about sin?

Those are gospels of sin management. And all three of the gospels I have mentioned, basically turn on that.

The Fourth Gospel - The True Gospel of Jesus

Now compare that to the fourth gospel that I have here, which isn't the Gospel of John, and it certainly isn't the gospel according to Willard.

This is the gospel that you will find in these verses that I have given you here; some of them we've already talked about; some not. Put your confidence in Jesus and live with him as his disciple now in the present Kingdom of God. sus and live with Him as His disciple now in the present Kingdom of God.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 5 [1:18:56]** ~ ~ ~

~ 06 [Kingdom Salvation](#) [YouTube link]

[1:10:15]

The Gospel of the Kingdom

So what is the gospel? The gospel is you can trust Jesus. That's it. That's the simplest form of the gospel.

But not something he said about social evils. Not something he did to secure your forgiveness. That's all in there. But those are not the gospel. The gospel is Jesus. His availability. Put your confidence in him. Come under the rule of God. God at work in your life.

Life of coherence

Now see, all of us have this in bits and pieces at least. But there is a coherent whole here, of finding our life in the Kingdom of God. And, we've talked about Matthew 4:17; we've talked about Matthew 6:33.

Romans 8:1-14 - *"Walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit"* [00:01:15]

I haven't said much about Romans 8:1-14. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh God did by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh..."

And showed up sin for what it was. Right. And the result of that is those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, see they have deliverance over sin. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Now then you have to settle in your thinking, is that imputed righteousness, or is it also imparted righteousness? The Ryrie way of setting it up is, that's imputed. We fulfill the law because we trust Jesus who died to pay off our sins, and we owe nothing to the law. That's the way that's read.

Life of the Spirit

You read it that way, you can't make any sense of what follows, in Romans 8. Because **Romans 8** is not talking about forgiveness of sins. It's talking about life.

It goes on to say - it goes on to contrast the life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit. They that live in terms of the flesh, it's hard to translate prepositions like kata, but it - I think if you put it in terms of, they that live in terms of the flesh, verse 5. Those who are according to the flesh, my version says. But who live in terms of the flesh, set their minds on the things of the flesh.

That is to say, that's what they think in terms of. Flesh here is what you can do in

your natural human abilities. You individually and you socially. That would mean that you would look in your planning of your churches and your own life, you would simply expect things from natural sources, and that would be all. Those who are, who live in terms of the Spirit, kata, they mind the things of the Spirit. If your mind is set on the flesh, the outcome is death. The mind set on the Spirit, life and peace. And he goes on to develop that you see. It's talking about life.

John 3:16

[4:00]

John 3 is not a forgiveness passage. John 3:16 is not about forgiveness. It includes forgiveness, but it's about life from above.

This is one of the most shocking things that I often say to people; it's because they always thought in terms of John 3:16 meaning forgiveness. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever put their confidence in him would not perish... go to hell, ...but have eternal life... go to heaven. Right.

Now, if you read the passage you'll see it's not about forgiveness; it's about life from above. That means that John 3:16 is not just about what happens after you die, but what happens while you're alive. The life you lead will be an eternal one; that means that the things that you do - go tie it in with the Romans passage - will be of the Spirit, and therefore will not be perishing. Will not be death.

The mind of the flesh is death. Why? Because it puts its focus on, it involves its life entirely with the things that are natural. And so, we often wonder if God didn't exist, would our church be any different. And if it's simply a human operation, the answer is it wouldn't be. Because, people would do the things that are needed.

So, I just invite you to take these kinds of verses...I mean, you just pile them up. An inductive Bible study is what you need to do. You take the words you're focusing on; you study them through the Scripture; you get the context. So now here's the some...

Salvation in the Kingdom

[6:15]

Here's what salvation is on this view. And since that's, that's the really big deal, try this on. Try it on in your life, in your ministry, and above all in your study of Scripture.

Salvation is participating now in the life which Jesus is now living on Earth. Of course that involves forgiveness, and heaven afterwards. It's not a question of omitting those. It's a question of making that the whole deal, see.

So now, do hang on that Colossians 1. **Colossians 3:1-4**. If you then be risen

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with Christ, see, that means participating now in the life that Jesus is now living on earth. If you then be risen with Christ, seek then those things that are above. So, you don't become passive; you become active.

Seek those things that are above. Now, above doesn't mean beyond the moon. It means where God is acting in the first heaven, and beyond that of course, where Jesus is on the right hand of the Father. Now he manages to do that and be here as well, all right. *Seek those things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of the Father. Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth. Because you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. See. That's now.*

A Hidden Life

[7:40]

So now, you have to bring that together with the theme of the divine conspiracy, because this is a hidden life. Now, go back to John 3. What did Jesus say about those that are born of the Spirit? Precisely that they have a hidden life, which is the real thing that is going on in them. Now, that hidden life will manifest itself in great transformations, not just of character, but if you like signs and wonders language, it will certainly show up there too.

Now the onlooker will not know what's going on. That's what Jesus said to Nicodemus, wasn't it. The wind blows where it lists. You hear the sound; you don't see it. You see its effects, you perceive its effects, and that will also be true. (John 3:8)

But now here's the crucial point for the understanding of the divine conspiracy. A person who wants to explain them in some other way will do that to their satisfaction. And that is a part of what God has in mind with the whole process of things here on earth, is to allow people who wish to go another way, to go another way.

But to allow people who wish to know him to find him. Because the promise, as you recall, in Jeremiah, is that, You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. Right. **(Jeremiah 29:13) [Proverbs 8:17]**

So God is present. God is present in you. He's present in the people of Christ. The salvation that is running, that we're a part of now, is one that actually is there for anyone who wishes to seek and to find it.

A Wonderful man named Bill Craig

[9:45]

I don't know if you know him, but he's - and Bill is from a more Reformed position. At one point, he got worked up about John Wimber, and thought he should... But

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Bill is a wonderful, loving man, and while he can disagree with someone, he can also be open. And he...

This was many years ago, 1988, Bill sent out a prayer letter, where on - we received them. And he's talking about power evangelism. And power healing. And he has theological disagreements with John Wimber, and that's OK. John Wimber would never have been troubled about that at all. A man of incredible and irenic Christlike spirit, and he would understand. And here's what happened.

Bill Craig - he's writing this from Belgium I think it was. Even if we do not have the gifts of healing, because he's one who had trouble with the idea of gifts, we can pray for the sick. Interestingly, that's of course also true of John MacArthur, who has trouble with gifts, but still believes in miracles, and in prayer.

Bill says, "When I returned from our first conference back in November, my thoughts kept turning to a young woman here, in Belgium, named Sue Cooper, who had been recently stricken with multiple sclerosis. It was a terrible tragedy, and the question kept forcing itself, why don't you, to Bill, why don't you lay hands on Sue Cooper and pray for her healing. When I shared about the conference with my Sunday School class, Sue, who was in the class, said Why don't you pray for me. So I did something I wouldn't have done before. That is, before reading Wimber's books and hearing him teach."

"I invited Sue to stand in the center of the room, and the others in the class to lay hands on her and pray . Pray for her healing. Nothing extraordinary happened. But Sue was grateful, and we continued with the lesson. After a couple of months, the Coopers moved back to the United States, and Sue was pretty resigned to the fact that she wouldn't be healed. But now we received word from her that her doctors can find no trace of MS in her body at all. And the doctors said that she should no longer say that she has multiple sclerosis."

Well. What do you know? What do you know?

See that's... We're participating in a life that really moves with us. And us with it, and that's what we're learning as disciples. Faith in Jesus means that we have confidence in him for everything.

It doesn't mean that we have confidence in social teachings, or that he hates people in power or who are rich, and wants to cut them down. Send them to hell. I've heard people say that. Right. Cursed be you rich. Isn't that pretty strong? Didn't Jesus say that? Didn't Jesus say that the rich are cursed? Well, looks like that. Luke 6. See, if you've got your mind on something, you can find a place in the Scripture to support it.

Complete confidence

Not just something he did. Even suffering for us. That isn't discipleship. Faith in Jesus the whole person. I have confidence in him for everything. Everything that he said about life and death is right. Everything he commanded us to do is what is good for us, not something that's supposed to make us miserable. It's good for us.

Discipleship is not bad news. Oh, someone says, I understand that Jesus says that if you're going to be a disciple of his, you have to give up everything. You have to hate your mother and your father and brothers and sisters and...your own life also. Sounds awful, doesn't it.

The Cost of Discipleship

But you have to remember that's the other side of the parables of the pearl of great price. Those go together. You have to count the cost to be a disciple, yes you do.

That doesn't mean you just look at what you pay. You also look at what you get. See, if you go to buy a new car, you have to count the cost. That doesn't mean you just count the money you have to pay; that means you have to count what will happen if you don't buy the car. How do you like being stuck on the freeway? Well you see, you get a car that runs, that you don't have to worry about that so much. All right.

So you have to look at what you get and what you pay, and that's what Jesus is talking about when he talks about counting the cost. But then it comes down and we have a book written, wonderful book by the way, on the cost of discipleship.

The Cost of Non-Discipleship

Now see, no one knows the cost of discipleship who does not understand the cost of non-discipleship. Right? So, how about you writing a book on the cost of non-discipleship. Could you do that? You preach on that. What it costs you not to be a disciple of Jesus.

Well, you spend the rest of your life being dominated by hatred and lust. How's that? That sound good? Well, of course, if you're far enough gone it could sound good.

But if you have your wits about you you'll realize, hey, that's worth getting rid of. How about living a life full of love and joy and hope and peace. Confidence in God. Is that worth something? Well, that's the cost of non-discipleship, because if you don't have discipleship you don't get that.

Am I making any sense to you? Please say yes or no. OK. All right. Good. Thank you. You see.

Now, I didn't leave that up there long enough for you to look at, but see, that's what faith in Christ means.

What is the Gospel?

[16:55]

So now, just to rehearse it, say what are we saying? What is the gospel?

The good news that we can live now in the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ means I have confidence in him for everything. I want to be as close to him as possible, and learn from him everything I can. I want to believe, and I do believe, that all of his commandments are for my benefit. So anything he tells me to do is for my good, and I will be much better off when I do it. I'll be much better off.

Now, you can only understand that if you get the background of the Kingdom. If you don't get that, you don't get it.

The Ultimate Questions that Face Human Beings

[17:50]

[[Session 4 1:27:50-1:37:00 \(p.37\)](#) [Q's #1-3 - Session 7 0:00-34:00 \(p. 60\)](#)]

1. What is reality?
2. Who is well off?
3. Who is a good person?
4. How do you become a good person?

Now, here, if I had time I would go back to these questions that I put up last night... Oh, it's OK. These great questions you see, that I put up last night, the great questions that Jesus answers, and we could talk about how he answers them when we come in this way, see.

What is reality? Who is well off? Who is a good person? How do you get to be a good person?

Now see this is a framework for genuine witnessing for Christ. You want to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. You bring those questions to the mind of people. And I have never see a person - I use these questions in my classes at USC. Because that's what all the philosophers and the thinkers have tried to answer through the ages. And that's what we want to keep before the people we teach, the people in our fellowships. That's what we want to bring to, to people who are not in our fellowships, but are people we are trying to bring the witness of the Kingdom to. These are the questions that we have to press.

So now, we want to bear down just a little more on the - what discipleship, the content of discipleship is, and why the gospel of Jesus that he preached is omitted, because this becomes a serious problem. Why don't we - why isn't - why don't we hear the gospel of the Kingdom?

I included again in chapter two here, of *The Divine Conspiracy*, some interesting statements by Peter Wagner and some other people about the gospel of the Kingdom. Here's what Peter says. Peter Wagner says this, he says, It is the unanimous opinion of modern scholarship that the Kingdom of God was the message of Jesus.

Now, it's not quite right. What the message of Jesus was the availability of the Kingdom of God, not just the Kingdom of God. This on page 59 of the book *The Divine Conspiracy*. Now he says, I cannot help wondering out loud why I haven't heard more about it in the thirty years I've been a Christian. I certainly read about it enough in the Bible.

"I honestly can not remember any pastor preaching a sermon on the Kingdom of God. I myself have never preached a sermon on it. Where has the kingdom been?"
Peter Wagner (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 59)

Well, now, again, I don't want to be legalistic about this. You can preach the Kingdom without using the word. On the other hand, the words are pretty obvious in the Scripture, and raise the question, perhaps we should use them. And at least raise the question - do we have a better way of putting it? And I'm not saying we can't, and I believe that actually that it has been done without the wording through the ages, repeatedly, by people who had other language for it.

But as I said earlier this morning, there's always the fact that there is an emphasis on whole life involvement with Jesus as Lord. And if you can get that in the manner of Keswick talk or Franciscan talk, or Benedictine talk, or Quaker talk, or Baptist talk, or Catholic talk, or whatever kind of talk, if you get that it's OK. That's fine. But you have to have that, regardless of the language you use.

Well, there's some other references in that part of *The Divine Conspiracy* on this issue of not preaching.

Areas of Discipleship (3)

[22:10]

Now, let's look at these three areas there, because we have to develop these later now. [Session 9 1:05:15] In being a disciple, there are three areas that we need to think about.

1.) Learning to do what Jesus said.

One is just learning to do the things that Jesus said. And I say again, and from now on I'm going to be repeating this, don't get legalistic about this. Doing the things that Jesus said is not a matter of trying to do the things that Jesus said. It's a matter of becoming the kind of person who would naturally do them.

And that's where we go back to our circle diagram. The focus is on changing the stuff that's in those circles. You change the stuff that's in the circles, and the behavior will change.

So, to stick with our simple case, you know, blessing those who curse you. You don't want to try to bless those who curse you. If you do, you'll fail. That's all you'll do. See, the problem is the stuff that's in the circles pops out before you have time to think about what you're doing or not doing. That's why the Pharisee always fails, and winds up in hypocrisy, because they aim at the action and not the change in the person.

But still, the things that Jesus explicitly said to do are guidelines, and we need to have in mind becoming the kind of person who does that. So now we have a lot to say about that later. That's just the general point.

2.) How to live life in the areas without explicit command

The second thing is how to live life in areas where there is no explicit command. No explicit command. How do you live? Most of the stuff that we do, God - Jesus didn't say anything about, there's nothing about it in the Bible. Didn't say anything about automobiles, for example. What kind you drive, how you drive it, and that sort of thing. But still, there is a way he would do that. And so now...

This is a combination of learning how to do the things he explicitly talked about, but also how to do stuff that we have to have guidance with. And we have to be spoken to about. That are particular, and not in general terms, they're particular. And here we have to learn to hear the voice of Christ, to listen for it, to learn to follow. And this might involve everything...

This is where our investment bankers and lawyers, and others, everyone, needs to be able to listen and learn how to do the particular kind of work they do with Jesus at their side. And to hear his promptings and his directions, so that life as a whole is lived in the Kingdom and not just the explicitly religious kinds of things, or the moral commandments only.

This includes areas of prudence as well as morality. What is the wise thing to do? Colossians 3:16, I quoted it to you the other night: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Speaking and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart unto the Lord. See that's, that's a whole life kind of - the wisdom of Christ is what we need here.

I think we ought to include for example our business decisions. Issues about our family's financial welfare. And all kinds of concerns that have to do with ordinary

life that we might not think about, if we just looked at the Bible alone. So we have to take care.

#3 - How to act with the power in the Kingdom

And then the final category here is how to act with power in the Kingdom. I said, I think, earlier that prayer and giving are the two baby steps in learning Kingdom life. If I didn't, I'll say that later. Prayer and giving are the two ways that we take tiny steps for learning how to act with the power of God in the Kingdom.

The letter from Bill Craig is an illustration of this. He didn't know how to - what to do with that. And so then now he heard some teaching, and it impressed him, and he had theological problems with it, but given all the theological problems, still at the moment, he was prepared to do something that he had never done before. And he observed the result. See that's learning under the third category here.

Now go back to our earlier statement that we ought always being - we ought always be undertaking to do things that we can't do. Right. That is the - that's built into our nature. Cause we're meant to live in the Kingdom of God, under the direction of God. So that means we would always be undertaking to do things that we can't do.

That's learning to act and live in the power of God. And that would cover everything from teaching Sunday School to a little child and talking to them about Jesus, about life and death and heaven and righteousness and all that, see, you'd talk to a little child, you're counting on God to do a work there. If it's leading a big meeting or writing a book, or if it's starting a business, and so on. It's all in the same area. Cause we want to be acting in the power of God.

Why is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus is omitted? [28:20]

Now, why is it that the preaching of the gospel of Jesus is omitted? I'm going to have to limit myself here, and again I'm saying carefully, study - five minutes - carefully study the Scripture on this. Read carefully the New Testament, the Old Testament, to see, what is the gospel.

There's one issue in particular that comes up over and over, both on the left and the right theologically, and that is the idea that Jesus preached one gospel and Paul preached another. And you have to face that out on the basis of your understanding of Scripture.

I want to tell you that there is no such difference, and the gospel that Jesus preached and the gospel that Paul preached are the same. If you have time at some point, and I had thought I might have time here but I won't, to walk through

the book of Acts, and watch how the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel of Jesus come together. And you will see them separate at the beginning, and together at the end. And this was a - this was a matter of putting a face to the Kingdom, and a Kingdom to the face.

See you have to understand that people did not know what Jesus was talking about, when he talked about the Kingdom of God. And I've already mentioned that in Acts 1 when they go out - when he's getting ready to leave, and they're still asking the question in the wrong terms.

But Jesus is still talking about the Kingdom of God. Look at Acts 1:3. In the forty days that he was with them, in and out with them, he spoke of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. That's what he spoke about.

The good news

There are very crucial passages such as Acts 8, where Philip is ministering in Samaria. You remember that they'd had a big meeting up there before, and Philip went back. And now he's preaching. Look at what the good news is about in verse 12 of Acts 8. It's worth your time to mark this verse; you may not have seen it.

And Philip ...and we read here in verse 12, But when they believed Philip preaching the good news.

Now stop there a moment and register, good news. What's the good news about? It's about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. Now let me ask you. What do you suppose that name of Jesus stuff is about? What was the good news about the name of Jesus? Think. What was the...

Authority. And I'm going to translate that, Dan, as meaning that in the name of Jesus, you can invoke the action of the Kingdom. See that's the key. That's what they had to learn.

The Name of Jesus

Now, in the early chapters in the book of Acts, and you'll notice how that issue - the name of Jesus - comes up over and over in the first chapters of the book of Acts. By the time they get here, they have learned that when you ask and act in the name of Jesus, the Kingdom comes into action.

So now then I've quoted repeatedly **Colossians 3:17**, Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why that name stuff is important, is because it ties in to Kingdom.

And you - I'm going to have to leave it to you to do your inductive Bible study. Take a walk through the book of Acts, and watch the Kingdom and Jesus come together, so that by the time you get to the end of that, and you're now living in the area where the letters were written, and the church was emerging as a separate kind of entity in the world, you get to the end of that you will see the face has been put on the Kingdom. It's the face of Jesus. And a Kingdom is presented in terms of the King, who is Jesus. But a king always brings a kingdom with him. So they come together. And that's the way it was understood in the New Testament.

Spirituality and Ontology

I know I started way up in the middle of the air, you know, like Ezekiel's wheels. (Ezekiel 1) And, you have - I believe you have to do that, and that if you don't start there, things will not clear up. And when you get down to the more specific level - I think we can illustrate that in what we're going to be talking about now - you will invariably wind up in legalism.

So here's a saying for you.

[33:15]

Spirituality without ontology produces legalism. Ontology is the theory of being. It's the understanding of reality, though, that's why we have to go there. And it applies not just to God, but it also applies to us as human beings. What really matters in us, is the hidden aspect, the sources of our behavior. And we have to understand that we are spiritual beings. That's ontology. What...

When we get the ontology right, and we get the order right in the person, then we're able to escape legalism. Spirituality without ontology produces legalism. And that will be pharisaism. And that's why religious people often are so angry, and can be very mean. Is because they're focusing on behavior, on faith and practice, and they're judging themselves and everyone else in terms of that.

And it produces mean Christians. And contemptuous Christians. Just think of the things that Christians have done to one another.

Avoiding Legalism

And where does that come from? Well, it comes from the insistence on behavior. And on specific beliefs, and right and wrong, and so the Inquisition and all the religious wars and all those things. You say, how could that happen? It's because that - they try to understand spirituality in terms of explicit behavior or faith and practice, or explicit kinds of belief. So now if we come to Jesus, we have to have beliefs about him. You can't come to him any other way.

But the significance of the beliefs is not so we will be identified as having the right

answers. See very often salvation in terms of going to heaven is presented in terms of you being kind of like a driver's test, you know. Here in California you miss three you have to take it over. Except in this situation, you don't get to take it over. You have to go to the bad place. Because you didn't get the right answers.

And the significance of faith is not having the right answers. The significance of faith is being enmeshed in reality, in the way that accords with truth. And when you do that, then your life is different.

Take something that in past generations there's been huge battles over. Virgin birth of Christ. Well what's the significance of that - to believe the virgin birth of Christ? Well, it isn't getting the right answer. It's that if you believe Christ was born of a virgin, you've got a different world than one in which he was not. So now you're going to be relating to him in a different way.

I mean, you hear now of course constant discussions among Christians about, was Christ divine? Well, one way of thinking about it is if I say that then I pass the test. God will let me in because I got the right answer.

Effects of True Belief

Now I'm hoping that you are thinking, that surely isn't the way it matters. See, if I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that he was uniquely divine, I relate to him differently than if I write - relate to him just as a nice man who was, had a historical significance. We ought to be like him or something of that sort, you know. So, my belief is designed to integrate my action with reality. And that's why, that's why it really matters.

So we seek the Kingdom in Jesus; we come to him; we begin to listen to him. If the Holy Spirit and the Word works faith in our heart, then we begin to say, this is the Son of God. This is equal with God. And now then, we have a different kind of person that we're relating to. And hopefully all that we've been saying spells that out.

And so we come to seek the Kingdom in Jesus. We live out the righteousness and the peace and the joy that is of the Holy Spirit. And we live in uncompromising obedience. We're learning to do that.

Now, do we have to be perfect? Well, no, obviously not. Why? We're not accepted on the basis of perfection or performing. We're accepted because of our relationship to Jesus.

When I go to heaven, the place of God, they're not going to check the computer to see if all of my sins have been paid for. They will see another friend of Jesus

coming. That's what they will see. A disciple may be very green and very imperfect. What characterizes the disciple is not the level of their perfection. What characterizes a disciple is that they are learning. That they are progressing. And before very long, they're very different in how they behave, because their inner being has been transformed.

The Inversion of the Two Kingdoms

[39:30]

Now, we want to look at the way, the form that Jesus' teachings of the Kingdom begins to take, as he opens up his main teachings. And running through all of his teachings is the principle that, again, it's not a new principle, but it is the principle of the inversion of the two kingdoms.

The two kingdoms in question here - now are they, well actually they're what the New Testament calls the world. Remember there're three things that the early Christians - when you confess faith in Christ, you took a stand against. You disowned. And that was the world, the flesh, and the devil. You disown those three things. The world, the flesh and the devil. [\[Ephesians 2, I John - Eyes, Flesh & Pride; Eve in the Garden of Eden\]](#)

The Kingdom of the World

Now think of the world; the world is socially organized, historically developing flesh. It is superintended by the prince of this world, who is Satan. And the primary job that he has is to direct the ideas of this world in such a way that people are controlled by a false system of belief.

And that false system of belief has as its - probably one of its primary components the way people are ranked. And you may have noticed that in human beings. It's called sometimes pecking order, because among chickens there is an order in which chicken gets to come and peck. This is a silly, brutal kind of thing. But it has to do with ranking of people in terms of who is up and who is down.

And it is a pitiful thing. You watch how little children, for example, suffer from it. Very, very heartbreaking to see it. You watch a group of children on a playground, and among the most brutal scenes on earth are playgrounds in schools, where little children suffer all these things and get involved in these rankings. And it hurts you just to even think about it. Course it goes on as you grow up. As you grow up you get hardened to it, both in terms of engaging in it sometimes, and in terms of how you get ranked.

And of course this is where contempt comes in, because contempt is tied to the rankings. And who is worth, and who is not worth.

And Jesus is very conscious of this. And he's especially conscious of how that's tied to the theology, and how human rankings are identified with God's rankings. Does that make sense? Because now this is the key idea that we have to talk about, now. Central to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom, is the inversion of human ideas about rank, and the insistence that God has a different ranking. He ranks people in different ways.

So now that is why you have this statement of Jesus that shows up over and over: The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Sometimes it's worded different. Many who are first shall be last. Many who are last shall be first. But he's always referring to those two orders of ranking. What human beings regard as good, as respectable, as decent, as to be applauded and striven for, and the people who wind up in those places as being well off, as being good, to be respected.

And then the tacit idea here is that if you're in those good rankings that means God's on your side. Right.

So, and one of the biggest things in this, in this respect to God being on your side, was wealth. And social influence. And having the right qualifications. Qualifications. Very important.

The Kingdom of God

Let me show you something about Paul. Said the other day, Paul was really the first one who got it, and if you look at Philippians with me for just a minute, you'll see what I mean by that I think.

Paul is talking about his qualifications in Philippians 3. Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble for me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of false circumcision. (Philippians 3:1-2) And then he talks about the true circumcision.

Now the false circumcision was the circumcision of the flesh. It was a mark of propriety in those circles. You were in if you were circumcised, and you were not if you were out. If you were not you were out. You were a heathen.

Look at verse 4. Although I myself might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more. So here's... Circumcised the eighth day of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee.

Now you understand, these are regarded as good things. Paul was, in terms of the first Beatitude in Matthew 5, Paul was someone who was rich in spirit. He was rich in spiritual things. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. As to righteousness

which is in the Law , blameless. That's the upside in the scale of blessedness. Of God's favor.

Human qualifications are worthless

Now, here's what Paul says about it. Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that I count all those things... (Philippians 3:7-8) Now all those things he's referring to are the things he listed. His education. His attainments. His family.

Now, if you don't have that sort of stuff you're what we call today a nobody. Did you ever know a nobody? You're a nobody. That's fascinating language. You don't exist. What does that mean? That means, in that order of that pecking order, you don't peck. You're out of it. Now Paul says, All those things that put me up on the upscale of the pecking order, I count as loss. These are...

As loss what does he mean? He means they are drawbacks. They're drawbacks. I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them as rubbish. (Philippians 3:8) My New American Standard, a very nice translation. So some words it can't translate. Rubbish.

It ain't rubbish. It's much worse than rubbish. It's what you step in when you walk across the lawn where the dogs have been running. Isn't that a nice way of putting it? Now the old version has a nice - dung. That's OK to say dung. But don't say that other word. We're nice. But being nice, we don't get to it. I mean, that's what Paul's attitude is. These were the upscale things. Right.

Human riches do not guarantee blessedness [48:15]

Now, what Paul knew was, what he'd learned from Christ was, you can have all of those things and not be blessed. And you can be blessed and have none of those things. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Two kingdoms. The things that are thought to be up, on the human kingdom, do not guarantee blessedness. Rather, what guarantees blessedness is life in the Kingdom of God.

So look at Luke 6. I'm not going to have time to go over all these verses, but I do encourage you to understand that this is a general principle now. That you see over and over.

I've listed some of the great inversion passages. The Song of Miriam. (Exodus 15:18-19) Hannah's celebration. (1 Samuel 2:1-11) These Psalms do the same thing. (Psalm 34, Psalm 37, Psalm 107:31-43, Psalm 113) Mary does it in the Magnificat. (Luke 1:46-55) We see the same thing. Paul does the same thing in 1 Corinthians. (1 Corinthians 1:25-29)

But I won't have time to go over those. I just encourage you to read them to see the teaching there, as a part of the whole scriptural teaching that opposes the one kingdom to the other.

The Beatitudes

[48:52]

Now let's do look at Luke 6.

Now this is apparently another version of the Matthew passages, preached in a different place possibly. And he using - uses interestingly different formulations. Matthew 6:20. Turning his gaze on his disciples, he began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the Kingdom of God." (Luke 6:20) Now, what's the assumption? The assumption is that if you're poor, God isn't for you. You remember the rich young ruler? You remember how Jesus told him that he had to get rid of his possessions, and how he couldn't do that? And how he turned away? See that, question that came out of that. Jesus said, How hard it is for those who are rich to enter the Kingdom of God. (Mark 10:23) And this just hit his followers in the teeth. Because they had the understanding that if you were rich it was so only because God had blessed you. So you were in special favor if you were rich, otherwise you wouldn't be rich. See how the reasoning goes.

This passage has confused many people, because riches and poverty are such a big issue for people. Jesus didn't say it was easier for poor people to get in. He didn't say you couldn't get in if you have riches. What he did was he head on confronted the teaching that if you are rich, you are in with God.

Poverty in the Kingdom

So now he says, Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. (Luke 6:20) He's looking at poor people. Blessed are the poor, because yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are those who are hungry. Blessed are those when men hate you. Ostracize you, cast insults at you. And spurn your name as evil for the sake of the Son of Man.

So, are those good things? No. They are things that are regarded as bad by human beings, and if you're in those positions, you're not blessed. But Jesus is saying, no, if you're in the Kingdom of God, you're blessed even though you're in those positions. And you're equally blessed. You don't suffer by comparison.

Now is he saying that everyone who is poor is saved and going to heaven when they die? No, of course he's not saying that. Anyone who's known poor people knows that they can be just as wicked as rich people.

Actually, poor people can be more hung up on wealth than people who have it. Because they dream that it can do things that it cannot do. They trust it more, sometimes, than people who are rich, because people who are rich have found how little it can get you, as well as what it can get you. He's not saying everyone who's poor is saved.

And I have heard people preach that if you don't do what the Beatitudes say, you will not be saved. And I'm not going to mention the names of these people because they're well-known names, and names that we've already used in our discussions here. I've heard them get going and just say you have to be poor in spirit. You have to mourn. You have to...

And they think up ways of suggesting how you can do that. And they miss the whole point of the Beatitudes, which is the inversion of kingdoms, and the availability of the Kingdom to people who are not up in the world's system. And the unavailability of the Kingdom to some who are up in the world, in human estimation.

Wealth in the Kingdom

But I've heard people say if you're rich you'll go to hell. Now see, if you're obsessed with the issue of going to heaven or hell, you're going to have a hard time reading the Bible. Because it isn't always talking about that. So if you read blessed - oh that means saved. It doesn't mean that. Got something to do with it, but that's not what it means.

Look at the other side here, because you get woe-be's in this version. Verse 24. (Luke 6:24) Woe to you who are rich. Isn't that pretty plain, if you're rich you're in trouble.

Now, I've worked on this material at great length in a book called *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. There's a chapter in there, *Is Poverty Spiritual?* And it's a discussion of the back and forth over all this issue. And if you find it's something that you'd like to read, then I invite you to read it.

Because this is a huge tangle in contemporary thought and life. And you do have huge segments of the church visible, that believes that richness, riches, are a sign of decadence. And you couldn't possibly be rich or powerful and be right with God. That God is in favor of poor people over rich people. All sorts of confusions, and in a large measure they do derive from misunderstanding these teachings.

The Beatitudes don't tell you to do anything. They're announcements about the reality of the Kingdom of God, in relationship to the kingdom of men.

Jesus Way of Teaching

[56:00]

In order to understand them, you have to understand how Jesus teaches. And looking at these passages can help us with that.

Jesus does not teach generally by laying out general truths, but by contradicting prevailing assumptions, and allow... And causing you to think about that.

And you have to remember that they didn't have computers. They didn't have ballpoint pens and pads to write on. They didn't have recorders. So they came with nothing and they listened. So if you're going to teach in such a way that they get it, you can't lay out systematically a body of doctrine. You have to find ways of putting stingers into what they already believe, and so jarring them, that they will not have a problem remembering it. Did you hear what that man said?

Jesus Questions Assumptions

He teaches that way. He teaches by questioning prevailing assumptions and practices. And when you look at the Beatitudes, you have to understand that's what he's doing.

So when he says, "Blessed are the poor", he's not saying all poor people are blessed. He's saying, Your assumption that the rich are blessed is false. Because there are poor people who are blessed too. And they are blessed because they are...

If your assumption is that rich people are all well off, sorry. Because there are rich people who are in real trouble.

Now, I hope that this is not too difficult for you to get. Luke 14 is a good place to see it, because Luke 14... You have to understand how he teaches if you're going to get what he says, otherwise you'll turn it into legalisms and wind up where people do who discover, for example, that Jesus wants you to hate your mother and father. He said that, didn't he?

Well, if you don't understand how he teaches, and that teaching that you should hate your mother and father you'll think he's making a generalization. Whereas what he's doing is contradicting a generalization. The generalization that your mother and father should determine your life. That if you respect and love them you'll do what they say.

So imagine how Zebedee felt standing in the boat with his kids taking off down the coast with Jesus. (Mark 1:19-20) Right, you remember that? You could imagine Zebedee would say, These children must hate me. They left me here to deal with

all this business, and they're going after Jesus. They must hate me.

Jesus of course is not teaching anyone to hate anyone. He never taught that. But he did realize that the interpretation of loving, which meant that you would simply do what your parents said, even after you had grown up, had to be corrected because parents often misdirect you and you have to have a place to stand in the Kingdom of God to redeem family relations.

Jesus Questions Practices

Well in Luke 14 here you have him going to a dinner, and in verse 7 he starts teaching. He was invited by - and he says, he watches people as they take the places of - around the table if you wish.

And he says in verse 8 of Luke 14, When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may be invited...invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, You get up now, and you move down there, because I want this man to sit up here by me. And you in disgrace, get up and slink down to the last place in the table.

Now, you think Jesus was actually concerned about that? About you being embarrassed? Think he's actually concerned about that? When you're invited, go down to the last place, sit down at the last place, that when the one who has invited you comes, he'll say...

"Where's Joe?"

"Oh, Joe's way down there."

"Joe come on up here! I want you to sit by me."

Friend, move up . Then you'll have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

Now, do you do that? Then you're disobedient to Jesus. He told you to do it, didn't he? Look at the next... verse 12. When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives. And some people might say, I've really been looking for this verse. Or your rich neighbors. Lest they invite you in return, and repayment come to you. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed since they do not have the means to repay you and you will be repaid in the resurrection.

So does that now actually say you should never have your relatives over for dinner? No. It's addressing a general practice. And Jesus teaches in this way when he's down at the very concrete level. He addresses a general practice, and he addresses it by putting a particular case before you.

Jesus Contradicts Expectations

So, with reference to the Beatitudes. He's not saying that only those who are poor in spirit or poor in money are blessed. He's saying, contrary to the human expectation, the poor are often blessed because the Kingdom of God belongs to them. And the rich are not blessed, because they're not in the Kingdom of God. See, it's all relativized to the Kingdom.

So the meaning of the Beatitudes is to be understood in the light of this great inversion. They are primarily proclamation of the availability of the Kingdom. What are the Beatitudes? The Beatitudes don't tell you to do a thing. And if you just look at the grammar, you'll see that that certainly seems to be what he's doing. He doesn't tell you to do anything. It's proclamation of the Kingdom. The availability of the Kingdom.

It's not guarantees of blessedness or un-blessedness. And you'll see that when you understand how he teaches, and you realize what he's doing.

Jesus Answers Life's Great Questions

The two great questions that we've mentioned that have to be answered, and Jesus answers them in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5)

Who is well off?

And who is a good person?

[\[Session 4 1:27:50-1:37:00 \(p.37\); Q's #1-3 - Session 7 0:00-34:00\]](#)

And he answers who is well off in the first section up through Matthew 5:17. And he answers the question who is well off in such a way that it is shocking and revolutionary, and he has to say to the people who are listening, "Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law."

When do you say that kind of thing to a group? You say that kind of thing to a group when you know they're thinking that, don't you? Now why were they thinking that? They were thinking of that because of the shocking proclamation that he had just made about wellbeing, or blessedness. He had just announced that people who were on the list of unblessables in the human order can be blessed. And their blessing lies in the Kingdom.

And then in Luke of course, he adds the woe-be's. (Luke 6:24-26) The list of people who are thought to be - to have it made, in the human order, in the Kingdom of God can be totally left out.

So now what's the essential message? The essential message is, in the familiar words, "whosoever will may come. Whosoever will may come." It doesn't matter,

the human distinctions that may be drawn.

The Open Generosity of the Kingdom

Now then, go back to the verse about, that I gave you earlier about Matthew 11, 11 and 12, and Luke 16:16, where it talks about, since John the Baptist, people are violently taking the Kingdom. And taking... See, that's - the Beatitudes are about that. The Beatitudes are saying...

Now then tie that in with Jesus' practice. What was Jesus constantly in trouble over? Associating with the wrong people. Associating with the wrong people. Listen to this. Luke 15. "Now all the tax gatherers and the sinners were coming near to him to listen to him. (Luke 15:1) Those are the wrong folks. See, they're like lepers, and they should be going the other way.

"And both the Pharisees and the scribes begin to grumble." That's a feature of Pharisees and scribes. They grumble a lot. And here's what they said. "This man receives sinners. (Luke 15:2) And to top it off, he eats with them." He eats with them.

And he told them a parable. About the lost sheep. (Luke 15:3-7) And about the lost coin. (Luke 15:8-10) and about the lost son. (Luke 15:11-32) You see, the meaning of the Beatitudes is the openness of the Kingdom to all who trust in Jesus. See that's the story of the Gospels now.

Have this in mind, go through, read the... What do you see? Person after person coming to Jesus. You see the remarkable generosity of Jesus in the Kingdom of God. He's comfortable with all of them, because he's solidly situated in the Kingdom of God. So he can be with anyone, he can be anywhere.

That isn't necessarily always true of us. And we have to grow as his disciples before we can enter into that kind of thing, but we ought to have in mind that we can like him be anywhere with anyone, and perfectly safe, and perfectly strong in the Kingdom of God.

The Prophecy of Daniel

[1:07:45]

Now, just a final word. The prophecy of Daniel. (Daniel 2:35) Why does this upset people so much? Why do we constantly try to go back and civilize the Beatitudes? Why do you have people invest such efforts into how mourning will save you? And how being poor in spirit is really a matter of thinking that you're poor. That's so amusing to watch people try to translate these in ways that will fit into the legalistic mindset of human beings.

And they are disgraceful. They are, they're like the prodigal son. And the older brother is standing there looking with reproach.

You see, this is actually the announcement of the Kingdom that is cut out without hands. The stone that is cut out without hands in Daniel. (Daniel 2:44-24) That comes and crushes human order and fills the whole earth. And that's the eventual outcome of the Kingdom of God. It shakes the foundations in Haggai 2:6-7, so that the things that remain will remain, and those that are not eternal will disappear. It is the kingdoms of the world have become that of our Lord and of his Christ. And that's what puts the hallelujah in the "Hallelujah Chorus", isn't it?

The Gospel and the Meaning of the Beatitudes

Well now, I know I've raised a lot of questions, and we're going to have time later on to talk about those, so keep those things in mind about the meaning of the Beatitudes, and what it means for the poor in spirit to be blessed, and for the rich to be woe-be'd, and we'll come back to those.

But this is a very essential part of the gospel of the Kingdom of God, because that gospel inverts the natural human orders, or the human orders that we see about us in the wisdom of the world. In our fellowships of disciples, we will not respect the human order, the human pecking order of values.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 6 [1:10:34]** ~ ~ ~

~ 07 [Kingdom Goodness in the Whole Self](#) [YouTube link] [1:00:53]

[3 of 4 of The Ultimate Questions that Face Human Beings]

[Session 4 1:27:50-1:37:00 (p.40) Session 6 - 17:50 (p. 54)]

Question #1 - What is reality? - [See sessions 5 & 6 "Kingdom & Discipleship"]

Now, remember I said to you there are four great questions. One is what is reality? And we spent I guess more time on that than anything else. And Jesus's answer to that is God and his Kingdom. And everything under that is real. You depart from that, you become increasingly less real.

Question #2 - Who is well off? "Blessed" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, Chapter 4)

Now then, we've been looking at the question, Who's well off? That's a big question. A lot of people have different answers to it. Want to be very conscious, I think, about how people answer those questions in your work, in yourself, because that will mean the difference often between peace and not-peace for you if you understand where your wellbeing lies, and if you understand that it lies in the Kingdom of God.

See, human beings tend to think their wellbeing lies somewhere else, and so for example, those of us who are in Christian service, fulltime service, often spend a lot of time worrying and wondering about whether or not we're in the right place.

Jacob's dream

And just let me encourage you to think in terms of Jacob - remember Jacob's wonderful story, about how he was this crooked guy who was always cheating somebody out of something? (Genesis 28:10-22) Got in bad trouble, as people tend to do when they live that kind of life, and wound up on the run, and wound up sleeping in a ditch with a stone for a pillow. And if he had worn his cap backwards he could have run faster, maybe made it to the Motel 6 by nightfall.

He wound up in a ditch, and as he slept he had a dream. And the dream was Jacob's ladder. Remember Jacob's ladder? A kind of staircase ascending into heaven. And angels coming and going. Wonderful dream! You remember Jesus said people were going to see that in his case, remember that? They were going to see the heavens open, and the angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

Let me ask you to put yourself in that place, and think about that. The angels ascending and descending on you. When Jacob awoke, you remember he said God was in this place, and I did not know it. He said, this is the gateway to heaven.

God was in this place, and I did not know it.

God's presence

And it's very important for us to understand that God is where we are. We don't need to be someplace else. Getting someplace else may turn out to be something that will happen, and it can be good. But the truth of the matter is, God is where we are. We do not have to say, Who will ascend into heaven to bring him down? Or, who will go across the sea to bring him? Or who will descend into the depths? The word is nigh thee; it is even in your mouth. It is the word of faith which we preach. (Romans 10:6-8)

So I really want to encourage you to think that. And that God is where you are. And that where you are is the doorway to heaven. Remember heaven doesn't mean what happens after you die, OK. Heaven means the presence of God, the Kingdom of God. It's here.

And it does not matter what you are, who you are, what you've got for you, what's got, you got against you. None of that matters. None. That's the lesson of the Beatitudes. That's what the Beatitudes are about. And you only understand the gospel of the Kingdom of God if there's no limit to who you can go to. To whom you can go, and say blessed. No limit.

Writing Beatitudes

Why don't you write some Beatitudes tonight? If you were to write some Beatitudes with what you know now about the Kingdom of God, what would you write? What would you write? Take a moment and write one. Blessed are the...

Now you're going to put on there somebody that in the human scale is thought to be nothin'. Nobody. Is thought to be someone who is not blessed. Who can you put on your list? Now remember they're not blessed because they're in the condition they're in. They're blessed because the Kingdom is available to them. Hm?

Blessed are the unemployed. Blessed are those who are pregnant too many times. Blessed are those who can't get pregnant at all. Blessed are those who are overemployed, underemployed. Blessed are the fat. Can you do that one? In our culture, that's a big one. Isn't it.

JR: Blessed are those with cell phones.

Dallas: Blessed are those who have cell phones, for they shall be called. [Huge laughter]

JR: How about, blessed are the gamblers for they will become rich - in the Kingdom?

Dallas: If gamblers are considered to be those who are unblessable, then you could apply that. Remember you're looking for people who are thought to be unblessable. Maybe those who are addicted to gambling - but now the reason would not be because they're addicted to gambling, remember. The blessing is not in the condition; it's in the Kingdom. Do you understand that? That's the key. That's how it works.

Blessing unblessables

Now, if you have trouble with going to people who are considered unblessable and pronouncing their blessing in the Kingdom, then you haven't gotten the message of the Kingdom yet. Because the message of the Kingdom is precisely that all of those that human beings regard as unblessable are not unblessable, if they enter into the Kingdom. If they don't, it's another story, because the Beatitudes are all about the Kingdom, and entering into the Kingdom.

So now, that's a radical message, folks, and it will upset most churches if you preach it. Because that will...that would mean that you're breaking down the social barriers, the pecking order, that most people in our churches assume to be valid.

So, now, the New Testament struggles with that; you remember what James for example says about respecting rich people, and dising poor people. (James 2:1-7) You remember that? That goes on in our churches all the time. Who are the nobodies in our churches, and how do they get treated? Is Jesus' way of treating them mean treating them all the same? Is that something that is a part of our teaching and our faith?

So those are huge issues now, and I know that they are, and I don't pretend that I have settled them all, but I do encourage you, if you have a copy of *The Divine Conspiracy*, at some point, sit down and read chapter four. Just sort of let it come over you, and see what it does for you.

See, the issue of wellbeing is fundamental. Who is well off? That idea is fundamental to human life, because we are responsible for our lives, we have choices to make. We have to know how to relate to God in our world, and we may feel like we are shut out of God, because we are among the unblessables. And that is where we have to understand the extent and what is contained in that phrase *Whosoever will may come*. *Whosoever will may come*, and what that means. *The Sermon on the Mount* deals with the two central questions of the Ultimate Questions that face Human Beings: *Who is well off?* *Who is a really good person?*

Question #3 - Who is a really good person?

[10:25]

Matthew 5:20 *"Unless your righteousness exceeds the Scribes and Pharisees..."*

Well, let's move on now to the other question of the Sermon on the Mount. Sermon the Mount deals with the two central questions that I listed earlier, when I talked about the four main questions, and those two central questions are, Who's well off? and Who's a good person? So now having... And the first question is primary, because you can't really go on to the second question until you deal with the first one.

But now we want to turn to the second question, which is the question of who is a really good person. So you start with Matthew 5:20, and there Jesus in continuity - and I can't go back and build the bridge here - but I hope you will in your studies; I hope you will build the bridge between **Matthew 19 and 20**, actually between **Matthew 17 and 20**, and make that a part of your faith and your teaching.

But Matthew 5:20 gives us this startling word. Unless your righteousness...

New righteousness

[11:35]

Now righteousness, "dikaiosune" [Greek term] is not an easy word to translate. Think of it as your goodness. What makes you a really good person. What makes you a really good person, and that is agape love, is constitutes goodness, but... I say to you unless you, your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of the heavens. (**Matthew 5:20**)

Now remember, first, that's not saying you won't go to heaven when you die. It's a different topic. It's talking about entering into an engagement in your life and practice with the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is the Kingdom of God. That's the phrase that comes out of the Jewish experience with the Kingdom of God, and it's standardly used in Matthew. Matthew does use the phrase the Kingdom of God, but it's very rare. It's normally the kingdom of the heavens. That's because it expresses the Jewish experience of God, and that experience was in the first heaven. It was in - God appeared in the atmosphere, which is the first heaven. And of course that goes all the way down to the ground. So, entering the Kingdom of the heavens means to engage with what God is doing in the world around us. Now, here's...

New birth

[13:15]

What the verse says is unless you get out of the scribe and Pharisee mode, unless you come to a different level of goodness, you will not be in interactive relationship with the kingdom of the heavens.

Now there are other passages where Jesus talks about entering it - and of course the one that's most familiar is **John 3:5**, "Unless you are born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens." The Kingdom of God, in that case. And once again in Matthew 18, Unless you repent and become like a little child, you cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens, in that case. (**Matthew 18:1-4**)

So those are three ways of describing what it means to enter the kingdom of the heavens, and our task now is to try to understand as best we can what he's saying here in Matthew 5 and following about entering it and going beyond the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee.

Pharisee Righteousness

So let's think first about what is the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee. And it is the righteousness or the goodness of the deed, mostly what one did not, because most of these commandments were negative. Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not bear false witness and so on from the Ten Commandments, but the overwhelming number of the commandments are negative.

And they led into a system of righteousness, which is the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, which referred to what you did. And so, what does it mean to go beyond the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees?

Kingdom Righteousness

It means to locate your righteousness in something other than what you do. In order to try to help my students in ethics understand this, I often tell them a thief is not just someone who steals. A thief is someone who would steal if the situation were right.

Inner difference

Now, obviously that's to make a point, and there are some qualifications to be had, but the truth of the matter is, there's a great difference between a person who would steal if the situation were right, and a person who wouldn't steal no matter what the situation was. There's a great difference. It's a difference in the soul of the person. One can have the soul of a thief a murderer or an adulterer, and never do it. Perhaps just because of the fear of what would happen if they did.

Now, it's better not to do it. But what Jesus is saying is unless you get beyond just not doing it, you're not going to be in interaction with the kingdom of God. So conversely, if you want to get in interaction with the Kingdom of God, you have to move to a different level. And that is the level of your thoughts, your feelings, your character, your habits, habitual way you live in your body and in your world.

So, the cases that you have in Matthew 5 are murder, and you have the - that's the... The righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisee was, don't kill anybody! But that's not the Kingdom righteousness. [["The Whole Self"](#)]

Matthew 5 Cases - Lessons in Kingdom Righteousness [16:35]

And so Jesus goes on to contrast the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee with Kingdom righteousness, and we're going to talk more about that tomorrow in detail, because what I want to go is from the general and abstract right down to the most concrete, and we're not going to hit the concrete until tomorrow. Maybe this evening we'll get a little more into it.

Adultery

But the general idea here is, thou shalt not commit adultery. OK, I didn't commit adultery. On the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees I'm OK. And that... Out of that comes language like, I did not have sex with that woman. Did you ever hear that. Language like, Well, it depends on what the meaning of is is. That's classical righteousness of scribes and Pharisees. Depends on what the meaning of is is.

That's the way, and Bill Clinton learned that language, unfortunately, in church. Because in sexual behavior of young people over the last decades, that has emerged a whole list of legalistic distinctions between what you do and what you don't do, and what counts as what. See that's all pharisaism. And that I think is something that's pretty generally known, but it has become a stock in trade now, of young people who are dealing with sexual issues.

Divorce

Then you have other cases like divorce. You had someone who said, Well I divorced my wife, and I did it according to the law. I gave her a bill of divorcement. Pink slip. Gave her a pink slip. I'm righteous. Jesus says no no, you're not righteous if you do that. Moses set up that arrangement, because it was important to keep women alive, among other things. And they could easily be killed if they didn't have that. But that's not a good thing, he says.

Vows

Keeping your vows. I've kept my vows. Well, Jesus says no, it's not a matter of

keeping your vows. It's a matter of making them in the first place. Why do you make vows? And so letting your yes be yes, and no be no, means that you go beyond just the finesse of the wording and keeping your wording, and you go into the heart of why you're saying things to people in the first place.

What does that mean, let your yes be a yes, and your no be a no. It means don't try to manipulate people by saying yesses which are noes, and noes which are yesses. Or saying yesses which are yes yes yes yes yes yes yes, right, trying to wear people down. Just say, it's this way. It's not that way.

Plain speaking, simple, allow others to do what they're going to do, take their stand, and that is the righteousness of the Kingdom. What he's really talking against here is trying to manipulate people by using impressive language. Invoking God. Invoking the devil.

And then he goes on to spell out some more particular kinds of things. I just want you to see the cases there, to get the contrast.

Luke 12:1 - "*Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees.*" [20:10]

Now, why is the leaven of the Pharisees' hypocrisy? This will help us understand more about what the righteousness of scribe and Pharisee is; and Jesus talks a lot about the scribes and the Pharisees, and he really warns us about the leaven of the Pharisees, and doing what the Pharisees do. So, in Luke 11 there, he says, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

What does leaven stand for? You know, we talked about leaven or yeast when we started out here, and we talked about how the Kingdom of God is like yeast or leaven that a woman hid in a bushel of dough or something of that sort, and just put it in there. And then pretty soon, everywhere in that dough, there was leaven. It's a moving, living, force.

So when Jesus speaks of the leaven of the Pharisees, he's talking about the moving, living force in pharisaism. Our language today, we might say the "spirit" of the Pharisee is hypocrisy. It's what moves and drives everything they do.

Concern for doing right

But the question is why is the leaven of the Pharisee hypocrisy. Two things you have to understand. One's good. The Pharisee is really concerned about doing the right thing. That's good. That's commendable.

And we want to do justice to the Pharisee, and you want to remember that probably, the best followers of Jesus were Pharisees. They were soon ex-Pharisees,

but they started out from pharisaism. And these were good people, and they meant well. So that's...

That first part, that's good. They were very serious about doing the right thing, and not doing the wrong thing.

Failure to change the heart

The second part is not good, and explains why, with the first, they're driven into hypocrisy. And that was that if you just try to do the right thing, or not do the wrong thing, you will certainly fail. You cannot succeed on that path. You have to go to a deeper level of the self than controlling your actions.

There are many lessons that Jesus teaches us about this. For example, he says, Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45) That means what there's a lot of in your heart comes out your mouth. And what comes out your mouth is what there's a lot of in your heart.

Remember Mike Tyson bit off Holyfield's ear. And his explanation was, I blew it! That's very common of people. They will... That's supposed to explain something - I blew it. It's supposed to let them off the hook. Oh that wasn't me. Yeah, but it was him. That's why he blew it. Blowing it came out of his heart. Holyfield didn't bite his ear off, you know. He wasn't - that wasn't in him. But Mike Tyson did that. And you look at Mike Tyson, you get a sense of what's in the man.

See, what's in the person comes out, if not the mouth then the action. Our actions do not come from nowhere; they come from somewhere. And the Pharisee always fails because they do not know that. And they do not practice that. They keep trying to control their actions rather than change their heart, and their mind, and their feelings.

Applying Intention

Now we almost ought to pause over this for a moment and just have a moment of meditation, because this is the crux of the matter. We talked about intention earlier and we'll have to talk about intention again.

But the intention has to be applied at the right place. I have to become the kind of person who not only would not kill, or does not kill, but who would not kill. Not only who does not commit adultery, but would not. See, that...

So my intention has to be applied at that level, and that's what Jesus is saying. Because when you turn to that level, then the kingdom of the heavens will interact with you, and you will find that you can change. But if you stay at the act level,

the kingdom of the heavens will not cooperate with you, and you will fail.

The role of grace

Now of course one of the great things about grace is grace actually operates at this deeper level. It operates at the other level too, but it is through grace that we can become genuinely transformed and our intentions can be fulfilled to become the kind of person that Jesus was, and that he has called us to be and given to us.

Matthew 23 - Indicting the Pharisees

[25:25]

Now, the indictments of the Pharisees were pretty awesome, and I think we ought to take some time to look at that, so let's turn to Matthew 23, and this isn't the only one, but this is the one where Jesus... This is coming toward the end of his ministry, and this is where he really begins to spell it all out.

And I have to tell you that this is one of the passages that really got after me when I was, as I say, a young minister trying to do something, and I kept coming across this passage. I said, is this talking about me? And I began to suspect maybe all the Pharisees weren't dead, you know? And maybe there were a few - maybe I'm one of them.

Teach without doing

Now here's what he says in chapter 23 of Matthew. The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses, that is to say they profess to teach the Law. Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe. But do not do what they do. For they say things and do not do them. (Matthew 23:1-3) Would you agree with me that the clear implication of this passage is that you ought to do what you say? Is the clear implication of this passage that we can do the things that Moses said. Would you think that is it? He's giving them a criticism here.

Says, They tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a little finger. (Matthew 23:4) Put out a little finger and lift, see? They do all...

Do to be seen

Now, then he begins to analyze their case. Here's why they fail. Here's why they fail. They do all their deeds to be noticed by men. They broaden their phylacteries, those were ritual clothing, and lengthen the tassels of their garments. (Matthew 23:6) This was supposed to show that they were very righteous. Imagine that. They love the place of honor at banquets.

Remember the Luke 14 passage, about not taking the place of honor, but go sit

down at the card table out in the kitchen, and wait till someone calls you. They love the places of honor at banquets, the chief seats in the synagogues. They love respectful greetings in the marketplace. Being called by men Rabbi. (Matthew 23:6-7)

Rabbi is professor, right. I mean, it's no deal not to come someone Rabbi today if you're not a, if you're not, in our circles. Rabbi is teacher, professor. Doctor. Don't be called Rabbi. You have one teacher, and you're all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth father, for one is father. He's the one in heaven. Do not call them leader, or teacher, for one is your leader that is Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant, and whoever exalts himself will be humbled. And whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12) See, people who do things to be seen of men are seeking to be exalted.

Now one of the greatest burdens that will ever fall off of your back is when you learn to not do anything to be seen of men. Your life will be much easier. Don't do anything to be seen of men. Jesus taught about that in Matthew 6, didn't he. Talked about doing your alms to be seen of men, talked about praying, and about fasting to be seen of men. He's... Don't do that. If you do it to be seen of men, what will happen? Men will see you. Wow. God will disregard you, because you will have got what you wanted, which was to be seen of men. So men will say, wow that guy really gave a great prayer. Or he gave a wonderful contribution.

Fundraising around universities are interesting. You can get people to give, rich people to give money, but they want their name on the building. The one thing you can't raise funds for is mops and vacuum cleaners to keep the buildings clean after they've built them. I guess if you put their names on the mops, that might help. Why do people give? To be seen of him. So a fundraiser normally has to play on that motivation, or people won't give. This is a great trap.

Obstruct the Kingdom

Well, Jesus gives us some very severe woes now, you know. He's into giving woes. Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites because you shut off the kingdom of the heavens from men. For you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites. You devour widows' houses, and while even for a pretense you make long prayers, therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. Woe to you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on land and sea to make one proselyte, and when you...he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you yourselves are. (Matthew 23:13-15) Well, from a human point of view you can see why they killed him, can't you. I mean, this is not the way to win friends and influence people.

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So, on he goes. And it continues on through the rest of the chapter. Now, I mean, it heats up, You serpents. You brood of vipers. How shall you escape the sentence of hell ? (Matthew 23:33) This is for Pharisees. And it winds up in this great lament over Jerusalem. (Matthew 23:37-39) Jerusalem, which did not understand what God was doing and put itself crosswise.

So now you compare that to the goodness of the Kingdom: loving God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, your strength, and your neighbor as yourself, see. Now that's...the difference, is it's internalized. The righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisee, in terms of deeds, it is primarily for the benefit of being observed and recognized. It means that you manipulate your social relationships in that way. That your standing before men is the important thing. Your standing in God is pushed away. That leads to hypocrisy.

What is Kingdom Goodness? [[Answer to Q#3](#)]

[33:15]

So now, what is Kingdom goodness? Well, I've said earlier now and I'll say it again. Kingdom goodness means that every aspect of our being is permeated with agape love. Don't worry about perfection, OK, because probably that is process which will not be completed in this life. But we can make progress. And so when you see that bumper sticker: Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven, just remember that there is a lot of distance between being perfect and being forgiven. And that the issue is not being perfect.

The Whole Self - 6 Parts Diagram [[Agape is "Kingdom Goodness"](#)] [34:00]

In all aspects of the self, love comes to predominate. What would that look like?

~ **Social Relations**

The issue is getting better. And the way we get better is by following the internal transformation, and I bring back now this diagram because I want to emphasize again that in all aspects of the self, love comes to predominate.

Now what would that mean, let's say, in social relations? In relationships between people. Well, it would mean, it would pull together a lot of stuff we've already talked about. For example, it would mean that rejection goes out of our relationships to others. We don't reject people. Even people we disagree with, and people we think are wrong. We don't reject them. See, to reject someone means to distance them, put out of our relationship. That's what the Pharisees did. That's why they were mad at Jesus about him sitting with people and eating with them. Rejection means to push away, to push away. We don't do that.

A good question for Christian practice is a question I often get in presenting this material to Christians. How can you fire someone in love? How can you fire someone without rejecting them? Now that's very similar to the question that came up yesterday about, can you be a soldier? Can you kill someone in battle in love? What's the answer?

The answer is yes. Can you fire someone in love? Yes. But it rarely is done that way. Can you as a soldier go into battle and cause people to die, and do that as an act of love? Yes you can. But it almost never is done that way. And if it were done that way, there'd be a lot less people dying. And there'd be a lot fewer wars.

Predominance of love

But you can describe a situation in which one would, in an effort to achieve what was loving and good for everyone involved, bring about the death of another person. You can... You don't have to approve of, agree with, people to love them. You have to seek their good in the context of everyone that is involved.

So, for example, if someone is not performing well on the job, and is affecting the wellbeing of everyone in the workplace, the business itself and all of that, time would come when you would say, as an act of love, I have to fire you. I have to let you go. Now, if that happened, what you would see is not distancing, because ordinarily when that happens, the two...the people involved never want to see one another again. So you have to think about how you, if you were going to fire someone, would not distance yourself from them. And if you're being fired, how would you carry that and not distance yourself from the person who fired you? Even if you disagree. See those are the kinds of things that we rarely have a

chance to talk about because we don't even get there to talk about them. We just... We're out the door.

Or in the case of killing, we wind up hating the people that we are opposing. That's usually that's what happens, isn't it, in war. And in fact you'll see the effort of governments to get you to hate the person on the other side.

Elimination of hate

And so those are things that we can work through, and once we begin to understand what love is, then that social circle there can eliminate attack and rejection as personal matters that involve hatred, contempt, and so on. So, most of you are not... You may have seen the pictures of Nazis or Japanese that were used in the Second World War by the government to inflame hatred and contempt for the other side. And I must say that you have to be well advanced in Kingdom living before you can avoid that. But the point is, you can avoid it, and it is a good thing for you to do that. Well that just kind of illustrates that.

~ **The Body** - The body for...

The body is very important, because the body is usually posed to do things that are not loving. And this can...this covers all kinds of activities. But the body can be transformed so that instead of being ready to do the thing that is hateful and unloving, it is ready to do the thing that is loving and unhateful.

~ **The Soul** - The deepest part of the self [39:30]

So, the soul, the soul is the deepest part of the self, and the soul has to be retuned. The law is basic in this because the soul that works aright, is the soul that naturally follows the law of God. That's why the 19th Psalm says, The law of the God is perfect, transforming the soul. (Psalm 19:7) The law of the God... The law of God is perfect, transforming the soul. It's because as we come back into order, with the law, then the deepest parts of ourself, and the soul is the part of you that makes all the others come together to form one life. And when it's broken, life doesn't come together. So the healing has to go there, and the word, Thou restorest my soul, is a wonderful phrase in the 23rd Psalm, and the soul that is restored is a soul that works in harmony with the law.

God's law

Conversely, if you want your soul to be restored, one way is to begin to track with the law of God, begin to do the things that the law says. Like most people who are in trouble in life, the first thing that they need to do is stop doing things that are wrong. Now, we have a whole system of explanation that sets that aside. But no matter what your situation in life is, the first thing that you need to do is stop doing things that are wrong. First thing that I need to do is stop doing things that

are wrong. And there will be many effects of that, but most important is my soul will be in track with the Kingdom of God. It will begin to track with the Kingdom of God. And as it does that, then the abundance of the Kingdom of God will increasingly move into my life.

Now, if I have the attitude that I've been insulted, stepped on, spat upon, sat upon, and I have therefore every right to do what is wrong because I've been injured, well then you can have that too. And it will get you absolutely nowhere. But the... Once you begin to track with the law, then you begin to draw on the abundance of the Kingdom of God. That is how you seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and you begin to benefit from that.

Now, I'm not a prosperity gospel; I don't think it will get you a Cadillac, or anything. The Cadillac isn't anything anymore, is it? You have to go... So it shows you how old I am. So, that's hardly better than a Chevrolet, is it? But what will happen is that everything you need will be provided. That's Kingdom stuff, see. It will be provided. If you don't track with it, then it won't be, because you will not be tracking in the abundance of God's provision.

~ **The Spirit (or the Heart) and The Mind** - Well, all the other parts here, like the spirit or the heart, surrender to God, willing to love, not caught up in having its own way, a mind that is not obsessed with what I want, what's going to happen to me, what's been done to me and so on. But a mind that is devoted to Christ and to God that keeps him before the mind. That's going to bring different feelings; you're going to have joy and peace and love instead of anxiety and hatred and depression and so on. So that's the kind of transformation you get.

Transforming the Actions

Now once you get that kind of transformation, then the actions are different. The actions are a natural expression of what's in those circles. So this little diagram is intended to sort of show that. And you have all the aspects: feeling, thoughts, body, social, there. And then the soul is the circle around the whole thing, and then at the center is the will, and out of the heart comes the action. So, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Well, part...that's partly...you have to understand it partly in terms of how the heart restructures by grace all of those other circles. Because if there are certain things - for example, if you're devoted to Christ, the love of God, loving your neighbor as yourself - if you're devoted there's certain things you will not think. They will not come to mind. And there are certain things that if you think they will shrink any possibility of you loving your neighbor.

Love

See, we have in this country the idea that what you think in your mind is nobody else's business. It's everybody else's business, that you affect by your action, because your actions come out of what is in your mind. But it's a part of what we

call freedom in our country, to think well you can just think anything. It's nobody else's business.

So for example, pornography's a private matter. No, it's not a private matter. Not a private matter at all. And when you see people who are in trouble sexually you're going to probably find it's because of something like that where they've devoted their attention to this and it possesses their mind, and then it comes out.

Pornography is a first level problem for ministers in our country. And internet pornography is even stronger because it creates a certain sense of intimacy. It's curious how this works, but cyberspace is seductive because it creates an aspect of intimacy that makes more powerful the sexual tones that come over. And intimacy is what people are looking for in sex. They want intimacy. And they only keep pushing the physical buttons because they hope to get a little intimacy out of it, but it actually just makes it more and more distanced.

So there are certain things in relationships to other people, in churches, in business, in the community - I mean they just won't think. One of the saddest things about our political life is observing what people allow themselves to think about others. I mean, there's a lot of stuff you should just never allow yourself to think that people of good character have always known that. And we even have a little language about that; like, don't go there. Right? That often refers to the social situation, but it's actually advice about our mind, and our feelings. Don't go there. Just don't go there.

So, as that transformation comes about, then the actions will be different. Now the Pharisee says, sit on the action. Kingdom righteousness says, take care of the inside. We're going to have to pay some attention to the actions, that's for sure, because they have consequences, but still, if you want to get control of the actions, you deal with what is on the inside, what is in the heart. OK.

Well I hope you get this picture now, and this is just spells out a little bit more of it, and see what really is the innermost part of us is this heart, and this third point here, the inner tilt click or yes to a more or less extensive course of events, that is what really constitutes the innermost phase of the self.

Let me see how much time I have here to cover what I have to cover.

Transforming the Will

[46:50]

So if we pay attention to the will, then everything else can be directed from that, and so for example with reference to what is in the mind, don't be conformed to this world, be transformed with the reun...how...well, your will has to come into play with that. You have to decide, and you have to do the things that - and that's where spiritual disciplines come in, which we'll talk more about in a little bit.

So in God's plan, the function of the will is to trust God. That's the basic issue. So that means the surrender of the will to God, not to itself. The will is something that has to be surrendered in the sense that it must not be taken as ultimate, or it will be poisonous, it will turn back on the self, and try to devote all of the energies of the self to getting one's own way. You will have your kingdom, God's Kingdom will have to go its way, and you'll take your kingdom and go its way.

So Satan's plan is the... In Satan's plan, the function of the will is to be absorbed in itself. And when we are absorbed in ourselves, then this wonderful phrase in Isaiah 53, All we like sheep have gone astray. (Isaiah 53:6) So now, how does a sheep go astray? Does anyone know how a sheep goes astray? One blade of grass at a time. One nibble at a time. They just nibble, and pretty soon, they don't know where they are.

And that's how we go astray if we are governed by our will. If we just do the thing we want, that's it. And we go astray. If we devote our will to God, and through him, to the good of others, then we don't go astray. But, each of us has turned into his own way, that's the way the sheep goes astray. But we have to have the larger view, and as we have that larger view, then all the segments of the self begin to pull in line, and as a result of that, we have a self that is devoted to God.

Two Forms of the Will

[49:28]

1.) Impulsive Wil

Now, you want to recognize there are two forms the will takes. And this is extremely important for our culture today, which is as we said last time, is absorbed in feeling. And essentially sensual culture. And the first is vital or impulsive will, and that is simply will that identifies itself with desire. If I want it, I grab it. A kid has that kind of will. It's typical of a child to have vital or impulsive will. And again, there's nothing wrong with that. We have to have that as well, especially when we're younger, because that's what keeps us alive and nourishes us and does things like that, so that's important. But you can't live by that. You cannot live by following your desires. For one thing, your desires conflict.

2.) Rational will

The second thing is, your desires conflict with the other desires of others you're intimately related to, so you have to have a larger picture, and that's where the rational, or moral, will comes in. And that's normative for adults. Typical of adults, but normative for adults, but the failure to have this is typical of adults who never grow up. So you need to insert there, failure is typical of adults who never grow up. Typically that's the kind of person who has to have what they want when they

want it, who gets attached to what they want, and disregards the larger good.

The rational or moral will is normative because it looks at the larger picture. It says, not what do I want, but, what is good. Now the person who doesn't grow up is the person who doesn't realize that there is a difference between what you desire, and what's good. They identify the desired with the good. Now, living in the Kingdom of God is the best way to have the larger view as to what is good. And that's where this comes together with what is basically just a psychological understanding of the self.

Discipleship Produces Character

[51:45]

Now then. Character is will settled into habitual patterns of action. And now this is what we're looking for in terms of discipleship. Discipleship is the process through which the character of Christ becomes the settled or habitual pat...patterns of our action. And that means where it is largely outsourced to our body and our social context. Character can be bad, or character can be good.

But what we want is, in the person who is transformed inwardly is, without thinking, they are prepared to do what is good. To do what is right. Without thinking. Character is to a large degree what you do without thinking. But it also in some degree has to do with what you do after you think.

Automatic responses

Again, see, use Peter here as the illustration, because we're all familiar with it. What...When Peter said to Jesus, I will not deny you, he meant it. He meant it. When Jesus said, You will deny me three times, he wasn't questioning Peter's intentions, but he knew what was in the rest of Peter. And Peter did not know that. So Peter didn't know his character; Jesus knew his character. (Mark 14:26-31)

Now, it is a tribute to Peter's character that also after he did it he went out and wept bitterly. (Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:62) Right. That was his character too. But that was not the part of the character that controlled his automatic responses. His automatic response was different from his intention, and that is typical of the person whose character has not been redeemed and healed, and brought to wholeness in Christ. Is it inconsistent.

You ever have someone in your church or on your staff that is inconsistent. Most of us have had to deal with that. Sometimes we've had to deal with it in ourself. What do we say of such a person? You can't count on them. You can count on the person who is ready to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. That's the person of good consistent character. Now some people you can count on to do the wrong thing. That's bad character. It's still character. They consistently do

what is wrong.

Self control

Now this idea of outsourcing is crucial. Don't underestimate it. That's why I brought up the circle diagram in the earlier talk and brought it up again today. It's because you have to understand how character works. Character involves all of those aspects of the self. But character is not just a matter of will. It's all of those things. And you start here, you're reborn, and you're given a relationship to the Kingdom of God and to Jesus, and then with that you begin to move out, and now you hear commands.

Like Peter, 1, 2 Peter 3:18. Perhaps all of you have memorized that. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What does that mean? That means, as you increasingly allow grace to come into all of these areas, see, your character changes. And now you can reliably do the things that you intend to do. Self control is one of the expressions of this. In order to have self control, you have to have a self that is in control. If you have stuff running wild out here, now that's not in control. Because at some point pop! and out comes something. And so, the transformation of the self as whole is what we look at when we are cultivating and growing the righteousness of the Kingdom.

Where Character Goes Wrong

Now the scribe and the Pharisee also has a character; it's just the wrong character. It's just the wrong character. What they have the character of doing is in intending to do things that are right, mainly for appearance, and they have a hidden dimension of themselves which they don't want people to know. That's why openness and truthfulness become such an important part of growth in Christlikeness. It's because that openness keeps us from having that hidden dimension that is running our lives.

Hiddenness

Now, when I was younger I guess I assumed that you always had to have a hidden dimension. And it's a great relief to know that you can come to the place where you don't. Well, what about all the disgraceful things you did? You just open up. That's what confession is about. You stop hiding. You allow people to know who you are. See. And you stop saying, well I can't let them know that about me, or I wouldn't be able to lead. I wouldn't be able to influence; no one would listen to me any longer. Well hopefully that's in the past, and you can understand that that is governed, covered by the blood of Jesus, by forgiveness, and then you have to count on them to accept that also, right.

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Now, if it's in the future, confession is one of the things as a discipline that is so powerful and the reason for that is it opens up the self and enables it to get help to change. So, confession as they say, is good for the soul but bad for the reputation. But that's partly why it's good for the soul, is it's bad for the reputation. And we need to come to the place to where we're not hiding what we have done anymore. We are, we admit we are sinners, right? Admit that. And that's hard for our churches often, because we're caught up in the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. I don't mean that you should rub this in everyone's face that comes by.

Transparency

But you want to be in a position where you're not hiding from the past. And if there's something in the present you want to have someone, some group of people, that you are opening that to as you ask for help. To get rid of that hidden dimension of the self. We speak about people being transparent. That's what we want is transparency. You can't be transparent unless you've learned to trust God, and unless you have received forgiveness, unless you are prepared to let him handle your public relations. But that's the only place there is any peace, is in transparency. And when we accept that, and we move into it, then that helps clear up all of these areas tremendously. It strengthens us as we move on in growth and grace.

Poised to do what is good

Well, so then, you would have here, how's this - how such love is in the whole person, it possesses all those dimensions of the circle, and poises them towards what is good and what is right. The body is then poised to do what is good without thinking about it. See Peter didn't know that his body was poised to do what was wrong without thinking about it. That's what he didn't know about himself; Jesus knew that about him. Relations to others purged from withdrawal and attack, the soul running smoothly in the tracks of the Kingdom.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 7 @ 1:00:53** ~ ~ ~

~ 08 [The Process of Transformation - Grace](#) [YouTube link] [38:24]

The Process of Transformation

Now, now we come to the major issue that we have to deal with, and that is in some detail how this happens. And I'm going to go over this in a general way now, and then in the meetings later, I will talk about some of the particular things that we can do.

Grace

Not by human effort alone, OK. Let's settle that. So, not without grace. We're not talking about bringing the inner transformation of the self into Christlikeness by human effort. OK?

But note the next one. Not without human effort. We still have to act. The statement, Grow in grace, from Peter is a command. That means that we do it.

Effort

How do you grow in grace? That's our question. How do you grow in grace? Grace is a gift. Can you control that? Can you pull up to it like you would pull up to the pump at a gas station and just download grace.

Well, the answer is, sort of. Strangely enough. And one of the greatest difficulties that we have in our religious circles today is not understanding how effort works with grace. But you must make an effort if this transformation is to come about. Not without grace, and the Holy Spirit. Obviously. But not by grace and the Holy Spirit alone. That's passivity. And the transformation of the inner being, the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee is going to be something that will not happen passively.

Jesus

So now notice the last line on the screen, because this will give you some balance I think. We're very familiar with the statement, Without me you can do nothing. **(John 15:5)** And that is true. That is why there is no boasting in this matter. Paul makes it very clear, Boasting is eliminated because it's by grace. **(Romans 3:27)** Right? Boasting is a terrible thing that it disrupts everything in Kingdom living, so that has to be eliminated. But now notice also that you can be sure if you do nothing it will be without him. And there's again a place we just kind of need to stop and let the - just let sit with you. If we do nothing, it will be without him. Without me you can do nothing.

OK, yes, right. We agree. But that's not the end of the story. Because in the very passage in which Jesus is saying, without me you can nothing...do nothing, he's giving you a command. Do you remember what the command is? It is, Abide in the vine. (**John 15:1-11**) That's a command. That's like grow in grace. Abide in the vine.

I. The Role of Grace in the Life We are Talking About [3:45]

So now this brings us to this issue that we've brought up several times, and now we need to try to say something a little more definitive on it. And that is the role of grace in the life we're talking about. So let's start with a statement about what grace is, and just try it on, folks. I'm not, you know, I'm not trying to dictate to you. I give you things that you can see how they work. So let's go with this idea of grace, and see if that is going to do the job.

God acting

Grace is God acting in our lives to bring about what we cannot do on our own. That's grace. That's God's grace. God acting in our lives to bring about what we cannot do on our own. Is it unmerited favor? Of course it's unmerited favor. But if you just say grace is unmerited favor, you don't say what it does.

And this is where the teaching of grace can easily slip over into the default gospel that says grace just have to do with the imputation of righteousness. It has to do with merit of Christ being substituted for your demerit, to bring you out of the red and into the black with God, you see. So you have to say more about grace than just that it is unmerited favor. Is it unmerited favor? Yes, it is unmerited favor. What does it do? It does this. Grace is God acting in our life to bring about what we cannot make happen on our own.

Supports effort

So now, we'll want to look at some of these passages in a moment to see how this works, but there're just another point or two here that we need to make.

And the most important one is that grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning. God acting in our life doesn't mean that we do nothing. But grace means that we never come to the place of saying we've earned what comes out at the end of the process. Earning out of the question. Whether it's earning your way into heaven, or earning success in your ministry, or earning a lovely family that you have. No, grace is involved in that. You can never say, I earned it. You always wind up saying, Thank God for that. Because that's the activity of God on your behalf.

And so, the effect is to eliminate pride, and boasting, and self-reliance, and self-will. It is to say to God, I am dependent on you. I am surrendered to you. I am following your direction. I'm expecting your help. I'm going to do my very best, but I'm not going to trust my best. I will engage in disciplines, but I don't trust disciplines, right. I will seek to know, to get knowledge, I'll try to keep myself strong on all of that. But I don't trust that. My trust is in God.

So grace does not make you passive, but it also doesn't allow you to be proud. It does not allow you to trust yourself. Because you recognize that what you're involved in is something that is far greater than anything that you can do.

Paul On Grace

[7:25]

Well, this last point is we need to look at a few verses on this one. Here's a case that I spoke about last night, in **Ephesians 3:8**. You remember what Paul said there? Unto me the least of all saints, this grace is given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. Now just think about that. That's grace. Does it have to do with guilt? No. Does it have to do with God acting in our lives to bring about what we can't do on our own? Yes. Obviously. That's what Paul's talking about.

1 Corinthians 15:10. Another statement by Paul about grace. He really does seem to have been the one who understood it best, and certainly he deserves a lot of attention for the way...for what he says about grace. **1 Corinthians 15:10** is he's talking about how he was born out of time as a witness to Christ. You remember this passage I trust. He's talking about all the people who had seen Christ, and he says in **verse 9**, *"I am the least of the apostles . I'm not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am. And his grace towards me did not prove in vain. But I labored even more than all of them."*

Grace as foundation for good works

And then he catches himself. There's a beautiful expression of the consciousness of how grace and effort work together in the life of Paul. I labored even more than all of them. Whoop! Yet not I, but the grace of God with me. **(1 Corinthians 15:10)**

Remember our little discussion of God with us, God with us, God with us, last...yesterday. See that's... Now, what is grace? Have you internalized this idea? Grace is God acting in our lives to bring about what we cannot do on our own. Paul. What is it he couldn't do on his own? He couldn't have had the tremendous effect he had in preaching the gospel on his own.

Strictly speaking, I'm sure that it's true at this time of all the apostles, if you looked at the work that was done, Paul was miles ahead of them. Miles ahead of them. At that time. I don't say later. Maybe later on, some got it. And caught up and went ahead. I wouldn't want to say; I don't know how to judge that; eternity will tell, possibly. But at this point there's just no question.

But what, Paul had just gone along, crossed the Greco- Roman world like a cyclone. And was it him? Well, he did something; if he had stayed home it wouldn't have happened, would he? If he just said, I'm going to stay in my cave, or I'm going to sit around the Sanhedrin down here, and though they're Christian I'll sort of haunt them.

No. He got out. He went. **2 Corinthians 9:8** is a really good passage. This is a discussion of the Macedonians giving, and he's talking here about how they had given far beyond what they were able. And given not grudgingly or under compulsion, but they had just given. And so this is an offering situation, missions offering, or something like that.

Look at **verse 8 in 2 Corinthians 9**. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance of every good work. Every good deed. For every good deed. You see what grace is there? Is that guilt? Are we talking about dealing with guilt? No. It's not just for guilt. Grace is for life. Guilt is one of the things we need it for, but when we're done with dealing with that we still need grace.

Grace as fuel for living

See, the person who is living fully in the Kingdom of God is consuming, if you wish, consuming grace all the time. But not just for guilt. The sinner needs grace for forgiveness, yes. To deal with guilt, there's not doubt about that. But compared to the grace that the saint uses in their lifetime, that's nothing. The saint burns grace like a 747 burns fuel on takeoff, see. They're burning it in quantities. Because what they're doing is always accompanied by grace, and much more is being accomplished than they could possibly do on their own.

And then one of the most famous passages on grace is Paul's statement: My grace is sufficient for you. **(2 Corinthians 12:9)** This was not to make up for guilt; it was to supply the strength that Paul needed in his weakness to do the things that he needed to do. And because this was such a wonderful thing, you have the statement of Paul, Most gladly therefore I would rather boast, here's where boasting comes in, about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. My weakness is an opportunity for the grace of God, the power of Christ is the grace of God; God is acting and alive, Thank God I am weak. **(2 Corinthians 12:9-10)**

Now, try that on, would you? Thank God I am weak. Why? Because when I am weak, I get to know the power of God working in me. Look at what the man says! Therefore I am well content with weakness, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong. **(2 Corinthians 12:10)**

Now. Wow. We have to put that into ordinary life. And we think about all the things we might suffer from. The attacks... We might imagine a person who is being attacked in their ministry or their work, and say, Thank God for that. Someone's being insulted. That actually happens in the church, doesn't it? Thank God I'm being insulted. Thank God I'm being attacked. Thank God I am weak.

Can you even imagine that? Why would one be thankful? Because they expected to see God acting in that situation. And that is better than them being able to control it themselves. That's what Paul is talking about.

II. Holistic Picture of Spiritual Growth

[15:10]

Now, this is a kind of holistic picture of spiritual growth and I have to give it because we want to have all the picture...all the factors in place. And if we have these factors in place, our mind is centered in the mind of Christ, and we will gradually take on that mind, and we'll have it.

—> The Golden Triangle

Top - Action of the Holy Spirit

You start at the top. This is the action of the Holy Spirit. Don't go anywhere without that. That's grace in action.

Bottom Left - Ordinary Events of Life

Down here at the left are the ordinary events of life. That means you take where you are. You accept where you are. You say, this is the place. This is Jacob saying, I did not know God was in this place. God was in this place and I didn't know it. This is the gateway of heaven. **(Genesis 28:10-17)**

Well, that's what Paul is saying when he talks about taking pleasure in his weaknesses. He's saying the same thing. So we don't throw our temptations away. We don't flee to a monastery. We live in ordinary life and there we experience trials. So the ordinary events of life turn out to be trials or temptations. We're not distressed about those. Why? Well because we expect God to act in those situations. OK.

Bottom Right - Planned disciplines to put on a new heart

But now wait a moment. It may not be possible for us to hold still and let that happen. That's where this side comes in, planned disciplines to put on a new heart. When you fail, what are you going to do? Try harder? No. See, what you require in this process of the transformation of the inner person, in the righteousness that is beyond the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisee, what you need here is not just trying. You need to put yourself in a position where you can train and receive help. And that is where planned disciplines to put on a new heart come in.

[17:15] **2 Peter 1:5 through 10** is a story about a progression: Add to your faith, add to your virtue knowledge, and so up the line until you get to agape again. But the planned disciplines here are crucial. And this is I think the area where when we're thinking in terms of what we do in the religious life, we are most apt to miss. We are most apt to miss the understanding that we have to take practices that enable us to receive grace in the ordinary events of life, to keep our mind centered in the mind of Christ, and acting with the Holy Spirit, to be the kind of person that Jesus has called us to be and gives us to be. You plan for this.

III. V-I-M Principle

[18:20]

I'll talk more about this evening. [[Session 9 @ 32:20-39:50 \(p. 80\)](#)]

But these are the... This is the outline of spiritual growth. If you're going to change personally in any way, if you're going to learn to speak French, dance the polka, carry on conversation, save money, lose weight, any kind of change that you want to go through, you have to have these three elements. If you don't have them, and they're not rightly related, probably change is not going to happen. If you have them, and they're right related, change can happen, even at a natural level.

~ VISION

You have to have the vision of the goodness of what you're after. You have to be convinced that's a good thing. And the educational illustrations are again the most familiar, and I think the most illuminating. Back to our talk about learning algebra or calculus earlier. If you have a vision of the goodness of it, then you're ready to move on to the intention to realize the vision. If you don't have that, the intention won't form.

Now, I have a very nice exercise machine at home. It is relatively unused. And I can tell you why it's relatively unused. I bought it once when I thought it would be

a good idea. But I had no vision, and no intention to go with it. So, it sits there. And it's a means. It would work if I had the vision and the intention. I'm told that there are other people who have that same sort of thing. I understand it. It's how it works.

Truthfully it just doesn't mean that too much, that much, to me, and I don't think it's that important. I do try to watch my health; I try to be careful about eating and getting some exercise and so on. And I can ride that thing once in a while. But I don't do it consistently because I don't have the vision, and I haven't formed the intention. I just have the means.

Now, that's where, when we come back to the gospel gives us the vision. If we don't have a vision that's provided, a gospel that provides a vision of something to be done. In this case we're talking about living in the Kingdom of God.

~ INTENTION

If we don't have the vision, we won't form the intention. We won't decide to do it. And I spoke earlier about intention when I said the reason why we don't for example learn to bless those who curse us is because we never intend to do it. We don't intend it. It isn't the law of gravity. It's simply for the failure of intention.

Why does the intention fail? We don't have a vision of the goodness of it? See, when we get gripped with the vision of the goodness of it, then the intention will follow. And once we have the intention, then the means comes in. And we find the means and actually it isn't all that hard.

~ MEANS

And, the means aren't...they don't fall in the area of righteousness and things we have to do to obey Christ. Christ doesn't tell us to go into solitude. He went into solitude. And one of the things that suggested to me I should go into solitude was that if he needed it, I might need a little of it myself. So, I got to thinking about well maybe there's something here. And that's what led me, as I said earlier, when I was concerned about being able to preach effectively, and realized that prayer was connected to that, and realized I couldn't pray in the condition I was in, then I moved more or less by accident into solitude and discovered what solitude and silence could do to build those connections. But that's all means.

Now my intention in that case, or my vision, my vision was a soul-winner. Preaching to bring people to trust Christ. And so that intention to do that based on the vision of this as good things, led me eventually into means. I had to back my way into it. But see I thought that solitude and silence sounded awfully Catholic, and I wasn't into that bag at the time. In fact, I was young and full of spizz, and I

thought they were all wrong. But I hadn't...I had no experience of it. I had to work my way back, then reading helped me see things differently, and practice a back and forth between - leads into means.

So that my intention to bring to pass a certain vision, and the vision changed as it went along because I began to realize that perhaps it was very important what kind of person I was. And not just a whizz bang preacher. I used to preach like a machine gun, until a man once said to me, Why do you preach so fast? Why don't you give people time to think about what you're saying? And I realized I didn't want them to think. I wanted to keep them back on their heels. I wanted them to respond. I didn't want 'em, to give them, to think. I wanted to manage them and manipulate them, and get them to do what I wanted to get them to do. So I had to go through a whole process of rethinking that.

So the vision shifts, I think improves in some measure, as we go along. And as it does then our intention has to change. And so I became intent more on who I was than what I was doing. I'm still concerned about what I was doing. I'm concerned about results, but I now believe the most important thing that God gets out of my life is the person I become. Actually, I think the most important thing I get out of my life is the person I become. That the things I might accomplish in the way of ministry, it...they're very small compared to the importance of my becoming Christlike. I actually believe that the more Christlike I become the greater my results will be, but that's not why I do it.

The Quality of Life

So now, that goes back to the statement I said earlier today that the church's problem is never that we need more money, more influence, more people. The problem is always of the quality of the people who are there, and that begins with me. If there's a problem, that begins with me. What is the quality of my life? Now, of course there are meaningful questions to be raised about other things, but that I think is really fundamental.

Well, let me just, I think the last thing I can get done in the time I have is just look at this list. And then maybe just an additional point or two, and then we'll have to quit.

IV. Understand the Disciplines

[26:00]

~ Disciplines of Abstinence

There are many ways of classifying disciplines. I think it's really helpful to understand them in terms of disciplines of abstinence, as opposed to disciplines of engagement. Disciplines of abstinence refers to things you abstain from, that you need to step out of in order to allow things to shift around in your soul and your body, and in particular to allow you to break free of old patterns that keep you enslaved.

~ Disciplines of Engagement

Now, I started over here. You see. Study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession. And those are good things. But the thing is I didn't know those were disciplines. I didn't know what a discipline was. So I was just trying to do those.

Now, if that's all you got, that's a short recipe for burnout. That's what that is. So you grind away at those. And especially in a social context where people have all sorts of things for you to do, that's going to burn you out. Because it will not put you in touch with the things that will nourish you and grow you. It will not allow you to have a joyous, strong, walk with Jesus. In order to get that you have to shift over, and you have to practice some of these other things.

And I've mentioned the importance of solitude, and silence is very important. Fasting. Solitude, silence, and fasting are the big ones on the list. The others are more like hygienic exercises. They're important, very important. But they don't have the importance of those first three. You begin to move into them. You begin to practice them, and as you do, they begin to sustain you.

Usually with something like solitude it begins very quickly. And I would encourage anyone to begin to try to have substantial periods of time every week when they're simply alone, doing nothing. Solitude primarily means doing nothing. Solitude is connected to Sabbath. And Sabbath is still one of the big deals, one of the big commandments, as in often people think that was the ritual law, and not the moral law. No, it turns out to be moral law, because it has so much to do with your wellbeing and the wellbeing of others that you're related to. And Sabbath means you do no work. And solitude is for most people the only way they can start practicing Sabbath is to go into solitude, because as long as they're around others the others will keep them working.

IV. A.) Summary of Disciplines in Practice

[29:15]

So, you need to move over to that side, and begin to experiment with them. And as you experiment with them, they will begin to confirm themselves to you. You can talk endlessly about them, but when you really come to know them by practicing. And you enter into them experimentally, you enter into them expecting the Lord to lead you and be with you and he will. This will be a part of his teaching presence with you. Don't try to force things. Don't try to make things happen. Be gentle, be experimental. If you don't succeed with this for some reason, don't worry about it. Find out what went wrong, try to fix it, and try it again.

Not righteousness

I say these are not righteousnesses. They are wisdom. They're not laws. They're wisdom. And as you enter into them, you will begin to experience from God and from your own nature and soul a kind of renewal and strength that will then put you in a position to engage in study and worship and celebration in a way you've never done it before.

And out of this will come a richness of your life in the Kingdom that will allow you to do the things that Jesus said at a walk. And all of the struggle and the tension will gradually move out of your life, and you'll understand what it means when Jesus says, My yoke is easy and my burden is light. **Matthew 11:28**

Not behavior modification

But now remember, this is not behavior modification. That's one of the differences between a wonderful program like Alcoholics Anonymous and spiritual disciplines. Alcoholics Anonymous is aimed at behavior modification. This is not aimed at behavior modification. But it has as its result incredible behaviour modification.

But that's not what you aim at. You aim at the inner transformation of the self. And then that comes to pass as your efforts and your experience grows. And this is what it means then to grow in grace, because as you enter into these things you increasingly receive grace through your knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

IV. B.) How does one practice the disciplines?

[31:30]

Well, you decide to live a Jesus student. You begin to obey his teachings. You observe why you fail, and you will fail. And then do in reliance on the Spirit what will remove the causes of these failures. You will find that they are disciplines. Now that list is not a complete list. There are other things that also are disciplines.

And I'm - I notice that I did not give the standard definition of what a discipline is. You have to have the concept. So let me just give it to you now. A discipline is something in your power that you do. A discipline is something in your power that you do, in order to enable you to do what you cannot do by direct effort. It's something in your power that you do, in order to enable you to do what you cannot do by direct effort. So the principle is in direction. You find the things that will help you grow and change and you do those and then as a result what comes out of you is different, because what is inside you is different.

So, that's the way you do it. If you don't decide to live as Jesus' student you're not a disciple, and disciplines are for disciples. They can do you a little good here and there if you're not a disciple, but still, if you're going to take an orderly approach to the change or the transformation into Christlikeness you need to do this.

IV. C.) Churches & Spiritual Disciplines

[33:18]

Now, churches that are making motions in the direction of discipleship and transformation, always find that they have to organize their program of spiritual growth and development around the disciplines. Of course that includes church and giving and other things like that, but it's always much more.

You cannot get growth in Christlikeness out of church as usual. There just isn't enough there. You have to do more. A couple of hours in church, some giving, it isn't enough. So you have to plan for more. So many churches, like the ones I've mentioned, are making available more intensive experiences. For example, instead of having a group that instead of just going to church on Sunday, they take them to a retreat. And they have a Friday through Sunday evening retreat. And they allow them to be practicing some of these disciplines. And that's one way of going beyond things as usual.

The result will be you'll get out of improper subordination in yourself, where body is running the show, soul is subordinate to that, the mind to the soul, and the spirit to the mind, and God to the whole shebang. That's the situation that people live in, sometimes they just leave out God and live for their body. And the prominence of the body in human life is the result of that. Then the proper subordination shifts those, puts God first, the spirit is the will, it puts the will under God, then the mind at the direction of the spirit, thoughts and feelings, then the soul begins to respond to the mind and to the spirit, and to God. And the body finally takes its place under the soul, rather than driving the soul, which drives the mind, which drives the spirit, which tries to drive God, which doesn't work very well.

Relationship Between Salvation and Transformation [35:38]

So what does all this have to do with being saved? We have to come back to that question, because as long as you think it has nothing to do with being saved it will precisely amount to nothing. And I don't need to go back and talk about the situation we find ourselves in for the most part in our culture and in our churches, where discipleship is one thing, and being a Christian is another.

IV. D.) Theology Behind Spiritual Growth

Regeneration

But the way this works is, regeneration, new life from above, comes at the new birth. Now we're entering into an interactive relationship with God and his Son Jesus, and in his Kingdom. Since that has happened, then forgiveness, justification, is an appropriate thing. We are forgiven. I don't mean to suggest that you have to worry about which of these comes first, but they do come together. Then, that life which comes in regeneration naturally develops into sanctification. Sanctification means simply the established relationship, walk with Jesus. And all of the parts of the self are involved.

Glorification

Now that naturally progresses to glorification. Glorification has already begun. Remember Colossians 3 again? When Christ who is our life shall appear then you also shall appear glorious. **(Colossians 3:4)** Well that glory begins to shine in you already, and when you're walking this path, you're going to look differently. And there's going to be something in you that people can see. And they will respond to it, and they will want to know where it comes from, and they'll want to have it themselves. There will be a beauty in you.

Do you ever use that song, Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me? Did you ever hear that song? Anyone? A wonderful song. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. I should stand up and sing it, but probably you couldn't stand that. And being saved is not a matter of where you're going, but who you are now. You are a participant in the life that Jesus is now living here.

And that's what salvation is. And that all fits together, you see, once you start at the right place, and keep Jesus in the right place in all of this, namely central, and you see him as King over a Kingdom, in which he invites you to live with him now. And God then as **Colossians 1:13** says, We are transformed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 8 @ 38:23** ~ ~ ~

Training Differently - Changing the Roots of Behavior

Now just a little bridge here from where we were earlier in the day. We have been talking at a general level, and we will talk at a more specific level tomorrow, about how change comes through the changing of the insides. This involves some stuff that can be pretty subtle until you get used to it. It really does involve, for example - it involves us wanting to not want what we now want. It involves us desiring to not have desires we now have. It involves our wanting to not think as we now think.

See, you have to go to that level to begin to deal with the roots of behavior; and that really gets to serious change when you decide you don't want even to have the feelings, and you don't want to have the desires, and you don't want to have the thoughts that you do, and you want to have different ways of interacting with people - and usually those are pretty deeply embedded in us because they have been there forever.

It involves training ourselves differently in many ways. Sometimes, for example, in our church setting at the social level we have to change the way we approach praying for people. And one good way to do that is that instead of promising to pray for someone when it is convenient say, Well, let us do that right now. Someone says, pray for me for such and such, and instead of saying, OK, I will pray for you, and you say, Well let's pray right now.

Now actually, that is a considerable step for many people; and I don't know what your habits are, but people have the habit of saying, yes, I will pray for you, and then going on. Maybe they are uneasy about doing it right now with the person. So that's at a kind of social level.

We have to want to change at the level of those inner habits; what our body is ready to do, what it is not ready to do, and we have to really want our soul to hook up in different ways. So it is important to understand that, because if we don't understand that we just won't get down to the level of the changes that really need to be made. And that will affect our church activities too.

How We Gather as Churches

[3:00]

Tonight basically I want to talk about what we do, as we come together. How we gather, and what we do when we come together, and why we do that; and one of the things you have to think is what we do now is not what the Church has always done. It doesn't mean that what we do now is wrong; it just means it isn't what has always happened. You have little glimpses of this in the book of Acts and the

Letters.

One thing you can say is the Church has always gathered. It has gathered. People have come together. And once you get past that, there is not a lot that we've always done, and often our practices when we do gather are more a reflection of things that have developed in our society rather than something about what would be wise for the church to do.

So now, I think probably all of you are may be already into the issue of what we do when we gather. Pastors and leaders have the primary responsibility of enabling people to be together in a way that they will flourish and grow in Christlikeness. That they will develop spiritual competence; they will be able to do the things that we all associate with being a Christian. That means being able and being competent in things like speaking the gospel, helping people who need help, praying, enduring suffering joyously. And that's what we are aiming at, something like competence in those things.

Ephesians 4 and the Church Community

[5:30]

I think I will read a little bit from Ephesians 4 tonight to sort of help us get that before us, because you see the question of what we do when we gather is tied to structures I've already talked about; the Great Commission, the VIM principle, but now we are talking about what we do when we come together as a Church.

A lot of things have changed because, even within my lifetime, the communities where the churches were, basically gathered in the churches. There were of course some differences in what the churches were but actually for most of the history of this country all of the people who lived in a given community could actually come together in the churches of the community. Now that is no longer possible. You can't begin to think about taking the people of Hollywood to church. Just imagine what that would mean. You would have to rent the Coliseum and then you could not do it. Just the demographics are very different.

So if you are going to think in terms of the community you are going to have to think in different terms from what you would have thought 75 years ago, certainly 150 years ago, just because of the changes in demographics.

So now, we have a statement, we have statements over and over as to what its supposed to come out to and I would like to just work through some of **Ephesians 4** with you to get a grip on, shall we say, the basic objective.

In Ephesians 4 you will notice that Paul is talking about what the gifting of people in the context of the Church meant. He starts out by saying Therefore, I, the prisoner of the Lord, he is writing this from prison, I entreat you, in Ephesus to

"walk in a manner worthy of the calling in which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love." (Ephesians 4:1-2)

Unity

See, this community of the church is going to be a community in which there is no rejection, no one is rejected. If there are offenses, which there are bound to be, they will be dealt with by forbearance and forgiveness and that will be in the context of the community where there is actual communication about what is going on; and people would not be sort of going off on their own and sulking and resenting things and staying angry, because there would be a kind of community activity that would in appropriate ways bring them together.

Now, the idea of "preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace then; one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, over all, and through all and in all." (**Ephesians 4:3-5**) So that is the kind of unity in love that is envisioned among the disciples of Jesus.

Love

You remember that Jesus said: "By this one thing people will know you are my students because of the way you love one another." (**John 13:35**) He did not say because you've got the right doctrine, he did not say because you've got the right practice, he gave one thing, one thing; you know that verse, John 13 by this ... that's what Paul is talking about here you see. And of course, there are always problems but the problems are solvable.

Now Paul goes on to talk about how this is to be done by means of the gifting which is given to certain people. And he talks about how when Christ descended on high he gave gifts unto men and some were apostles, and some were prophets and some - now what is the essence of the claim here?

GIFTING

It is that you would have people who were acting with extraordinary power to accomplish the ends that are set forward in the passage here that we are reading. So this would not be a manifestation of human abilities, it would be a manifestation of Kingdom power.

The Kingdom now comes in and we've had a lot of questions about the relationship between the Kingdom and the Church, and the main thing we want to understand here is that the people of Christ would have this unity, and the love that is being talked about and the other characteristics that I am going to cover in a moment. Because the people who are in leadership are exercising gifts and gifts mean that they are able to have grace to accomplish things that they can't accomplish just by human ingenuity. And so that one of the worst things that can happen to the

visible people of Christ is that they just wind up being humanly engineered, and the result of that is you don't have this kind of unity, you don't have that kind of love.

Gifts in the Church Community

So the gifts are given for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service. See, the people with the gifts don't do the work of service, they equip the people to do this. The old word ministry shows up here in the older translations, for the work ministry to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12) So what builds up the body of Christ is the growth of the members.

One version of church growth is not more Christians, but bigger Christians. So you might want to file that away somewhere and think about that. Church growth as bigger Christians, not more of them, but bigger ones; that would be church growth too.

Equipping

Then you have this wonderful description here: the equipping of the saints for for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ until we all attain the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a fully developed person, a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:12-13)

I don't think that is being conceived as individually, individualistically, but it does apply to individuals. We talk about individuals growing up in such a way that they actually show the nature and character of Christ and then when that happens is the group will show the same thing, the same kind of unity and fullness of Christ, and then those two will feed back and forth across to one another and complement and encourage and strengthen one another.

Maturity

Now the result here is stated in terms of individuals: We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:14) And so people are going to be so solid that they cannot be thrown around by someone coming through trailing fancy doctrines, and glittering as they walk and act in a way that shows off how great they are; they simply won't be moved by that, they won't be impressed by that. Imagine churches that are so mature that they are not impressed by that sort of thing; they are not swept away by someone who is slick, who knows, has clever ways of handling people and getting them to do things, and so on. They just recognize it for what it is.

That contrasted then with, But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects under Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part. (Ephesians 4:15) See that's the individual functioning in the body...

Growth

...and as they function in the body then the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. So when you talk about church growth, talk about this passage.

Now numbers actually are not to be despised, but the truth is you get more numbers if you have this kind of growth than if you don't. The natural process for the spread of the gospel and bringing of people into the body of Christ...is one on one contact with individuals who have in them something so strong and so powerful that other people by and large will naturally want it. There will be others who will be so threatened by it that they will attack, but the ordinary person, when they see this realization of Christ in individuals, they will come and you won't have enough room to hold them.

PUTTING OFF OLD SELF 4:22 - "*Lay aside the old self.*" [15:05]

All the parts of the self that are filled with the wrong stuff. Something you do. There is not suggestion that it will just happen. It won't just happen to you. It won't happen unless you have help but it won't happen if you don't do it. "*I really want to change.*" We have to fill out the words and make the meaningful. "Laying aside" ought to mean something. This is major for what we are talking about - what we do in the local congregation.

Another key word - "Mortify" - let it die, to kill it off.

* Mortgage (def.) "*To kill something off by degrees*"

Colossians 3 - "*Your life is hid with Christ in God...Mortify therefore your members which are on the Earth.*" The parts of your life that you can do in the flesh. "*Get rid of evil concupiscence.*" (inherently bad desires). "Covetousness which is idolatry" the willingness to have what someone else has at their expense.

PUTTING OFF NEW SELF 4:25 - "*Speak truth*" [20:00] "*...laying off falsehood*"

Truth is so central to the kind of growth and community life we are talking about. "*Don't give the devil an opportunity.*"

"*Edification according to the need for the moment.*"

Take the similar passages in Galatians, Colossians, Sermon on the Mount - Don't all say the same thing because they are not Laws. It's not the "list".

They are all expressing a kind of life and activity that naturally wells up from interchange that comes with becoming a Kingdom person following Christ.

What's the deal? If you become the kind of person who lives Ephesians 4, you'll take the Sermon on the Mount in a walk. Colossians 3 will be easy. You really have to understand this so you don't fall into legalism. These are not laws. If you get one, you'll have the others. Because you will have changed to such an extent.

If you become the **kind of person** who can bless those who curse you, you will have become the **kind of person** who will be able to do nearly all the others things that are mentioned. That's not true if you try to treat it as laws. You'll drive yourself batty. It comes out before you could stop it. You weren't thinking. The character of legalism is you have to always be thinking and you can't think fast enough to stay up with it.

The Picture of the Church

[24:20]

A body of people who are together taking on the character of Christ. Now, it doesn't tell you how to do it. Doesn't tell you to meet on Sundays, in an auditorium, with tables & chairs. For the most part these things don't matter and that's why it doesn't say anything about them.

Leith Anderson - What is not mentioned in scripture. [25:15]

"While the New Testament often speaks about churches, it is surprisingly silent about many matters we associate with church structure and life. No architecture, pulpits, sermons, music, Sunday School, order of worship, no Bibles, denominations, camps, pastor's conferences or board meeting minutes. Those striving to be like the New Testament church strive to live its absolutes not details. The details simply are not given."

The Church Today

[26:30]

Q - Why does the New Testament say nothing about all those matters to which the usual congregation today devotes almost all of its attention?

A - It might be because nearly everything we devote our attention to today doesn't matter.

It isn't that it doesn't matter at all but it doesn't matter which of the things that we do to form the framework of our activities. Something else matters not the things that we spend most of our time thinking about.

The Vision - *The Great Commission = Make disciples* [28:20]

Here is what Jesus said to do. He said: "Make disciples."

So, now, the question is what do you do to do that? How do you do that?

You make the Trinitarian presence the rule of whatever meetings you have and then you teach people to do everything that He said. Now Paul is addressing that same issue here because he is talking in the context of Ephesians 4 where the disciples have already been made.

But now I point out again, he didn't tell us how to do that, did he?

Now, I want to suggest to you the reason he didn't do that is because he assumed the quality of life that we are living would be such as to attract and enlist other people into discipleship to Jesus and that when that happened then the Holy Spirit would come into that group and would supervise and direct, as they were disciples. Now if they were not disciples you've got a different story, but as they are disciples then the Holy Spirit would come and supervise and would direct, and the result of that is that people would teach one another how to do all the things that Jesus said.

So now, you have to do something don't you, people gathered, They talked to one another. They spoke, they taught; we know that to be true, and that is essential today.

Gatherings for a Global Community

But I do want to add on and impress upon us in our context today that we have to think about gathering in a different way. Where are people going to gather? How are they going to gather? In downtown Manhattan in one block you have 10,000 people living in one block. 10,000 people. You go block after block after block, hundreds of blocks like that.

Now how are those people going to gather? How are they going to be together? We have a choice. We can take the natural ways they are together and say that is where the church will be and where the work will be done. Or we can say we have to get them altogether in one place and have a meeting of everyone, or large numbers of them.

Changing demographics

And I will tell you frankly that the demographics are going to make that impossible and have already made it impossible in large parts of the world. We have never

seen cities before like we have to deal with now. Hong Kong, San Paulo, Manila, Cairo and so on. We have never seen this before. If you fill all the churches and synagogues in the United States once a week you will get between 3% and 5% of the population. You don't have to be a social scientist to know that. If you just fly in airplanes and you look at the people and you look at the places where they might gather in churches you will see that is true.

So the church has to be located in a different way. That doesn't mean we won't meet; we still will meet. People will still meet, the groups will still meet, there will be larger and smaller groups, and so on.

But we have to think in a different way about what we do as we carry out the commission of Jesus, and the way we do that, in my opinion, is that we have to apply that V-I-M principle that we talked about earlier, now to the group. We apply the vision, intention and means to the group.

Vision in the Church Today

[32:35]

And that means that we really do ask ourselves — what is our vision in coming together?

Now, I am afraid this is mean to say, but I have to say it. I think in most cases we really don't have much of a vision. Perhaps in many cases we would like the group to survive and we would like people to attend and give money. We would like for people to come to know the Lord, become converted, and to get more people and more resources and to grow, and so when we look around us in our world today and we think in terms of success in the Church, we tend to think in terms of, well you know the ABCs of church growth: attendance, buildings and cash! Attendance, buildings and cash - we tend to think in those terms.

And I don't think we can disregard those; I think they are important, but is that our vision, what is our vision? As a group, what are we trying to do? Now, the vision will then determine what our intention is and then the intention will relate to the means.

Group meetings

So to pull those things together now and relate them all in one lump to our concerns about our group meetings, and we don't need to think of the group meetings in terms of very large, we don't have to do that, in fact through much of the history of the Church, we haven't done that. But whatever the meeting may be we have to think in terms of: What's the vision, what are we hoping to accomplish, and have we formed the intention to do whatever is necessary to get there - and

then, what is necessary to get there?' That's the question of means.

Now that leads us back to the question of why do we do what we do when we do it? Because we already have a going operation and we do not have ground zero planning as I discussed it last night, what ground zero planning.... We normally have to come into a situation that is already existing, and if we are happy with what is coming out of that because of whatever vision we have, and that's quite conceivable, I am not saying that's all bad, if we are happy with that then we should stay with it.

If we are worried and concerned about what that does not do for people, for individuals and in particular in relationship to character transformation and the transformation of our world, along the lines that you would expect if you just candidly look at Jesus and read what it says. If we say this is not happening then we need to begin to raise questions.

Why do we do what we do? Is what we do conducive to the vision that we have for living for Christ now?

And so that's where we take that V-I-M principal and we apply it to the group. We've seen how it applies to individuals, we worked on that this afternoon. Local groups, through their leaders, must have the appropriate vision, intention, and means - and these need to be implemented in the group.

The Great Commission as Vision

And that would be achieved, I think, if the Great Commission were the mission statement of the Church. If the vision were what is said in the Great Commission, and the local group identifies that and intends it, and then says, we do what we do in order to realize that, then you have the unity of that V-I-M principle applied to the local group.

Are we distracted?

Now, each of us honestly has to say: is my church, is my group that I am involved in, is that what we do? Or do we do something else? I think it is very hard to come to grips with the vision that is actually operating within a group. I think it is very hard. I think that what we tend to do is become obsessed with perpetuating the group, trying to make it survive, devoting our efforts to that and as a result what we actually have is distraction from the Great Commission.

If at any point here, some of you say: We do the Great Commission, this is what we are doing - then say so. I can't do you any good if I just come in here and say things that you don't understand, or you already think you've heard, or you think

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you are already doing. Maybe you are already doing. There is really little point in trying to speak to you and teach about the Kingdom of God and the divine conspiracy, and what that has meant, what God means by it, and how it comes to the individual life. There is no point in doing that unless we really take a hold, and that taking hold may be, wait a minute, I disagree with what you are saying.

Are we doing it?

What we are doing is the Great Commission, we are doing it. We are making disciples and we are going through that whole thing that I have talked about over and over. We are disciples. Now if that is true then we need to go home, because we are doing what we need to be doing.

Now if it is not true, then there are some wrenching things that we need to talk about. And they can be upsetting because applying the V-I-M principle to the local congregation might well mean that there are some radical changes that have to be made.

I don't know if you agree with this, but my view is that the typical church denomination or parachurch does not intend, does not have the vision of implementing the Great Commission. They do not come into existence on that basis and usually they don't know it. Now, I am sorry to say that, but I think that if we are going to get ahold of our situation today for Christ this is where we have to start.

We have to recognize that Leith Anderson is right and that actually the common problem is that people are distracted.

Are we merely surviving?

*They are concerned about upholding things they've always done, making sure that the church survives, and they don't have their eye on transforming the individuals in the group into Christlikeness. That's spreading throughout the community in a virus like way and not only bringing more people into the Church, which I am sure it will, but also starting groups here, here, here, spreading out just like it did as Jesus said it would, "Then you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and into Samaria and to the outermost parts of the earth." (**Acts 1:8**) That's the nature of the kind of spread that comes when we walk in the V-I-M of the Great Commission, if you wish.*

Paul's Vision - Treasure & Vessel - II Corinthians 4:7 [40:40]

*Now I want to use this figure that Paul uses of the treasure and the vessel and if you will go with me to **II Corinthians 4:7** for just a moment. Paul is actually*

talking about something here that applies to individuals and he is talking about it applying in his own case, his own vessel, and his own treasure. In verse 7 of 2 Corinthians he says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves."

The glory of God

Go back to the treasure; he is talking about the glory of God in the gospel of Christ. A wonderful verse here, verse 6: For God who said the light shall shine out of darkness is the one who has shone into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That is a beautiful summary of how God comes in his Kingdom, sends his Son; and the Son and the Kingdom come together, and the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines out. Where does it shine? It shines in Paul. Paul is talking about being in him and in others that were his associates. Now he says, we have this treasure in earthen vessels and he says that that is so that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves.

Weakness that hinders

And then he goes on to talk about the afflictions that he lives in. The hindrances, if you wish. Sort of being a human being you end up having a body. A body is something others can get ahold of and mistreat, it is something that grows older, it ages, it becomes weak. That is also true of institutions, that's true of groups, they age, they get weak, they get inhabited with people who do not share the vision and the intention of the people who founded them.

That is always true, and you can almost say that in religion nothing fails like success because the more successful a group becomes the more people are drawn in that do not share the essential enthusiasm, spirit, fullness of the Holy Spirit, zeal for righteousness and for Christ, and it just becomes a wonderful operation and it is so big, and so successful, and the tendency is always for that institution to lose its vision, to lose its intention and the means become ineffective. Now then when that happens the group still wants to go on.

Have you ever been around a church that died? It is a very painful thing, and it is partly painful because the people who have identified with it have invested themselves in it and they just won't let it die and maybe it should die.

Breaking Free of the Past

Someone was telling me the story about the church here, and of course it has quite a past, and how the pastor, Pastor Ed who came in here, took a

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sledgehammer to the choir loft, is that true? And then invited others to come. Now actually, that's profoundly wise to do that, but that is very hard to see; but he did that because if he didn't do something with this church, it would be somebody's secondhand store now. So he was, I mean he has a past and he has an experience of Christ that enabled him to say, This has to be done and we are going to do it. And now they pull together a whole different approach to things that is not just devoted to sustaining the glorious past of the church.

Look past the institution

You have to get out of the mode of saving the vessel. That building was a vessel, it was not the treasure. And now every institution you look at that forms, will go through that process, and the danger is that we will perpetuate the vessel and that we will devote ourselves to that and we will forget the treasure which is Christ. The treasure is Christ! Christ living in the group.

Paul says to the Corinthians, that wonderful statement: I was determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified . (1 Corinthians 2:2) And he is talking about how he came among the Corinthians in his weakness. Paul was apparently not an outstanding preacher. He was not a great showman. He couldn't entertain, and he came in weakness and saw the power of God accomplishing the transformation of individuals, bringing them into Christ and then growing them. All the wonderful things that we have out of a church that actually had a lot of problems also; very serious problems. They lived in a culture not unlike Southern California, I guess even worse some people would say, and that affected the people who were there.

Focus on Christ

But in the midst of that, because Paul focused on Christ and what Christ was doing - because when he says, I am determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified , what he was saying was, I never paid any attention to anything else, than what is happening in your life as Christ acts and lives and works.

Now, you see, our difficulty is to bring ourself to the point to where that is the only thing we will pay attention to in our groups. And if we are going to see the transformation of our groups into churches and congregations - and however you classify the things sociologically, there are people who come together - and in that, Christ is living, and in that people are being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

That would get us out of this bind that I mentioned at the outset yesterday when I talked about the gap between Christianity and discipleship, between consumer

Christianity and Christianity as a perpetual transformation of individuals. People engaged deeply in pursuing and following after Christ.

How can we make this possible?

[48:45]

So now our situation is one where we don't just hold to our distinctives as a group. No matter how precious those may be, but we hold before us the constant goal that Paul describes here in Ephesians of building up a body, speaking the truth in love, growing up where each member is nourishing the other members in the body, and being nourished by them. And what we want to do is to think in terms of how we can make that possible.

Make obedience the goal

And as it stands, I think we simply don't live the V-I-M with respect to being disciples, with respect to the expectations of obedience, and that means inner transformation. We don't really take that as our vision and our goal; and I am harping on this because I want to at least provoke you to say, That is not true - we do that - you are wrong. And if you say that, and do that, then that's wonderful and I will be very happy about it.

But I think we just don't expect it. We don't make our goal the kind of thing Paul is talking about in Ephesians 4. We have too low expectations and if someone is really flourishing in Christ, they are the exception, not the rule. And we often adjust our group policies to the mediocre, the person who is just a consumer Christian, to someone who has no expectation that they are going to change and grow, and the result of that is that we have people who don't grow.

And our groups are often filled with people who are mean and angry and contemptuous, even of one another, and we wind up walking on eggshells to keep from offending people. And yet in the midst of that we know that Christians are supposed to be nice so we try to be nice, but the inner reality doesn't change.

TWO CHURCH PRIORITIES

[50:30]

Church Priority #1 - Examine our Gospel

Discipleship Gospel

So now in order to do this we start by examining our gospel. Are we preaching a message that actually leads in this direction? And you cannot plow around this. You have to accept the fact that if the message that is preached does not naturally lead into discipleship and transformation, it is simply not going to happen. Those of us who speak have to be serious with that question.

What are we really talking about? What do we offer people? What do we call people to? What do we tell people is possible in the body of Christ? Now we've talked a lot about that in the last few hours, in the last two days.

But what are we going to do about it? We have to look at our sermons, we have to look at our teaching series. Do we do things like take the Sermon on the Mount and teach on that and explain it, or these other passages? I Corinthians 13. Do we do that in a way that it would actually happen? You have to start there. You don't stop there, but you have to start there.

We need to talk about the Kingdom. We need to talk about God's presence in our lives. We need to talk about learning as a process that goes on after we become Christians. We have lost the tradition of the seeker, by and large, in our churches. We have the tradition of arriving, and sitting down, and saying, everything is settled that is essential so now I am just going to wait until I die. Or we give our attention to other things.

Growing stronger

But you see the picture that is present in the New Testament is one of continually seeking more and more and more. Learning more and more and more. For example, about prayer; continuing to learn more and more about prayer and how it works and becoming increasingly powerful in prayer, so that, for example, when you become old and you can't do much else, you still are a mighty person in prayer. Because growing older doesn't mean you can't pray. It may mean you can't run around the block but it doesn't mean you can't pray.

And you should grow older and older and stronger and stronger in the spiritual realm and this is a major part of what Jesus means when he says about not tasting death. You continue to grow spiritually and you just walk right through what you see as death on this side but our life continues and it continues in His world. We continue to be active there.

I think a lot of people think, they take that passage in Hebrews about the great cloud of witnesses, and they think that all that people do is sort of sit in the bleachers and watch someone else. (Hebrews 12:1) Maybe watch Jesus. Jesus is apparently active. Remember, Jesus says in John 14, I go to prepare a place for you. (14:2-3) He is working. He is doing something.

Working with Jesus

Now we are not told a lot about this and you can make up your own mind as to what is going to be happening after you leave this place. I don't think it is going to

be watching Jesus work, any more than it is that here. It is working with Him and Him working with us to accomplish good, and to prepare the future of the universe in which we are going to live with Him. It isn't going to be just passive observance. So you grow and you grow and you grow.

Do you ever ask yourself what you are going to be doing four hundred years from now? Ten thousand years from now? We sing about that, don't we? When we've been there ten thousand years. What are you going to do? Well you see our life here should be a natural progression which continues on for eternity. And what we are learning and doing here should not be just sort of sitting and waiting but rather constant learning and growing. You should have more and more power over the goods of this world for the benefit of others who are here and for the glory of God. And that might be through people you minister to.

Extending the Kingdom

You see the government of God is something that comes to us. The Kingdom of God that comes to us and it gradually extends. Now does our gospel say anything about that? As we preach the gospel of the Kingdom then discipleship begins to emerge.

I say this to you. Other people are beginning to say it. The primary field of evangelism in our day is the American church. That's where the gospel needs to be heard. But it is a gospel of discipleship and of Kingdom living. Because we have this large array of non-discipleship Christianity, those who are identified as Christians but are not disciples need to be evangelized. They need to hear the gospel. If we do that then discipleship will naturally emerge.

Barriers to a Discipleship Gospel

People are not disciples because they refused it...
...but by and large they have never been invited. Try this out, try this out on people. See if they have ever received an intelligent invitation to become disciple of Jesus.

Now what a disciple is we have talked a lot about, but I can't go back to that now, because we don't have time, we have to go on, but try it out. Ask people, ask your acquaintances, ask people in your fellowship groups, or whatever, if they have ever received an intelligent invitation to become a disciple of Jesus. Would you be willing to try that?

Now, see, that is the direction we have to go if we are to do what we have been talking about in the local churches. Until we begin to move at that level the churches will stand as a kind of default position for consumer Christianity.

Lack of interest

So now, if you do that in your local group you are going to find that people are stirred up, they may be distressed, they may be worried about you, they may want to say - well, what do you think you are doing? After all, I am a Christian? I received Jesus as my Savior. Do I need to do anything more than that?'

There is a friend of mine who was teaching discipleship in a large church who had a woman come to him and say, Look, why are you talking about all this discipleship stuff. I am saved. I am going to heaven when I die - what's the point? See, what's the point? That is where most people are in our churches. And I know that you all have special concerns and you are not the normal people; you wouldn't be here if you were. So you have something else on your mind.

But you have to realize that what you are up against is a version of being a Christian which says, What's the point of talking about discipleship. Why bother to grow spiritually? I will do all of that after I die. Many people actually think that.

And this man, very serious, a good teacher, had a woman who just came and said - Look, I have accepted the system, I don't need this, what's the point of it? That is the crux of the matter as far as the real growth of Christ in people in our culture today. They have been presented with a version of Christianity that has nothing to do with discipleship and they simply don't see the connection.

Distorted theology

And that can go to greater lengths. Another actual case was, that I mention I think in one of the books, is a man who came to his pastor and said, I have fallen in love with another woman. I am going to divorce my wife and marry her. And the pastor said, You can't do that - you are a serious Christian, you are a leader in this church. And the man said, Well now, I know that it is wrong, but I will do that and then God will forgive me.

What do you say to a person who says something like that. God will forgive me and I will go to heaven, and that is what you taught me. What do you say to a person like that? Not much you can say unless you have a picture of the reality of being a person who belongs to Christ that is different from the default position that we are normally in.

See, one of the things you have to do in an existing group is renegotiate the contract. What do I mean by that? What I mean by that is that people coming into a group have a certain understanding of what you are permitted to do and what they are required to do.

Fear of change

And as discipleship begins to emerge in a serious way in a group, that is going to challenge others to begin to think about, am I right or not? And many of them are going to become very angry because they will say - you have changed the conditions of our agreement. Our agreement was that I could be a Christian and not do what you are talking about, and I still stand by that and so why are you changing the conditions?

This goes deeply into the undergirding theology of our whole Western Christian system and it challenges us to say what really it is to be a Christian and to be saved, and that is something that will make very many people unhappy, because you are going to be suggesting that there is something essential about obeying Christ. There is something essential about changing, about losing the things that cause so much sin and distress and loss among professing Christians.

Well you say that is not the way it is supposed to be, it can be otherwise and we are going to take the steps to do that because that is what our group stands for. If you say that your group stands for that then you are going to have a problem of renegotiating and you are going to lose people if you say that. And so you have to go through that process.

Consumer expectations

One of the churches out here on the West Coast that has shifted from some sort of mega-church model to a discipleship model lost 700 people. So that is a challenge. So they wound up with things like a \$100,000 shortfall in the money they needed to pay the salaries of the people on the staff. What are they going to do? I am glad to tell you that the two men who were pastors in this case said, we're simply going to stand firm. We know that we could raise that money, we're successful with that. This would fall in the category of a megachurch. We know we can do that; we know how to raise the money, but we are not going to do it. We are going to see what God will do will do.

And now that is the break point. If you are prepared to go that route then you can go through the process of shifting the local group over to a discipleship basis - and in this particular case was, as I said, 700 people left. They were in real distress. These 700 people went to other churches who wanted to continue the consumer church model. In the meantime, people in the other churches who were sick to death of the consumer church model began to move back to this church because they were looking for a discipleship basis for the organization. They haven't evened out yet, but that process has worked in such a way that they have

returned to solid financial ground.

Now this would not have happened unless the elders in that church had said, as they all did, We are with you. We are with you. And those elders stood firm, and there was a lot of unhappiness and moving and criticism and all kinds of gossip in the community; but they stood firm and they followed through, and people had time to change and shift their basis to a discipleship basis rather than a consumer basis.

So now all that is really tough. It is tough to do this. Para-church organizations who try to make this shift also have a really hard time. A lot of people get angry, lot of people criticize, try to shoot the project down, leave, discourage others from supporting it, and you have to go through all that if you are going to make this kind of shift.

Church Priority #2 - *BE then BUILD Disciples*

[1:05:15]

The "M" in V-I-M:

Find the Means to Carry out the Intention of a Discipleship Model

[\["Make Disciples in the Kingdom" - Session 5 @ 24:25\]](#)

Now I had to cover all that because we really need to know what we are heading for, but now I want to suppose we have made the shift and say: Now what do we do? That really is in the M category of the V-I-M model for the church. Now we have the problem of finding the means to carry out the intention.

Suppose you say we are going to be a discipleship church and you weather the storm, the white water as we call it sometimes, of going through that process.

So what do we do now?

1.) Be Disciples Yourself

And of course the first thing is that you have to be disciples yourself. The leadership, the ministry, the have to be disciples. And I mean by that they have to be learning how to do the things that Jesus said. I mean by that they have to be learning how to live under His guidance in things he didn't say anything explicitly about. They have to be learning how to live in the power of God.

We went over this earlier - but they have to be people who are comfortable with that. And so that's for me and for you, if we are in positions of leadership, we have to say I am a disciple of Jesus. I have to live that out in that church setting. Now that means that I treat people in a certain way. That I have power to do certain kinds of things that comes from God and if it doesn't come from God I just have to let it go. I don't step in and make it happen in whatever talents and powers I may

have. It is very crucial. You see the temptation is to take it into our own hands.

One of the Bible stories that is most upsetting to people I think is the story of Uzzah. (2 Samuel 6:1-11) He meant well, but you remember when David was bringing up the ark to Jerusalem, to the city of Zion that he was building, they didn't actually do the right thing with the ark. They had it on an ox cart instead of being carried and when the oxen hit a rough patch Uzzah was walking alongside of it and the ark looked like it was going to fall off the cart and he reached out and touched it. He was dead, just like that. Wow, that is how.

David got mad at God - it says that he was mad at God. I think I might have been mad too. That's tough, that's really hard.

You see if I am going to go through this process as a disciple and a leader I have to be one who is prepared to let the ark fall, if God does not steady it. I have to be one who is not going to slip in and patch it up in some way that refers simply to me and what I can do. I have to be a disciple. I have to be someone who really does trust God and do the right thing.

And now if you have leadership like that, then you are prepared to move on.

2.) Building a Discipleship Church

Now I don't have much longer tonight, but I want to talk a little bit about the kinds of things you would do. Now, we are beyond the preaching, we've got the preaching in place, we've got the leadership in place, these people are actually disciples.

Announce the goal

What are you going to do to help people who now come and say I want to be a disciple and I want to grow. I want learn how to do the things that Jesus said, and that Jesus did. So now what you want to do in general is to aim all of your activities at that objective. You want to say, We are a church of disciples, we are a group of disciples, and however you describe that group, We are disciples together of Jesus Christ. Then people coming in sign on on that basis.

Orient around that goal

Now the next thing you want to do is to start teaching them to actually do the things that Jesus said, and that is your main business so far as the activities of the group are concerned. So then when you come back to issues such as - shall we sing songs, what kind of songs we sing, shall we have Sunday School, shall we not have Sunday School, what kind of services will we have, will we have times of

silence in the service, will we have times when people get together in the service and talk with one another and pray for one another, what will we do when we are not in the church building, what about small groups'

All of those questions will have one objective: how do they relate to learning to do the things that Jesus said? One objective. Now that, I think, is the guide post that you look at.

Now you don't need to squelch life. You can still have fun - there is nothing wrong with that. You can still have good social events and social relationships; that is a part of life. But even that would fit into the objective of bringing people to the point to where they easily and routinely did the things that Jesus said.

CASE STUDY: "Yes be Yes" Teaching [1:11:00]
Matthew 5:37 - *"Let your Yes be Yes and No be No."*

So now let's just talk about a case in point. We want to get specific on things tomorrow and more specific than we will tonight, but just to illustrate, let's talk about a particular command that Jesus might have given. Let your yes be a yes, let your no be a no.

Swearing

Now this is given in a context of swearing, not in the sense of cussing; this is in Matthew 5- he says, swear not, don't swear. The old command said, if you swear, keep your promise to God. Now Jesus says, don't swear. See, he is shifting from the outside to the inside.

Why do people swear? They swear an oath in order to get people to agree with them to do things or believe things that they say. That's why they swear. So now it isn't always officially something we might call swearing but it is a way of exaggerating or shading things in talking that would be manipulative. That is what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5. Anything that would try to manipulate people into doing things or believing things that they might not believe if they just had a flat statement of fact.

There is some interesting wording there. Jesus says that if you don't just let your yes be a yes and your no be a no there is something inside that needs to be changed. Look at what he says in verse 37: Let your yes be yes or your no, no, and anything beyond this is of evil. What's the evil? Do you see the verse.

Exaggeration

Now what is the evil? Now, if we are going to teach people to simply speak plainly,

and simply let their yes be a yes and their no be a no, we have to deal with that evil. What is the evil? The evil is the desire to get people to do things that they may not want to do. That's the evil. Now it can lead to lying but normally it isn't lying. This is the use of language in ways that shades things, that gives an emphasis that is not really just the way things are.

Exaggeration is a primary problem for churches, it is a primary problem, because churches want to present themselves in a good light and that's why there is so much performance in our Christian meetings. And very often right in the services of the church we find ourselves letting our yes not be a yes and our no be a no. We find ourselves exaggerating, emphasizing, trying to put things in the best light and so on. Sometimes I think we believe God wants us to do that; but if Jesus is right in what he is saying, he wants us to learn the habit of very simply and clearly saying things the way they are - yes or no, and letting it stand.

Manipulation

Our whole advertising system is an exercise in yesses that are no's, and no's that are yesses. It is manipulative; it's distracting; it tries to get people to thinking about something that has nothing to do with the decision at hand. Just watch it. And then ask yourself to what extent in our churches and do Christians manage to stay involved in that system of plain speaking.

If someone comes to me, let's say, as a speaker, and they raise a question, I have to be very careful and listen and try to respond in a way that is truthful, that is sensitive, that does not put any shade on things, but just let the truth be what it is. If I don't do that then God can't work in that relationship and I will wind up manipulating that person just to make myself look good, or to make my group look good. Now that is a challenge to get out of that.

Learning "Yes be Yes" Two Steps: Awareness & Truth Telling [1:16:10]

1st Step - Awareness

So now, suppose you had someone who said, I want to learn how to let my yes be yes and my no be a no. How would you teach them how to do that?

One of the first things you would do, is you would help them understand what is going on when people do that, and you would talk about it in terms that they would recognize: Yes, that is what I do, I understand that; when I do this I am really more concerned about getting my way than I am about the person I am talking to. So I realize that I am constantly engineering my language. I am more concerned about myself and my projects than I am about them. So you help

people understand what they are doing when they do that.

Silence

One of the great things about the discipline of silence is it teaches us to let people know us without a covering of language. One of the hardest things about being silent is letting people make up their own mind.

Here's a good discipline, letting others have the last word. Now you know most of us are paid to talk, we are almost paid to have the last word! But letting others have the last word shifts the ground. It allows them to make up their minds and often they have things very valuable to say. It is a good discipline. It is a good discipline in the family to let a child have the last word rather than being the parent and having the last word because you are the parent.

You see when you do that you have a respect for another person and that respect is something that allows them to grow and to thrive as an individual because they are not constantly being pushed aside by someone else who is asserting their language and pushing their way over the will of the person in question. Often preachers need not to say anything and let their people talk. And if they are plain spoken and simple in their language then that will encourage others to be the same way.

Understanding

So the first thing we have to do is to teach people what is actually going on when we make our yesses no's and our no's yesses; or when, in the language of the text here, we swear by God, by my head. Did you ever hear people swear by their head? In America there are all kinds of swearing. I bet the devil my head - have you ever heard that one? That's an old American way of saying a yes which is not just a yes, or a no which is not just a no. Swearing is always invoking something that we really have no power over to get our way with someone.

You have to teach people what they are doing. Exaggeration; what are they doing? Now it is a great thing to understand that, and then we have to help people identify the cases where they do that. What are the cases in which they let their yes not just be a yes, but something more, and their no be not just a no, but something more.

2nd Step - Truth Telling

[1:19:20]

Now then, let's talk about the case. One of the lies most commonly told in my circles, academic circles, is, Yes, I've read that book. Now, sometimes you don't say, Yes, I've read that book, you just act as if you had. Why do we do that?

So, I have to ask, why do I do that? I want these people to think well of me and to regard me as smart. I want them to know I'm with it. Well how about just not saying anything, letting them think of me what they will. See, that would be a truthful and good thing, but if I am concerned to manipulate and control it, I am going to try to put the very best spin on me.

So now, suppose I said, Yes, I have read that book, what is a good thing you could say to me to get me to where I don't do that? Well, one thing might be, you could tell me, Why don't you go back to those people and tell them you haven't read that book? That's a good discipline. See you go through practices - disciplines are like that. You think you can't do certain things and you find out you can.

Practical steps

There was a man of some wealth in a seminar that I was leading a group and he was saying to me: I cannot not yell at my son. And you know where that comes from, the son was a typical young man and they did not agree and so when they got into these discussions the tone went up. (I have a friend who says when he goes to France he just speaks English louder!) And in these discussions between the father and the son and the misunderstanding, the feeling of frustration, he speaks louder and louder and he winds up screaming at his son. He says, I cannot not do that.

I said, Yes you can. I will tell you how you can do that. The next time you do it give \$5,000 to your wife's favorite charity and every time after that go up \$5,000, second time \$10,000. Now he actually had the money to do that but it didn't take many steps for him to realize that he could succeed in not yelling at his son, as he freely admitted.

You think of St. Benedict. St. Benedict is the one in church history who is so famous because his recipe for lascivious thoughts was to go roll in a briar patch. That would do it. You know what a briar patch is. Now you think about doing that. You see he was prepared to take steps and when we are prepared to take steps we can actually change something as simple as speaking plain yes and no and not being manipulative in how we talk to other people.

But we have to understand what it is and then we have to be able to discuss that. We have to be able to take a suggestion as to what might be helpful in changing our habits, going through that process, coming back and talking about it, giving feedback for further discussion, perhaps prayer, further suggestions as to what could be done to change that habit.

Churches that Teach Discipleship

[1:23:40]

Now suppose that is what we did in our churches. Suppose our churches were organized entirely around the objective of becoming internally Christlike people who routinely and easily did the things that he said. We could still sing, we could still have sermons, we could still do a lot of the things that we still do, but we would have to add on to our program a texture of interaction thick enough and right enough to help people form new habits. That's basically what it is about.

It would help us to announce publicly that that's what we do. That we do this. Imagine a church which talked about the various things that bother people and they feel guilty about and they fail at and they sin. Families need it so badly. I needed it so badly when I was younger and I was raising my children. I hurt my son badly because I did not know and did not do what I knew to do to be as gracious and kind and patient with him as I should have been.

BUILDING DISCIPLES in FAMILIES

Now, could we teach people to be like that? Could we say, "We teach fathers and mothers how to deal with children in such a way that they do not become frustrated and angry; that they are not hurt. That doesn't mean that we let them do what they want to. It means that how we handle the situation between parents and children is one where they are nourished and brought up - and even if they are not obedient, maybe they are very distressing, that we still manage to live with them, and love them, and grow with them"? Should that be the business of the church or should we farm that out to the psychologists and say - lots of luck!

Patience

See, one of the biggest problems in families is impatience. Children need lots of patience and understanding and in good families you see that. But then of course it may well be that the parents are so harassed and worked to death and worried, that they cannot be patient.

So can we say to people, "We can teach you how to live without hurry"? Could we say that? We can show you how to keep Sabbath. How to be strong and rested and present with your children in a way that all of the bad consequences that come out of families that are weak and really become destructive, just don't happen. Yes, I think we could. We could say that. But we have to say it.

Can we say to people; we will teach you how to have love in your hearts so that the things that are said in I Corinthians 13 will come out. "Love is kind, love is patient, love does not envy, it is not puffed up," and so on. All those things; can we do that?

BUILDING DISCIPLES in CHURCHES

[1:27:55]

Now here is what I am saying. You can organize a Christian group around that. There will be a lot of renegotiating to do. They are going to need careful teaching. They are going to have to have teachers and leadership that manifest discipleship in all of the dimensions we have talked about. There is going to have to be power present. You cannot do this just by being nice. You have to have the presence of God.

The Spirit

You see our churches often try to choose between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. You can't choose between those; you have to have both of them. If you don't have the fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, and so on you can't stand the gifts of the Spirit because they are so powerful they will be disruptive. But if you don't have the gifts of the Spirit you can't sustain a life in which the fruit of the spirit flourishes. You have to have both of them. That's the path of real discipleship.

We can do that. Our churches can do it. They have done it in the past.

If any of you are interested in thinking about particular examples of this, the best example you can find is look at the old Wesleyan class meetings. They did exactly what I am talking about. This was done in many of the religious orders that we now call Catholic, but remember before there were Protestants there weren't any Catholics. There were just Christians. So you look at the orders of the Church, the Franciscan, the Benedictine, the Augustinian, and so forth. You look at how they went at this, and later groups like the Wesleyan Class movement.

See, Wesley refused to call his movement a church, and actually when I first began to go to South Africa to teach back in the 80s the Methodist Church in South Africa did not call itself a church. They were called societies. Wesley thought we didn't need another church, we just needed to get Christians together in such a way that they understand their objectives, they share their problems, they pray and minister to one another in small groups in such a way that they actually grew into Christlikeness. This actually happened.

Why Don't We Do It?

See, it can happen again today if we intend it and apply the means that are appropriate to make it happen and our question is simply (and I don't want to keep pushing this tonight, but just leave with you this question) Why don't we do

it? Why don't we do it?

If you announce it publicly, then you put a sign in front of your church, you put it on your letterheads and your bulletin and you say, We teach people to do the things that Jesus said.

Now, if you do that in your local context and with Christians who are already on the ground, you have to remember to love those who don't go along. We can't get in a battle with those who don't go along. In ordinary churches if your leadership decides to move out in this direction there are going to be a lot of people who say, I didn't come here for that. And it may be that they will change after time. Maybe they won't, maybe they will leave, maybe they will just be mad and stay.

But no matter what, you don't become mad at them. That's a part of your discipleship you see, that is a part of my discipleship. This person disagrees with me but I love them still and I will serve them, and who knows what will come of that. Perhaps the next time by they may say, You know, I see that this is right and I want in on it. I want to be a disciple. I want to learn.

So then your church can accommodate people who are not on board, as long as you, in leadership, don't allow that to become a bone of contention over which you start fighting one another.

It is very important to remember. It will take time for many people to understand. Some never will, but for some it will just take time. Some when they do understand, won't want it, just like the lady I told you about: This is not part of the deal - I am a Christian, I am going to heaven when I die. What's this stuff about discipleship? And many of them will say, Well you know this is not what we understood when we came in, it is not in their contract.

But do remember the parable of the sower, because the parable of the sower also applies in discipleship evangelism, perhaps in it above all. You will remember there are four categories of seed, where they fell. Now the fact that someone was in one category, maybe they were on the hardened ground, or they were among the weeds the first time it came by, that does not mean they will stay there forever.

Centers of Love

So we want to turn our churches into centers of love, just like Paul described it, in Ephesians 4 when we started here. Where we speak the truth in love. That means among other things that we let our yes's be yes and our no's be a no. Do we speak the truth in love? We are non-manipulative.

Then as we do that the body grows in full as people nourish one another and

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change comes about and the Body of Christ grows up into the fullness of Jesus Christ and stands in the world as a power point between heaven and earth - I shouldn't say power point anymore! - as a contact point between heaven and earth where the angels of God descend and ascend upon the Jesus who is in the midst of the people.

~ ~ ~ END of Session 9 - 1:34:18 ~ ~ ~

"The Sermon on the Mount"

Opening Prayer

Now gracious Lord, we look to you for help. As you know, we need help, and so we ask you to please come into our midst, and minister to us and be our teacher. And help us think the thoughts that would be in line with your thinking. And see the things to do, and understand how to go about doing them. And that would in such a way that would bring honor and glory to you.

The Church and the Kingdom

All right. Now, today we want to continue our descent into the details; and we started out with very abstract, but I think very important, discussions about what God is doing, what God is like, how he works in human history, and especially how he works in a hidden way; and his Kingdom comes into the world which he made, and was a part of the Kingdom, and in time his Son comes into the world and calls people to follow him. And then we of course fit in there.

Now, last night we tried to talk about how we would proceed in our groups of Christians, local congregations I call them, and that's a good enough phrase for it. How we'd proceed there if in fact we had intended to teach people to do everything that Jesus said.

And I raised the question of whether or not what we do is actually directed towards that, and said that if indeed that were our aim then we would evaluate everything we do in the light of that aim. And I challenge you to think about the vision that actually governs the local group.

And whether or not there is a vision that is any more clear and focused than simply surviving, and, as an old man I used to listen to on the radio used to say, he would ask people to send in their offerings that they might keep on keeping on. And a lot of our groups are just keeping on keeping on. That's the limit of their vision - survival. Perpetuation of what they've been doing. Excuse me.

And so, the issue really is what is - what are we trying to do? And then the clarification of our intention, our decision in the light of that vision. And a major part of pastoring, for example, is wisely arranging for people to be together for their spiritual growth and development, and understanding spiritual growth and development.

Obedience and Spiritual Formation

[3:00]

Now, in terms of increasing obedience to Christ from the heart, a lot of our talk today about spiritual formation doesn't have the focus on obedience. So let me just say, for your consideration, that **the engine that pulls the train of Christian spiritual formation is obedience to Christ.** That's what it's all about.

And now we've talked a lot about how you have to avoid legalism when you're going in that direction. That's absolutely crucial. But, you have to go in that direction. And you go in that direction by - not by aiming at doing the right thing or not doing the wrong thing. That's the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisees. **You aim at obedience to Christ by inward transformation. You aim at inward transformation, and obedience to Christ is the result.**

And so, we were able to talk a little bit last evening about how we would aim at inward transformation. As you recall we discussed this thing that Jesus says about not swearing, and how we need to let our yes be a yes and our no be a no.

What Are We Doing in Local Meetings?

[4:30]

Now, I do want to suggest that most of what we do together and spend our time on in the local meetings is not clearly directed towards that. And if I'm wrong, I want to be told, and I hope I am wrong. But I don't - I think unfortunately that most of what we do is not clearly directed toward that inward transformation that will result in obedience.

And I think the results testify to that. We are in the situation because of what we do and what we preach, or what we don't do and what we don't preach.

So then it's helpful historically to look at how people have been together when they were focused on that. I don't have time to say much of anything about that, but you can learn a lot just by studying how things have gone when things really were working to that end. And there are cases of that. And nearly every denomination can look back at a time when they were focused on that. And that doesn't necessarily mean that you ought to go back and do that - do what that denomination was doing. But you need to find an equivalent where you are. I need to find an equivalent where I am. [\[Church History - see #9 @ the End p. 48\]](#)

And it's a real struggle. It's a real struggle because you are essentially trying to change the understanding that the people have who come, and who support financially, and by their presence and by their efforts. You are essentially changing their understanding of that, and that is something that is tough to negotiate and get through. We talked about some of that last night.

So we need to recognize those problems, but not to be deterred from the goal. So, the goal namely of ourselves and then leading others to change to the point that they become people who routinely do the things that Jesus said do. Not who do that as an exception, but that's the rule of their life.

Practicing the Sermon on the Mount

[6:50]

Now we want to go back to the Sermon on the Mount, and we want to... We want to try to deal with this sermon more systematically. And let's start at the end. Let's start at **verse 21 of chapter 7 of Matthew**, and here is what Jesus said.

He's actually been warning, in this passage, about not doing the things he said, and about people who don't do the things that he said, and don't teach people to do that. And he says in verse 20 that you will know people by their fruits. In other words, what they do indicates who they really are.

So watch what they do, and in particular if they do not do the things that Jesus said but only pretend to, well then they are back in the category of the hypocrite where the scribe and the Pharisee wound up.

Now *verse 21* says, "*Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of the heavens.*" I remember the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee; that was a talk about how to get beyond that and enter the kingdom of the heavens.

Now do you understand by this point he's not talking about going to heaven when you die? That's the way this verse is often applied, and obviously there is some relationship. If you just say, Lord, Lord, that doesn't get you to the heart level, beyond the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee. Not everyone who says that will enter the kingdom of the heavens.

"But he who does the will of my Father who is in the heavens." **(Matthew 7:21)**

Now see, if you don't understand how Jesus teaches, you'll rush right off and make a bunch of laws and say, I'm going to do that, and I'll enter - probably go to heaven when I die. That misses the whole point of the teaching. He's talking about becoming the kind of person who would do that, the kind of person who would do the things that he said is the kind of person who's going to be in an interactive relationship with the Kingdom of the heavens.

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? **(Matthew 7:22)** Now, I want you to notice that he doesn't reply to this by

saying, You didn't either. You didn't do that. He doesn't say they didn't do that.

What he says is, well, that's a different story. Then I will declare to you I never knew you. Depart from me you who practice lawlessness, or people who work iniquity. (**Matthew 7:23**) Or you may have some other translation there.

See, the references back to, again, who are you and not what you do. Some people want to rush right off and say well this is demonic. They were casting out demons in the name of demons. But just notice, now, he doesn't say that.

And I leave you to think that out. Because you see, you can get involved in works like that and still not be changed. Did you know that? You can...that does not require that.

Spiritual Gifts and Character

[10:45]

You remember Samson? Samson did some pretty impressive stuff. (**Judges 15:14-17**) And you'll notice he did it in a strength that was not his. And you'll remember the story well, will you not, that when he lost his connection with God he couldn't do those things anymore. He wound up eyeless in Gaza, grinding at a mill. (**Judges 16:18-22**) One of the great things you learn in the Book of Judges is that mighty deeds do not necessarily have to do with character. God performs mighty deeds through people in many cases because he has something he wants accomplished. And he's prepared to use people to accomplish that.

You look at the Book of...the Books of 1 and 2 Corinthians. And the opening of **I Corinthians**, he says to the Corinthians, now, you do not come behind in any spiritual gift. And what is Corinthians basically about? It's basically about character problems. And about the inner life. And then gifts of course are fitted into that, and I said last night and I want to reemphasize, you can't dispense with those. That's what **Ephesians 4** was about. You have to have gifts.

And you have to have people who are empowered to do things that are not in their own power. And you can't just get along with the fruit. You have to have gifts in order for the body to work, and for people to grow. But you do have to understand that these do not necessarily mean Christlikeness. And sometimes people who have gifts aren't even well balanced. And a gift sometimes seems to require that you not be well balanced to bear the gift, so you have to understand that.

Now look at what Jesus says there. *"I will declare to them I never knew you. And depart from me."* (**Matthew 7:23**) And then the following verses from **24 through 27**. *"Everyone who hears the words...these words of mine and acts upon them may be compared to a wise person who built his house upon the rock."* Do you see what it says? Hears and acts. Hears and does them, other translations will

say. The rain... In his case, he took the word and he just did it.

Doing what Jesus said

[13:55]

So now what I'm belaboring here with this passage is simply this. I want to ask you the question. After looking at that, do you have the thought that we're supposed to do what Jesus said? Does that impress you as being the situation?

And what is it referring to? It's referring back to all the things he said in the Sermon. It starts out with blessed are the poor in spirit, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, moves on to anger and so on. We're going to go back and spend most of our time this morning on those particular details. But I have to ask you. Is it your impression that there is some good reason why you don't need to do the things that Jesus said.

Avoiding the Sermon on the Mount

[14:50]

Now, there have been whole systems of hermeneutics built around avoiding the Sermon on the Mount. This is sometimes called dispensationalism. But there are actually other versions of it too.

Dispensationalism is the most commonly known version in our country because there was for many years really a wonderful name...man named C.I. Scofield who wrote a Bible called the Scofield Bible. And that Scofield Bible was the seminary to which huge numbers of ministers went for several decades. And I'll tell you, it had wonderful things and very helpful things in it.

But one of them is if you look at the old Scofield notes, the original edition, you will see he plainly says that the Sermon on the Mount is for the millennium, and the only exceptions that he makes are divorce and forgiveness. You should forgive people before the millennium. And before the millennium you are not permitted to divorce. I presume that will extend into the millennium, but... So you have whole systems of avoiding...

See now that, I'm Southern Baptist. Southern Baptist Bibles wear out at Romans 1. *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also the Greek ."*

(Romans 1:16) Charismatic Bibles wear out in **Acts 2**. Right. So that's where the leaves begin to fall out. Or maybe **1 Corinthians 12 and 14**. But the Gospels remain rather pristine in those circles.

You might not know - I've actually had people say to me in churches where I've gone and preached the - Why don't we hear this? Jesus is pretty clear about it, isn't he. I mean, he doesn't say now, in the millennium the poor in spirit are going

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to be blessed, and in the millennium you shouldn't speak with contempt for people. He doesn't say that. That's an imposed system, and it reflects a serious doubt about whether or not we are supposed to do or can do the things that Jesus said.

Johnny Cash has a song; we had Johnny Cash on here yesterday I think. I love Johnny Cash. He has an old song that says, The beast in me is caged by frail and fragile bars. That means it's in there. The beast in me stays. And there's a very frail hold over that beast. And you hear people present the Christian faith as if that's what it...that's the way it is until you die. And you can't really do it.

Charlie Daniels...you know Charlie Daniels? Oh Jesus how could you love me? Oh Jesus how could you love me? Cause when I've a choice between good and bad I choose bad two out of three. You ever hear that song? See that's a part of culture.

Down in South Missouri we had an associational missionary named Earn Elliott. And Earn had really been around the road. He was a wonderful fellow. And he used to say, Well, when you convert 'em you might as well just knock 'em in the head real quick, because they're bigger then than they're ever gonna be again. He said they're like wasps. You know, when wasps hatch out, they're still damp, and swollen, and then after they're out for a little while they dry out and they get smaller. He said they're like wasps.

Living Out the Sermon

[19:20]

Now, I ask you sincerely. Do we really believe that what Jesus said is for us to do? You believe we can do it? Believe we should do it? Well, I mean, I collect sayings and things that people say about all of this, and I think the overwhelming sense is that we don't need to do it, and probably can't. And so then the Sermon on the Mount sits there, and at most makes people feel a little guilty, and if they get very, very serious they're apt to be driven into legalism. But they never come to terms with it.

And so now what we want to do this morning is try to talk about the Sermon in a way that it will become the substance of our teaching and of our lives. And in such a way that each of us will say yes this is for me. This is for me. And each of us will set our course to live out the things that Jesus is talking about. That we become the kind of person who would just do what he says. Not in the pharisaical way, but in the way of discipleship which moves us toward inward transformation, and the kind of inner life that leads us easily to do that.

OK? Are you ready for that now, because I mean if... I mean, there's enough people in this room to turn the world on its ear. Enough people in this room. But you're not going to do it with a slick plan of church growth. And you're not going

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to do it in any other way than by your own transformation and that spreading out to other people. That's the only way it works.

Outline of the Sermon “The Heart that Jesus Gives” [22:10-30:35]

<i>Lives Free from...</i>	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>DC Lectures</u>
Anger & Contempt	5:21-26	#11 Start
Domination by Sexual Lust & Disgust	5:27-32	#11 @ 0:48:00
Domination by Divorce	5:31-32	#11 @ 1:08:00
Desire to Dominate & Control Verbally	5:33-37	#11 @ 1:09:10
	<i>See also</i>	# 9 @ 1:11:00
Grudges, Fairness Issues & Paying Back	5:38-42	#11 @ 1:09:30
Love Enemies & Bless the Cursing	5:43-48	#11 @ 1:11:20
Performing for Human Credit	6:1-18	#12 @ 0:08:00
Physical Substance	6:19-34	#12 @ 0:21:10
Condemnation Engineering	7:1-16	#12 @ 0:29:40
Community of Prayerful Love	7:7-12	#12 @ 0:48:45
Discerning	7:13-23	#10 @ 0:06:50
Hear and Do	7:24-27	#10 @ 0:13:30

So now, before we get into the details of it, let's think about the whole sermon, and you can, you can think of this whole sermon as expressing the kind of heart that Jesus gives to people. And I like to... I like to address the whole sermon under the heading of “The Heart that Jesus Gives”. The Heart that Jesus Gives. And then as you go through the sermon you see different aspects of that showing up. We won't have time to do all of them. But I do want to cover the main points in the sermon, and so if you want to follow this breakdown now in terms of aspects of life that show up from this heart that is changed, the Kingdom heart, here's how it would go.

Matthew 5 — Free of anger and lust [23:07]

First of all you have presented lives that are free of anger and contempt. And that's **(Matthew 5:21-26)** And we'll talk about why we...why he gives us the order he does later.

And then secondly you have lives free from domination by sexual lust and disgust. Sexual lust and disgust. Free from domination by those. That is **Matthew 5:27 through 32**. Matthew 5:27 through 32. And if you have your text open there I think you can almost see the breaks as they come by.

Free from desire to control [24:00]

Then the third section is on being lives free from desire to dominate and control

verbally. Now that, we talked about that last night as an illustration. That's why he's talking about, Swear not. And I hope you remember now that's...he's not saying, Don't cuss. It's not about cussin'. It's about swearing. It's not even about profanity or filthy language. It's about using language in such a way that you don't just plainly state things and let them stand for people to respond to; you try to manipulate people by the way you put things.

Now that can be swearing or cussing too. Because you ask why people cuss, well, that's an interesting topic. You could do some good sermons and teaching on that if you think about it. Where they say things like, Jesus Christ. Well, what does that...what are they doing? You know. Why do they do that? Well actually it is a form of what Jesus is talking about. So that's in **5:33-37**.

Free from grudges

[25:15]

Then on the next section, section four, free from grudges, fairness issues, and paying back. Grudges, fairness issues, and paying. So if you look at **38-42** you'll see these are things like turning the other cheek and so on. Going the second mile, those are teaches, teachings about fairness, grudges, and paying back.

So, what he's presenting here is a heart that is free from that. It doesn't carry grudges. It isn't obsessed with what's fair and what isn't. That really hits people today because so much of our culture is devoted to fairness issues. Children very quickly learn about that, and try to use it, so that's a major thing that has to be addressed. And then of course paying back.

Free to bless enemies

[26:17]

And then the fifth section is on the heart that is able to love enemies and bless those who curse, and that is **5:43-48**. Now, that finishes chapter 5.

Matthew 6 — Two Main Sections

What's **chapter 6** about? Well, chapter 6 deals with two things, and I'm going to have less time to deal with these than any of the rest of it, I think, but actually I may change my mind on that before the day is over depending on how the discussion here develops. But chapter 6 has two main sections. One is... **6:1-18**.

1st Half — Free from performance orientation

[27:00]

And that deals with performing for human credit. Performing for human credit. And the first section deals with doing good deeds, with praying and with fasting. And this issue of performance is a major one. But the Kingdom heart does not perform for human credit.

2nd Half — Free from trust in the physical

[27:30]

And then the second half of the sixth chapter is about not trusting in physical substances. Really, that whole chapter is about trusting. One is trusting in your reputation. And the other is trusting in money. And so from 6:19 through 6:34 it's about trusting physical means or money, mainly. That's the one that concludes of course with the section about not being anxious about what you're going to eat, or what you wear, and so on. And has the great verse, "*Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and everything else will be added.*" **(Matthew 6:33)**

Matthew 7 — Free from judging others

[28:10]

The final section of the sermon, in terms of the heart that is expressed, is in chapter **7:1-12**, and we do want to try to spend significant time on that toward the end of the day. This is about not managing others by condemnation engineering. That's a word I...or a phrase I try to use to indicate how people try to get people to do things by judgment, and condemnation, and laying good stuff on 'em.

So we'll have to look at that in some detail, and we'll see how that moves out into the community of prayerful love. So, you have a section here that you go right from how you deal with others, into the life of prayer. That's really fundamental for understanding community life, especially in our churches. And that life of prayer then leads over in **verse 12 of chapter 7** to the great statement: "*Therefore however you want people to treat you, so treat them. For this is the law and the Prophets.*" Treat people as you want to be treated." Now, the therefore, we'll want to explain why that therefore is there. Because you move right from the life of prayer to how you treat others in the Kingdom of God.

And then the last section of the sermon all has to do with this business of doing it, and really warnings about hearing and not doing it. Now see, I hope you realize at this point... I hope you've thought the thought that we've actually established a culture of hearing and not doing. We've established a culture of hearing and not doing. Not just in our churches, but in the larger society. People here, they don't do it. And that's why life does not go very well.

And so those are the main divisions that we'd be looking at as we go on through the day, and with that we turn back to **chapter 5**. Now then.

Matthew 5 - Blessedness in the Beatitudes

[30:45]

Jesus' Approach

Why does he begin where he does? Why does it develop the way it does? The first thing you want to understand when you look at the Sermon on the Mount is that this is a master teacher, who knows exactly what he's doing, and therefore there is a reason why he orders things the way he does. That's why he starts off at the opening of the Sermon with the issue of who is blessed. Because who is blessed is going to determine how one behaves. We act for what is good in our eyes. And so the first thing that he has to discuss is who is well off, and...that covers those Beatitudes and what comes immediately after it. And shocking statements that he made, like, *"You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth."*

(Matthew 5:14)

Now we just pause over that for a moment, see, because that is often not thought to apply to me, and you. And so, here's a suggestion. I mean, put on your bathroom mirror, *"You are the light of the world."* You are the salt of the earth. And you say, well, Jesus is the light of the world. No, you can't get off that easy. You're the light of the world. Where you are, if you are not the light, there isn't going to be any light. That's your calling.

Now, one of the reasons why you have to understand the Beatitudes as taking a list of the humanly un-blessable and announcing that they too can be blessed in the Kingdom of God is because, if you don't understand that, then you won't know the connection between those next statements, where he announces to ordinary people, very ordinary people, in **verse 13 of Matthew 5**, *"You are the salt of the earth."*

And then he warns that salt can become tasteless. What they called salt in those days is not what we call salt. What they called salt in those days was more a kind of rock compound, and you could leach the salt out of it, and it would still be there. That's what it means there when it talks about salt becoming tasteless. The salt you have in your shaker can't become tasteless because it's pure salt. But the salt that they had in those days was not pure salt. It was a kind of rock compound, often limestone or other things, and you could actually leach the salt out of it, and that's what he's talking about here. And if it does loses its salt, you can't give the salt back to it, not in those days; they didn't have the technology for it.

It's good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot of men. **(Matthew 5:13)** They took it and would strew in a muddy place, to make a pathway where you could walk, like we would do with gravel today. And that's what he's saying here.

And then he goes on, You're the light of the world. **(Matthew 5:14)** You're the light of the world. Now, here he makes a different point, that a city that is set on a hill can't be hidden. What he's saying here is, being the light of the world, all you have to do is be the light of the world. You don't need to make an effort to be seen.

And no matter how dark it gets, darkness cannot put out a light. Did you ever know that? That's one of the interesting asymmetries between light and darkness. Light expels darkness. Darkness does not expel light. The darker it gets, the brighter the light shines. And that is true of a disciple of Jesus. That's why, when it gets dark, you can be proud and thankful to be a disciple of Jesus, and you can be assured that you don't have to announce that you are shining. Right? You don't have to announce that. You just shine.

And so, one of the things that Jesus is telling us here is we can put God in charge of our public relations. If we have the real stuff, it can't be hid. It cannot be hid. Now you see that comes together with the things that I've been hammering on here.

Obedience to Christ

[36:15]

The true ecumenism among Christians is obedience to Christ. We can have people now who work next to one another for years, and they both attend church and are professing Christians, but at work they never find out they're Christians. And you might be tempted to say, if you have a spiritual life that can be hidden, maybe it should be. Maybe it should be. That might be the best thing.

Jesus says, if you are the light of the world, where you are, that's your appointment. That's what God foresaw for you from the foundation of the world. That's a part of what's built into the idea of the Kingdom of God. Is that you did not take God by surprise. He foresaw the world in which you would be born, and the family, and all that goes into that world he had you in mind for that place from the foundation of the world.

So now that's your place to be the light of the world. How are you going to be the light of the world? You're going to be the light of the world by living out the Kingdom of God in that place. That's how you are the light of the world. You bring the Kingdom of God into that place, and you let it work.

Now, you...I would hope you would know, you would all know, because you're students of the Scripture, and we've talked about here what that means. What form that's going to take. You're going to be a person who does the right thing. Why do you do the right thing? Because you're a person of love, and because you live in faith, a faith in God that allows you to know that if you do the right thing,

God will stand with you. See that's one of the things that you learn as a disciple of Jesus.

Obedience to Christ - Life of Integrity

[38:30]

You never have to do anything wrong. You never have to do anything wrong. People who do not understand that always think, you know... People want to be good, but they're ready to do what's wrong, if necessary.

Now see that's the little clause. Did you ever hear the phrase, "Business is business?" When do people say business is business? When they're getting ready to do something wrong. Or at least something they believe is wrong. And they're going to say, well, we have to do it. We have to do it. That's when they say business is business.

And now, the Christian will always say, business is never just business. Could I get you to write that one down? Business is never just business. See there's a popular idea that you can't do business in a godly way, because you're always going to come to that point, where, business is business. That means that you're now prepared to trust yourself and your own devices and not God. That's what it means. At that point the light diminishes. And everyone says, *"Well, really you're just like everybody else."*

Life that glorifies God

[40:06]

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and say you are really wonderful. Did I misread that verse? "You wonderful." No, no. They're not...they're going to see your Father in heaven. That they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. They're not going to see your good works if you say all those words, like business is business, or whatever it is we do to explain why we find it necessary to do what we believe is not best or perhaps is outright wrong. They'll never see that light. It's when you stand there in the world, and you say, blessed are those who are facing unemployment. Not because unemployment is good, but because they too can live in the Kingdom of God, even if they're unemployed. Facing bankruptcy. Facing shutting down the business, or whatever. See.

Understanding Blessedness Is Crucial

[41:30]

So now, you have to have that solidly in place. The order of the Sermon is fundamental. And anyone who does not know where their blessedness is in the Kingdom of God is not going to be able to go on beyond the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee. Am I making any sense? That make any sense? Maybe I better say that again. You have to know where your blessedness is. Or when you

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Dallas Willard @ Harvey Fellows 2007 Summer Institute

come to deal with anger, you won't be able to deal with anger. You won't be able to deal with contempt, unless you know where blessedness is.

Because, for example, you'll say some people who fit certain categories are contemptible. You won't say, well, the Kingdom of God is over all, and it's over them too. And God made them, and called them. Now they may not...they may be in the category here of the salt that has had the saltiness washed out of it. And human beings can't restore that. But God can. And so that's crucial now to understand this order.

~ ~ ~ END of Session 10 @ 42:55 ~ ~ ~

~ 11 [Kingdom Living](#) [YouTube Link]

[1:21:00]

"The Sermon on the Mount" (continued) — Matthew 5:21-48

1st - Lives Free from Anger & Contempt

5:21-26

Getting Rid of Anger, Contempt, and Cultivated Lust

Now, I hope you understand the importance of thinking that this is an intelligent man who is giving an intelligent address to fundamental issues. So on the assumption that Jesus was smart and knew what he was talking about, can we all agree on that assumption? Everyone agree with that? He knew what he was talking about, so now he's giving a talk, and he's dealing with the issues, so there's going to be an order in there.

Most Fundamental Problem

So why does he start with anger? Answer: because anger is the most fundamental problem in human life. Now. Systematically it's not. But it is the most fundamental problem if you are aiming to transform people. You have to start there. And Jesus is not writing a theory. He can leave that to later people, everyone from St. Augustine to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others, and they can...

We need the theory, but he's not doing that, see. He is founding a community. He's founding a community of redemption. His project is to change people. And the theory's all there; it's in the background. Love, love of God, love of neighbor. That's been developing. The laws that are expressions of that; that's been developing for centuries. But that's not going to help a person who's down here in the guts of life, flailing about, caught up in their own anger or other blind feelings, trying to medicate perhaps to get out of them. Or, letting them fly and brutalizing everyone around them by violent language and emotions and actions. That's not going to do it. So that's why he starts there.

The Sermon on Anger

And now then, as he goes on, see if you... Let's suppose you start... Let's say...let's say you decide, oh I'm going to start at...oh, I think I'd like to start at, oh maybe verse 41, "Whoever will force you to go a mile go with him go two." (Matthew 5:41) You won't do well with that unless you've dealt with anger, and contempt first. Right. Now that's actually, probably, talking about a Jewish person who is being forced by a Roman soldier to carry a load for one mile. Because that was a - that was what you could be required to do according to the Roman government.

And Jesus is saying something unbelievably radical. A Roman was an uncircumcised pig. If a Jew went into a Roman household, or had close connection with a Roman, they were unclean. They could not participate in religious rituals. They couldn't come into certain kinds of company for three days. Would you say that is dissing? I would say that's dissing, wouldn't you? Now, if you're not...if you haven't gotten out of your dissing mode, then if you're in your anger mode you're probably going to diss because they're closely connected. You're not going to do anything with this.

Turn the other cheek

You're not going to do anything with the person who slapped you on the cheek, and Jesus is saying now turn the other one. Cause you're full of anger. You're full of contempt. Probably because you're full of lust. So you can't do it. These statements of Jesus are ordered in a progressive way. And so you have to understand the fundamental character of what he's saying about these first two sets of things that we gave on the list a moment ago, and these are covered in verses 21 through, actually through verse 32.

The Nature of Anger

So now. Let's go back and work on anger. We talked a little bit about it earlier. Now we have to go deeper. We said some things like anger is not in itself wrong, but it is very likely to lead to wrong. The person who is quick to anger is in, is a dangerous person.

So for example when Paul in Titus 1:7 is talking about the requirements for elders and bishops and leaders, one of the requirements that he lays down is that they are not soon angry. They don't get angry quickly. And that's right next door to not given to much wine. Love, described in 1 Corinthians 13, you remember one of the things about it, is it is not easily provoked. Not easily... Can it be provoked? Yeah. But it's not easily provoked. And it doesn't stay provoked, if you remember how love is described there. Doesn't keep score. It lays things down. Lets grudges go. See, angry... Anger is dangerous because it gets us on a path that leads to things that harm other people.

The will to harm

So now, let me go a little deeper here into anger. Bear with me please. Anger actually is will to harm. It is will to harm. That's why when someone is angry at you, you already feel hurt. Isn't that true? I've yet to find someone who even likes to be honked at. You like to be honked at? What does a honk mean? Did you ever think you'd be caught in a situation discussing what a honk means? Well, I mean they would be words like, You idiot get out of my way, right? I mean, that's a mild

version. Maybe that's a Christian version. Someone driving to church.

An announcement of pain

Well, it's very interesting. Anger is built... And actually this, when you understand this, this is a part. What anger really does is announce to us that something needs to be changed. Now we may be wrong about that, but that's what it announces. Anger in the emotional realm is like pain in the physical realm. And actually anger is a kind of pain. It's an uncomfortable feeling. And like when you step on a nail, you feel pain in your foot, and what that tells you is something is wrong. Pain tells you something is wrong. Something needs to be changed.

A course towards harm

And so, the essence of anger is the will to push, to if necessary move you, harm you even. So, people... Then when people get caught up in anger, they set themselves on a course of harm, and that's where murder comes from. And if you remember Joseph, or Jacob, sorry, when he came to die, said to his two sons Levi and Simon, he said, I don't want my soul to have anything to do with you. I don't want my blessing to get messed up with you. Because you are angry people, and you kill others. And you slay animals. (Genesis 49:5-7) These were people who were possessed by anger.

A crossing of the will

Ecclesiastes 7:9 says, "Anger reposes in the bosom of fools." Now, that doesn't mean everyone who's angry is a fool. It means if you find a fool, you'll find some anger. Now, fool is heavy word in the Scripture. So we need to think deeply about the nature of anger, and we need to understand for example that anger is caused by our will being crossed. Doesn't matter how trivial it is. You know, out here in Los Angeles we shoot people over parking in the wrong place. It doesn't matter how trivial it is; if it crosses my will, and I'm a person who is given to unrestrained anger, I will do anything to carry out that anger.

An insult to your kingdom

Basically, anger is an insult to your kingdom - that causes it. Your will is being crossed, and really no matter how trivial the issue... I mean haven't you been around people who for no reason at all just fly into a rage - it doesn't have to be something big, it just has to be experienced in a certain way.

Now, some people come to the point where they are just angry people. They don't necessarily have to have anything to be angry at but when they get into that position, then the smallest thing - don't we talk that way? We'll say, the smallest

thing will set them off. And that is always because you have a will and a certain condition, and that is what causes anger.

The Position of Anger

And we want to say that anger is not a sin; it is something that is natural, like pain - but only if you have rock solid Christian character, can keep you safe with anger. And often people say, Well God gets angry. Well that is all right, God can handle it, you can bet on his character! They say, didn't Jesus get angry when he made the whip and went into the temple . Yes, Jesus did - again, I can trust Jesus with stuff I wouldn't trust myself with.

Now, we do have situations where people do not have any other way of handling things and they become angry and sometimes it leads to change, and so I think that in some circumstances we should say while anger might not be the best thing, it is better than some other things.

And so we often have people who feel that, for example, if you are not angry about certain kinds of injustices that you must be, you couldn't possibly be right - either you are brain dead or your heart is not in the right place. And there is something to be said for that, and perhaps some things do become so bad that in some situations the only way is to let anger explode.

Not the best

But that I really want to say that is not the best way of handling things, and if you come to that, what will invariably happen is that the anger will evoke anger on the other side, unless you've got someone over there that is of rock solid Christian character, which is unlikely, though they may think they have it, right.

So we are not talking about repressing anger; we are not talking about denying anger. Those are bad things. We are talking about not being angry and still being able to stand for what is right, be solid; stand to the death if necessary.

That may sometimes verge even over into things like warfare, but if war is inevitable, or necessary, and in some circumstances it is still true that anger and contempt are not. And you will certainly recognize that warfare conducted in anger and contempt is many times worse because of that. Many times worse.

Not necessary

So those are things we need to have in mind and we can say, I believe that everything you can do with anger you can do better without it. You may have to learn how to do that. And if you act without anger, you are going to have to

educate others that you really do mean what you say, though you are not angry. Right?

And in many respects human beings just live at a level that if you don't act angry they'll think you don't mean what you say. Just like a dog - you know you can say the most awful things to a dog with a kind tone and it will just wag its tail and lick your hand. Or you can say the best things to the dog in a tone of reproach and anger and it will just slink off with its tail between its legs.

And there is so much we see of CEOs that rule their operation by the threat of being angry and people would sort of drag along until that came over the horizon, and then when they got angry they would start to move. See, this living without anger is a matter of reeducating everyone around you, especially if you are in a position of responsibility.

So I say here everything you can do with anger you can do better without it, understanding you have to go through that process both with yourself and with others.

The Danger of Anger

Now one of the reasons why anger is so dangerous is because it is always righteous in the moment. I have already talked about that a little bit, so I don't want to spend time on it but just draw your attention to it again. Anger. Check this out, and check out everything I say, of course, but I mean you do want to test this all against your own experience; and it is very rare that you ever meet someone who is angry who doesn't feel like their anger is completely justified. And moreover they will feel that their anger justifies what they do in anger, and so that keeps us from being critical.

Easily justified

And anger is a feeling, and all feelings when they come up they don't raise the question of, Am I right? Thoughts and beliefs tend to do that, but feelings simply tend to stand there in your face and hammer at you and say, I want this, I want this, I want this, I want this.

And this is true, for example - you get a person who is caught up in a love affair: they will normally feel completely justified in all the feelings that they have. Now once they subside and so on, then they can criticize them, but the moment, in the moment of feeling there is not the appropriate kind of reflection and criticism about what it all means. That is one reason why we have to be extremely careful with feelings, and anger is one of the most of important ones for us to deal with.

Anger is in our body. We've talked earlier about how we farm character out to our bodies and that is why it so easily bypasses our mind and our spirit if we are not well formed to recognize what's happening. We will act in anger before we think.

Christians and Anger

Well, that's where our mean Christians come from: you have people who are professing Christians and they have not come to terms with their anger; and then when things go contrary to their will, they are unhappy, they attack others, they withdraw from others and normally they don't really - they are not really on top of what their feelings and thinkings are...

After 9/11, as we endearingly call it, every church that we went into was abuzz like a hive of bees that had been hit with a stick. Everyone was so angry and they didn't know what to do with it. And that's unfortunately typical because where do you train as a Christian to deal with anger and to come out of that situation that Jesus describes.

Jesus on Anger

Look, here is what he says: You have heard that the ancients were told, You shall not commit murder and whoever commits murder will be liable to the court, but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother... and there are two versions here, and if you like the easier version, without a cause... actually it doesn't make any difference with the point at hand, shall be guilty before the court, that is to say, have the same kind of guilt as one who murders, and whoever shall say to his brother "racca..." (Matthew 5:21-22)

Now, "racca" is an Aramaic term that's uncertain in its origins but the way it is pronounced it sounds like the noise you make when you are clearing your throat to spit. I won't demonstrate! But you can practice in the solitude of your room! Racca.

Everyone who says that shall be guilty before the Supreme Court. That is even worse than being angry, and he goes on to say, Everyone who says, you fool, see these are all expressions of an attitude of harm towards other people, shall be guilty enough to go into the fires of Gehenna. (v. 22) This isn't Hades; it is Gehenna that is being referred to.

So you can see now Jesus is putting a really heavy weight on stepping out of anger. And the reason that we have so many angry Christians is because they are not trained out of that, they are not taught out of it. No one lays the foundation for getting out of it, so now we want to move on here to the next screen and talk a little bit about that, stepping out of anger.

Living Without Anger

Now since anger is a world phenomena that is where you have to begin, and so not just to get rid of anger, but because it is right and good in itself, stepping out of anger presupposes you have surrendered your will to God. That means among other things you have accepted the fact that you don't have to have your way.

All right, so that other person did park in your parking place! Now what? Well, it could be the end of the world. Or it could be an inconvenience, and you might decide, for example, that you will have compassion on the person. That doesn't mean you wouldn't speak to them about it, or do whatever is necessary to correct the situation; it just means you won't do it in anger and contempt.

So surrender to the will of God effects a pervasive change in all of our life.

The Cross

Now this is the meaning of the cross in spiritual growth and in redemption. This is the meaning of the cross. See Jesus did not die on the cross so that we wouldn't have to die on the cross; he died on the cross so that we could join him in his death on the cross.

So what does Paul say in Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ." (2:20) What does that mean? That means that I have accepted the same posture in my life as Christ did. I have given up my life to God, I have laid it down.

I mentioned William Law yesterday. There is a wonderful passage here from that book, *A Serious Call to the Devout and Holy Life* and I will just read a few words from it:

"If therefore you live in murmurings and complaints accusing all the accidents of life, it is not because you are a weak infirm creature, but it is because you want the first principle of religion; you lack the first principle of religion; right belief in God."

Wow! Maybe I should read that again; it might help me. He is talking about always being thankful to God in life. He says,

"If therefore you live in murmurings and complaints, accusing all the accidents of life, it is not because you are a weak infirm creature, but it is because you lack the first principle of religion; a right belief in God. For as thankfulness is an express acknowledgment of the goodness of God towards you, so repinings and complaints are as plain accusations of God's want of goodness toward you. On the

other hand, would you know who is the greatest saint in the world - it is not he who prays or fasts most. It is not he who gives most alms or is most immanent for temperance, chastity or justice, but it is he who is always thankful to God, who wills everything that God wills, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness and has a heart always ready to praise God for it. All prayer and devotions, fastings and repentance, meditation and retirement, all sacraments and ordinances are but so many means to render the soul thus divine and conformable to the will of God and to fill it with thankfulness and praise for everything that comes from God."

Something to think about.

Surrender

[25:50]

So, stepping out of anger is going to mean the surrender of our will to God. Now, what about things that are wrong. We can still act with reference to them. We don't just let everything stand. We speak truth, and we live it, but we don't do it in anger and contempt. And the reason for that is we know that he is taking care of us. We know that our real interests are safe.

So now suppose the guy parks in my parking place, I have to park a block and a half away and walk to my apartment. Well, can you do that praising God? Can you do that with thankfulness that you found a parking place two blocks and a half away. Then, can you speak to the person who parked in your place with compassion and love and understanding of the weakness of people who do such things, and their needs, and so on, and have a discussion with him.

Working Through Anger

Well, you see, if you do this, you talk with him, what is he going to do? He is going to get mad probably, right? Because he knows he's wrong and he is uneasy to begin with and now you come along and point this out.

So now what is your response going to be to that person? You are not going to get mad. You can stand there and let him pour vituperation and bile upon you and because you are not an angry person now, you are going to be firm, you are going to ask him not to do that again, explain to him the situation, God bless you, have a good evening, I will be praying for you! Now what do you think this is going to do to that person?

Now suppose instead you go and whack on his door and you start hollering at him and cursing him? He is going to curse you back and holler at you and feel completely justified in doing it because you came and cursed him and hollered at him. You see, anger hurts. I don't care, if people - you know, I'm cool baby, I'm

not hurt they say, as the blood drips down their shirt, they are wounded deep - I'm cool baby. But they don't want you to know they are hurt, right. So you get all this silliness, absolute silliness, and the way you short circuit that and dump it somewhere, and it takes a while, because you see that person now, that you are talking to, this isn't a dive bombing situation, you are entering a relationship by doing that. They entered a relationship with you when they parked in your place.

Understanding people

And now this is the kind of work you have to do if you are going to understand anger and how to get out of it. You can't just live in it. You have to understand that other people have to be drawn into it. They are used to living in their shell. You know those little crabs that come out of their shell and you move towards them and they back into their shell. That is very much like human beings so you have to sort of say, Wait a minute, not back in your shell. So you stay with them.

Now, again, you just don't make a law out of this, you use your brains, you use good sense. That, by the way, one of the things that many people do. Many people read Jesus' teachings as if he were some kind of an idiot, and you know, - and they think well, you just stop thinking and do what he thinks. Never. Never. See what you are being called to is responsible selfhood, responsible humanity, and responsible humanity means that you think in terms of relationships, not in terms of acts, much less tit for tat.

Caring for relationship

I spoke about firing someone in Christian love. Normally, that means the relationship is divorce, see, and this is a wrong attitude toward what goes on between human beings, but when we have a painful encounter with someone, we try to scuttle back into our little rock or shell and we hope never to see that person again.

But, now as a Christian, you are living in the neighborhood, you are going to see that person again. You might even send a Valentine. You maintain the relationship and that is a part of recognizing the care of God and the supervision. As angry as I might be at this person, in a sober moment I realize God loves that person. God loves that person. So now, they may not even be right with God but God cares about them and if I am going to relate to them then I have to be in a position to recognize that. And God cares for me also. He cares for me.

So now, with this in place, this point of not getting what you want is not a big deal. See, you begin to step out of anger because anger always comes out of when you make things a big deal. It is not a big deal. Now sometimes it is a big deal in other respects. So if it has meaning other than just, I want my way, then you stay

with that and you don't change what you are saying. You are just not angry about it and because you are not angry about it you don't evoke all the angry emotions from the other side that would come if you were angry.

Now you will get some, but you see when you get those, that's where you stand steady and let them work their way out. And this applies to all kinds of relationships.

Now I have already talked about the meaning of the cross here. You see, that is the meaning of the cross. There is life beyond this event's, there is life outside this event. And now then, the Christian, the disciple of Jesus living in the Kingdom has learned that no matter what the event is, there is life outside that event.

Contempt - Twin of Anger; Find one and the other is close by. [33:16]

Well we need to talk a little bit about contempt, because anger and contempt are twins. You know, any time you find contempt or anger the other one is close by, often locked in an embrace, but in any case they are always close by. Because if you have contempt towards something or someone, you regard them as less worthy or worthless, and so then it is more appropriate or easier to do the things that would harm them, to be angry at them.

So I mean you think of the whole history of things like racial conflict, and you look at the history of that - where people of another tribe, where it is quite fitting to eat them. Not your tribe, of course! It was quite fitting to do whatever to them to degrade them, to deprive them. That's always what goes into contempt. It regards the other as worthy of harm or loss.

So if you have contempt for someone and something bad happens to them you are certainly less likely to grieve over it. You are more likely to say, Well, you know, they deserve it. And you are certainly less likely to do anything to help them or to act for their advantage.

Filthy language

So then we have talked about dissing someone. The use of filthy language is always an expression of contempt. And many people can't find anything wrong with filthy language. It always brings the element of contempt in, and that contempt is not a good thing. And it makes anger easy and it issues from anger. You see people in a fight, they will always move to contempt; filthy language always goes that way. That's built into the nature of anger. If you get into a fight and the anger is flowing, contempt will be right there. And needless to say, contempt does not mean love.

Living Without Contempt

So now one of the things we can do is resolve to learn to live without contempt. We can do that. And the answer to contempt is love. You cannot have contempt for the things that you love.

Again, as I always say, test this out. Test it out in relationships, watch others, observe life, observe yourself, and see whether or not these things are true. We can give up the right to have contempt of people.

Many people say, well, I have a right to be contemptuous of them. No, actually you don't. But the human way of looking at things might suggest that you do, that you have a right to be contemptuous. You can give up the right to be angry. You say, well I have the right to. Well, in some cases you may, but the question is whether or not you ought to do it anyway. You have a right to do a lot of things that are not good for you.

So that I think a great moment for our own spiritual growth is the time when we decide I give up the right to be angry. I am not going to exercise it. I abandon contempt, I can live without it, I will be better off without it. Then I have to learn how to act against wrong without being angry and that is a lesson in itself.

Studying Anger

Now, I realize that (and when we get to questions later on, you may want to go on in this for some length) I realize there are some issues here that have to be dealt with. I do want to encourage you to study anger and angry inductively in your Bible. That is to get your old concordance down, or now you've probably got it electronically, and search anger and angry. Get those words and study them in the biblical context.

And that's a good occasion to say now to you that everything I say in this series has to come out of the Bible. If it is not biblical we don't want it. And that comes with what we said earlier about the Bible in relation to our knowledge of reality and knowledge of what is good and right.

God has provided the Bible. It is the kind of thing it is because God thought that was best it be that way, so it isn't a little rule book, it isn't a theological treatise, it is a window on life. But you study it and there emerges from it the profound teachings that we need and I think you will see that about anger if you study it that way.

Now you are not apt to study it that way if you don't take seriously the ideas that Jesus and Paul and the others - that we should just lay aside anger. Don't be

there. Lay aside contempt, don't be there either.

The Positive Side of Anger & Contempt - Mt. 5:24-26 [39:33]

In the Sermon itself you do want to look at the positive side on anger and contempt. I should just mention this. See when he goes, Do not commit adultery, then he says, I say to you do not be angry without a cause... don't express contempt, don't call people fools, then he switches over to the positive.

So you need to understand that verses 24-26, he is teaching the positive side of dealing with anger, so he says, Therefore, in verse 23, if you are presenting an offering at the altar and there remember your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go your way, be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering.

Right and wrong attitudes

Now understand what that is doing, see, follow the texture of the sermon, what is that doing; that's still talking about anger. And what it's doing now, it is contrasting the right attitude to the wrong attitude. And now he gives you teaching about the kind of thing that the person who has the right attitude will do. It isn't just that they won't call them fools, they won't be contemptuous of them, and they won't be angry at them, as a positive attitude.

*** 1st Case - Interrupt the process of the ritual.**

Now get this picture. Jesus takes a situation where there is a great temptation to overlook the moral dimension of life in favor of the ritual dimension. Why does he pick that? If you are presenting your offering at the altar.

Well, one reason is that is precisely a situation you do not interrupt for any reason other than some other ritual consideration. You can interrupt the process that he is talking about here if it were to turn out, for example, that the offering had something wrong with it. Or that the priest had not set things up in the right order so that the instruments that were used, and all of that, were not proper. Then you could interrupt.

See, there is always a tendency in religious institutions to glorify those processes to such an extent that people wind up substituting ritual behavior for moral rightness, and Jesus is going counter to that. He is suggesting an outrageous thing: in short, that you would interrupt the process of your offering in the temple to do some trivial thing like go make things right with your brother.

Now, of course, I don't mean it is trivial. What he is saying is that is the really

important thing and it is so important that you would be prepared to interrupt the ritual in order to go take care of it.

Goodness and rightness

Now why is he saying that? To show what it is really like to not just, not kill your brother, but to really love. Do you understand what I am saying there?

See the prophets have always had this problem with people substituting sacrifices and keeping days and all of that and saying, oh, we are just wonderful because we do that, when they were morally debauched. You know your Old Testament well enough to know that, I think. They are always dealing with that issue. The tendency to substitute ritual behavior for genuine goodness and rightness, and that is what Jesus is talking about.

*** 2nd Case - A new type of friendship - Mt. 5:25 [43:57]**

He goes on, he takes another case here which is very touchy, he says, Make friends quickly with your opponents at law. (Matthew 5:25) Now these are people who are engaged in a lawsuit as we might say today. To make friends with the person you are having a contest with. What is that about? That is a further illustration of the genuine heart of the Kingdom person, that is so far from killing them - see, that is the background that he is talking of - that if they go to law, they are friendly.

Have you ever seen people going to law? Ever done jury service and watched the people engaged in law suits? Would you be inclined to describe them as friendly? Well, that is not the way it is.

Now you see people who say you are never to go to law, and maybe they will qualify, with a Christian. I knew a man once who would not do business with Christians - he was a business man - because he said, If things go wrong in our dealings I can't sue them. Now that is profound, isn't it? He had read this passage and thought it said you shouldn't go to law.

Give in love

It doesn't say you shouldn't go to law, it shows you how to go to law. You go to law in love. Be friendly.

So the person wins the case? Well, Jesus says if someone sues you and takes away your overcoat, and you later see that they need your jacket and you have an extra jacket, what do you do? You say, "you SOB, you took away my overcoat - I wouldn't give you anything." Right? No, no. Jesus said give him your jacket.

Anger and Contempt in the Immoral Life

Now, folks, look here. Suppose we just got that far. You see what it is going to do to everything else. I mean if you pull the anger and contempt out of pornography, how much pornography do you have left? Almost none. I would be willing to say none. Am I making any sense to you.

See, Jesus understood the structure of the immoral life. He understood that. And when he goes at it, he just pulls the foundations out from under it. If people were not contemptible of others there would be no pornography. It is always full of contempt, and anger is close at hand, and so they are willing to degrade others and see other people degraded.

Now I am just talking about pornography, but the reason I am bringing that up is that Jesus is going to move on here towards sexuality. And he is going to talk about it in a day when there were people, just like there have always been, who might not commit adultery and might say, Well I didn't do it, I didn't do it.

Are there still people like that today? Well yes of course there are. And often they are religious people, and maybe they are even religious leaders. I think that's what Jesus was talking about because he understood that many of these people who were religious leaders in his day, Pharisees and scribes were people who would commit adultery if they had the occasion and they would not be fearful of what would happen. But if they were not contemptuous already they would not be bothered with that. If they were not angry with their wife, or wives in this case often, unsatisfied with them, they wouldn't be looking elsewhere.

2nd - Free from Domination of Lust, Disgust & Adultery 5:27-30 [48:00]

So Jesus takes up this topic now in terms of the act of adultery and goes to the heart. He says, I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust... (Matthew 5:28) And if your version reads and lust would you please mark it mark the and out; I'll give you time to look because this is such an important matter. The language here is very clear; it does not say, looks and lusts, but, looks to lust.

Have an NIV? What does it say? Looks lustfully - so that is and . So you check our Greek, do your sources on this.

This is a particular kind of thing that is often done. For example, apparently there were construction workers in Jesus' day! Now then this has spread to television commercials. You know the Pepsi commercial that has the young women standing in the window and the construction worker with his shirt off having a Pepsi. So this is the familiar sort of thing. It is looking to lust. And you need to understand in

this matter because you can easily enslave yourself to things that you think are wrong that aren't.

Sin, temptation, and readiness

You need to distinguish 1), thought of sin; from 2), inclination to sin (that's temptation); and 3), readiness to sin. Adultery in the heart is three, it's number three. It is not temptation, temptation is not sin, and it is not thought, thought is not sin. Adultery in the heart is manifested by three, and it is manifested by cultivating desire. When you look to lust you look in order to lust, and that manifests three. By not just having to, but rather inciting to, purposefully to enjoy dwelling on that.

Habits of indulging feeling

So now we have to talk about why does one do that sort of thing. For the most part it is just a habit. It feels good, we enjoy titillation, we enjoy imagining things we might like to do, even if we wouldn't do them; and so this habit of indulging feeling becomes a major part of how we get through life. It's a part of that turn to the body that we discussed earlier especially in relationship to Romans 1, because it is a source of gratification and good feeling.

Actually I think anger and contempt become that for a lot of people; they actually feel better when they are enjoying being contemptible of others, because it gives them a kickback effect; they feel superior and that's a good feeling. It is all a part of the sensualistic approach to life where feelings are treasured, and often people live in imagination just because they enjoy that and perhaps they don't have any sources of satisfaction. They are not experiencing success and drama in their life, and so they get it out of what we call sex and violence.

Living Without Cultivated Lust

[53:00]

So now leaving it, leaving cultivating the lust, you make the decision to go no further than one. And in fact you try to train yourself to avoid one as much as possible. If it happens, it is not a sin; it is not something that is wrong - it is just that you need to know when you move there, you move away from it, you don't go further with it. So now how do you do that?

~ Decide not to Lust

It's very important to decide not to do it. We are not going to do this. Now it isn't like the law of gravity where you can't escape it and many people seem to talk that way. But if you will experiment with it, you will find, just like covetousness and other things, you don't have to be drawn into it. And your world presently, of

course, is just soaked with it so you have to recognize that and say, I am not going to be a part of that.

~ **Practice the Discipline of Chastity**

The discipline that I call chastity, and I discuss it in The Spirit of the Disciplines- it is not a good name for the discipline; it is more a name for the outcome of the discipline - is something you can learn to do.

You can train yourself to live with thoughts successfully, by choosing to simply - avoiding them for a period of time.

You don't have to dwell on sexuality in relationships. You can actually train yourself to think about life and relationships in a way that doesn't involve that. But you have to break habits and most of us have habits that run in the other direction, so that is a project.

~ **View Others as Unceasing Spiritual Beings**

It will help you in doing that if you indeed decide to view the person you encounter as - and here we go back to language we have already used - **An unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.** Your view of them will be lifted and lifted in such a way that you will not have the same inclinations in relationship to them and whatever thoughts that occur will be dismissed.

Now then this condition is what could be called sexual purity. And I don't know if you have a way of spelling that out, or if in your circles people aren't apt to talk about it very much, but you need a way of thinking of about what sexual purity is; and that does not mean that you are asexual or that you don't have thoughts of sex, or appropriately engage in it if you are married, or that you aren't a sexual being. That's right.

But sexual purity means that you are not enslaved and accustomed to degrading yourself in that relationship, or degrading others, because it always comes in that way.

~ **Training to See the Signs**

Now, we can also help ourselves here by training ourselves to take the initial signs which we used to use to get ready to cultivate your lust, as signs to bless, to help, to pray for...that should be, for the person in question.

As long as you engage in these activities you are not going to have trouble with

the others, but you have to train yourself to do it and learning to **see people as unceasing spiritual beings with an eternal destiny in God's great universe**, opens the door then to doing these other things and using the customary signals that one might have used, let's say the proverbial construction worker would use, to just turn the other way. And we can train ourselves to do that.

Now then, let us go back further. Since we have already surrendered self-will, getting what you want, you will not feel deprived. See, many... The way the world runs, a person is apt to say, Oh, I am being deprived if I can't do this, I am missing something important, I am missing something good.

Now you have to get out of that; you are not missing something good; you are missing something that is harmful and can lead to much worse things. So the surrender of self-will has to lay the foundation not only for anger but ceasing to cultivate lust. Abandoning that. It all hangs together and I hope that is one of the things you will see as you go along.

The Process of Change

Now then, what do we do as Christians, well, we train ourselves; and then if we are leaders and we are leading a group of disciples who want to be done with anger and with all of this other stuff, then we train them in the things that we are talking about right here today.

And we don't treat things - life, anger, and contempt and sexuality - as if they were sort of peeled grapes that it is impossible to pick up, and as slippery and as incapable of getting ahold of; because now we have thought about it, and we have teaching about it, it may have struck us that actually Jesus knows something about it and has something to teach us about it. And then we are ready to act. And in our groups and in our lives individually we can begin to take steps to change that inside the mind, the will and the feelings in such a way that we are able to do the things that Jesus said.

You know, that is crucial if what I have said to you is right, we have to grow in grace by our own actions as well as receive that grace from God, so we have to know what to do, so we don't just say, Oh, I've failed again, I am going to try harder next time. We don't say that; we say, How did that happen, and we have to go through all the stages.

We have to have the vision that it is okay if I didn't do that, it would be okay if I didn't engage in that. My ears wouldn't fall off. I'd still be a human being; it's okay. Then we go to the stage of decision, saying, I am going to be that way. And then we get into these details and we do whatever is necessary in addition to the sorts of things I've talked about to help us become a different kind of person on

the inside.

So then, *agape love is the sure answer to lust. What you love you will treat lovingly*, but you have to understand the details and see what goes into that.

Spiritual Disciplines & Change - Principle of Indirection [1:00:50]

Now, then, just finally here, let's go back to disciplines, because we've talked about the vision, the intention, and the means; and we have to say that when you come to implement this, for example, dealing with anger, you are going to have to think in terms of disciplines that will help you change.

Remember the principle of indirection which I talked here again about. You are becoming different inside, and you have to do the things that change you; so solitude and silence and fasting and study, all those things inside, you engage in those without asking the question directly of, How is this going to change me? Will it modify my behavior?

Change from the inside

It will modify your behavior, but remember you don't aim at modifying behavior; you aim at changing the insides, and then when the insides are changed the behavior changes. Disciplines enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort - so you cannot stop cultivating lust by trying to stop cultivating lust. You cannot do it. You have to go through the process of understanding and habit change, habits of envy, other relational - see, those have to change from the inside.

So you can't do that by direct efforts. So disciplines enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort. So we just go into solitude, we go into silence, we practice worship, we change all of those attitudes that lead us into degrading positions and then we are no longer there.

Change through worship

And worship is a tremendously important - genuine worship, admiration of God, astonished reverence of God; that is a good word for worship, is astonished reverence for God.

Many of our songs express those, some we don't know any longer, but if you go back and read a lot of the old hymns; maybe you know the old hymn Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise- that is a tremendously powerful, theological song. It exalts God in such a way that the back effect is to change us.

John Newton's old hymn:

How tedious and tasteful the hours when Jesus no longer I see. / Sweet prospects, sweet birds and sweet flowers have all lost their sweetness to me. / The midsummer sun shines but dim, the fields try in vain to look gay / But when I am happy in him, December's as pleasant as May. / His name yields the richest perfume and sweeter than music his voice. / His presence disperses my gloom and makes all within me rejoice. / I would were he always this nigh, have nothing to doubt nor to fear. / No mortal's as happy as I, my summer would last all the year.

You see, that is worship. Now when you are living there, that changes you.

Change through study

Of course, study has to go with worship, inform the mind. The emotions and the mind come together and so we come to the position that you see expressed in Psalm 16:8, if you remember that great Messianic Psalm, and in 16:8 David says: I have set the Lord always before me, he is at my right hand, I will not be moved.

That's discipline, that's what the disciplines do, and they work by indirection, and they are not aimed at behavior but the changes come in behavior. So solitude and fasting, and so on, have tremendous effects on these areas of anger and lust.

[1:05:25] I want to read you a letter here from a young lady who had been experimenting - under direction, she had been experimenting with fasting and solitude, and the effect it had on her. A young Japanese woman, actually; and a friend of mine had gone from Fuller Seminary over to do some work there teaching in Japan, and this young lady gave this testimony, just listen to these beautiful words. She said:

"The more I practiced this discipline of solitude and silence the more I appreciate their strength, and the less I become judgmental and skeptical; and the more I learn from them the more I accept things I didn't really like about others. The more I accept them as uniquely created in the image of God, the less I talk, the fuller are words spoken at an appropriate time. The more I value others, the more I serve them in small ways. The more I enjoy and celebrate my life, the more I celebrate the more I realize God has given me wonderful things in my life and the less I worry about my future. I will accept and enjoy what God is continuously giving me. I think I am beginning to really enjoy God."

The effects of change

That is how disciplines work. The disciplines that are tried and true in the life of the biblical people and more recently, always have the effect of changing the

whole sense of life and the sense of God so that you are no longer driven by feelings, by hungers, by needs, and so on, because you are centered in the sufficiency of God.

Summarizing the Sermon

Now, we need to say a little more about chapter 6 of the Sermon; well, let's not go there directly, let's finish up chapter 5, just quickly. I've talked about these two main topics of anger and contempt on the one hand, and cultivated lust; but then as you go on through that sermon and culminate at the end where it is talking about being perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect, because now you love those who hate you, and your enemies, you love them.

3rd - Free from Divorce - 5:31-32

[1:08:40]

He goes through a series of things here affecting not only divorce- because you see, if you have already dealt with anger and contempt and cultivated lust, there is not going to be much of a problem with divorce, because divorce without anger, contempt and cultivating lust will almost never occur.

There may be some other reason, but normally they come out of those conditions, but then he goes on to talk about what we discussed last night, namely, letting your yes be yes and your no be a no, and then he moves on to retaliation.

4th - Lives Free from Desire to Dominate & Control Verbally [1:09:10] Matthew 5:33-37

He goes through a series of things here affecting not only divorce- because you see, if you have already dealt with anger and contempt and cultivated lust, there is not going to be much of a problem with divorce, because divorce without anger, contempt and cultivating lust will almost never occur.

There may be some other reason, but normally they come out of those conditions, but then he goes on to talk about what we discussed last night, namely, letting your yes be yes and your no be a no, and then he moves on to retaliation.

[\[Session #9 - Church Communities - 1:11:00-1:24:30\]](#)

5th - Lives Free from Grudges, Fairness Issues & Paying Back [1:09:30] Matthew 5:38-42

The old law said you could have an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth. Actually that was a merciful law because it was a rule that if someone knocked out one of your eyes, you couldn't knock out two of theirs, same with teeth and so on. It was a way of restricting revenge. Now if you have already taken care of these earlier

issues, then you will be ready to deal with the retaliation.

Now Jesus says, don't resist those who are evil and I hasten to say this is talking about a personal relationship. Don't resist them in the way they are attacking you. So, if someone slaps you, don't slap them back. Remain vulnerable to them.

Now if you are a person who is operating out of your own desires and anger you won't be able to do that and there are all sorts of ways of responding to that. Everyone has heard the person who says: Well, I will turn the other cheek and then I will knock their head off.

Now that is thinking legalistically; that's like the person who has to go a second mile - well maybe the person doesn't want to go a second mile and you say, Well Jesus told me go the second mile so I have to carry your load on down the way. You don't go about it legalistically; you think about it in the terms of the spirit of Jesus, the realities of the Kingdom, of how love works, and then these things begin to fit in place.

6th-Heart Able to Love Enemies & Bless those Who Curse 5:43-48 [1:11:20]

You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. It is interesting in this case, verse 43, you can't get, Hate your enemy, out of the old law, so it isn't quoted. The part about love your neighbor is quoted, but, Hate your enemy, had actually been added on by the time of Jesus, as a requirement, you should hate your enemy. And that is something that still is in the world today.

But Jesus says, Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, in order that you may be the sons of your Father in Heaven. (Matthew 5:44) That means in order that you can have the nature of your Father in Heaven. So it will be children, children inherit the nature of their father.

Here is what he does: He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. That is what he is like. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have. (Matthew 5:45-46) In other words, what's the big deal about that, if you love those who love you. And he goes on to say, Everyone does that. If you greet your brothers only, what do you more than others. Even the Gentiles do the same thing. The Gentiles, remember, are those who do not know God

How am I going to do all this?

[1:12:50]

Now I am piling stuff on here, and I know it gets a little heavy because you start thinking in terms of, how am I going to do all of that. Someone comes, give unto him that ask of you, to him that would borrow from you, don't turn them away.

Give them what they want. Can we actually do that?

Well, again, we can't if we are living on our own resources and all we know is controlling things so that they come out the way we want them. If we have abandoned that, there will be cases where people will ask you for something and they will have no claim on you at all, but you will give it to them, and you will not base it on some prior claim but simply on their need; and basing the giving of something just on need is a characteristic that you will see in people who have learned to live in the Kingdom of God.

Responsibility

Now you are going to make a law of it? I hope not, because sometimes there will be other claims on things you might give to a person. I had a case a couple of weeks ago, a man who was asked for some money and the money he had was devoted the bills that he already owed. Should you give that money to people who asked you? Well, he was torn by that and he stepped into the situation in a way that he was bothered by the legalism of it and he did give the money, and God did give him what he needed to pay the bills.

But see, you are going to have to make a judgment about this, and when you look at all these things, like turning the other cheek and remaining vulnerable, about giving to those who ask of you, going the second mile, you do not abandon your responsibility to make a judgment about what you have to do and foist on these teachings a legalism that says you always do exactly that.

Love

See this is describing a circumstance where you are growing in your understanding and there will be occasions when you do this. And in fact, probably in most occasions you will do it. But there will be occasions when you don't do it, now when that is true, what will be the reasoning? The reasoning will be that love obliges you to do something different.

Self defense is a legitimate thing. What is not legitimate is to simply give back what you got; because he hit me, I hit him. Self defense merely to defend yourself, no. There has to be a larger issue.

The Teachings of Jesus

So you have to think these things through and the only alternative (and this is what has happened to the teachings of Jesus, over and over again, through the ages) the only alternative is to turn these into laws and then they will paralyze you because you actually won't know what to do, because often they will force you into

conditions of conflict.

Question prevailing assumptions

So you have to then say, well, I understand that these are practical teachings and the principle that Jesus teaches on is to contradict the prevailing assumption. So the prevailing assumption is what? You don't give to people just because they ask you, right? You give to people because they have some prior claim on you. When people hit you, you hit them back, right? And that's right and proper. No, Jesus says that is not the way it goes.

You have to take this teaching along with what we said about in Luke 14 yesterday. Was it yesterday? You will remember the talk about taking the seat out in the kitchen and waiting for someone to call you up, or the teaching about, when you have a dinner, don't invite your neighbor and your relatives.

So you have to understand that in these teachings Jesus is contradicting the prevailing assumptions about what you do and He is saying that for the child of the Kingdom there will be many circumstances in which you will go contrary to those assumptions because you are alive in the Kingdom.

Disregard rule systems

Now we have to go over this slowly and give it time to sort of soak in because I think this is a hard lesson, because we keep wanting Jesus to just tell us what to do. So we will even take something like, for example, don't call people fools, and we'll try to make a rule out of that.

And you can never catch the reality of the Kingdom in a set of rules. I know my grandmother would not allow me to call my little playmates fools. Well, I solved that problem quickly, I said I'll just think it! Do you think I satisfied the rule? Well, if you interpret it legalistically I did, I didn't call them fools, I just thought it. It didn't say, Don't think it, did it, it didn't say that, right, I guess I can think it then.

Now see, if you take these teachings and try to make them rules of righteousness you will always fail. They will become impossible to do and you will make Jesus look like he is an idiot.

If, on the other hand, you understand that he is talking about having a certain kind of heart which may well, out of love, go exactly contrary to what is treated as righteousness: go the mile you have to, don't hit someone unless they've hit you and then you can hit them back, don't give to people who have no claim on you, if you have an enemy hate him real good. Well, that's not where you live when you live in the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:48 - *"Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."* [1:19:25]

So that is what He is really coming to, when he comes to the end here he says, Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect. That has caused many people a lot of trouble and I think you need to understand the word teleo there does not mean legal perfection; it means functional completeness. It means function in love and in Kingdom reality as your Father in Heaven does.

It does not refer to legal righteousness, perfect adherence to the law. Give up on that one. You'd never do that and it is a good thing you didn't because if you did you would be overwhelmed with pride.

So when it is talking about being perfect it is talking about growing into the language we used last evening from Ephesians, Paul's language, growing into the fullness of humanity in Christ. **Ephesians 4**. Now a child, for example, can be a perfect child, and be a perfect teenager, that's a little hard to conceptualize, but still, as people grow they are perfect all along the line, though they have much growing to do. And that is the kind of purpose driven completeness that Jesus is talking about.

~ ~ ~ **END of Session 11 @ 1:21:00** ~ ~ ~

"The Sermon on the Mount" (continued) — **Matthew 6 & 7**

Jesus Teaching

Now, I won't be able to finish the discussion of the Sermon on the Mount, but I do hope that we will be able to convey the basic spirit and idea of what Jesus is doing here. And let me try reading a few verses in the way I think he might have actually - what they might have meant to the people who heard what he was saying.

For example, verse 38 of Matthew 5. Perhaps what he was saying is, well... He said, Look. You've heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Now, do you think that is right? - he might have said. He might have asked people to...

He's getting them to think about it. You know he didn't just rattle on. He wasn't trying to keep people from going to sleep. And he was conversing. He was teaching by a way of speaking and interacting with people. That's the natural way of interacting, and teaching, is to do it in a conversational style. And pretty clearly he didn't preach sermons as we would understand them, although he did have unified discourses.

So, now you see, could that possibly be right - an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? Well, he says, think about it. Maybe sometimes you shouldn't resist evil. You shouldn't say now, you've taken my eye. I'm going to take your eye. Because after all, what do you gain if you take his eye? What if you said, look, you've taken my eye, and I'm not going to take your eye because you need it. And actually, I care about you. Suppose, see...

A push out of the ordinary

See, Jesus' teachings are designed to draw you off your familiar ground. They push you out of the ordinary human actions, and put you in a different basis. So if you slap me, and I slap you, we know where to go from there. Right? We think we do. If you slap me, and I don't slap you, then what do we do? Now we have to rethink the whole situation, don't we?

Very often when people come to you and ask you for something they need, they will give you a song and dance. They will try to cook up something that supposedly will hook you in, and get you to answer their request. Well suppose you said, no no, you don't need to do that. You ask for it, you need it, I have it, I can give it to you. Here it is. No song and dance.

A new understanding

See, you're rewriting all of the scripts that human beings have worked up for managing their way, and getting what they want. And now you step outside of that; you say well no, there's a bigger thing going on here. There's something bigger than you just getting what you want. And you introduce them to that by the way you respond to them. And again, if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat.

Well, again, you see that's going to shift the ground away from the way we've ordinarily understood things, where, well I've sued you and I took away your overcoat as I said, shirt it says here. But I took away one of your garments by process of law.

Now here you are. You need some clothing. What do I say? Well, the human way is to say, I'm not going to give you anything, right? That's the human way. But no. You're not standing on human ground. You're standing somewhere else. You have a garment; a person needs the garment. You give it to them.

A specific context

Now, I hope you see that it's not saying that if he doesn't need it you force it on him anyway because Jesus said that. Right? You're not going to come and say, well, you sued me and took away my jacket, now, and I have to give you my coat because Jesus said that.

See, you have to supply the context. The context is one where there is a need on the part of someone who has sued you and taken something away from you by process of law; you can meet that need, and you don't stand there and say, I'm not going to give you anything! Right? Because you're operating out of the Kingdom of love, and if it is an appropriate thing to do, then you would give it to them, even though they had sued you and taken away your other garment.

A fundamental shift

Now, once again, am I making any sense to you? See you have to understand that this is a large shift here, this isn't a matter of picking over a bunch of little laws. For one thing, the laws given wouldn't begin to cover the expanse of real life. There are all kinds of situations that you have to deal with that aren't on this list. But there is not a single situation that you have to deal with that isn't affected by this shift into the Kingdom. OK? You with me?

Reading the Sermon on the Mount

Now you have to learn to read this rightly, or it will just drive you nuts. You'll just go crazy trying to keep these laws. They're not laws. They're expressions of a kind of a life. You get that kind of life, then these are characteristic kinds of things that you'll see happening. And they will all have the mark of not obeying the usual human way of manipulating and controlling kingdoms. They'll all have that mark. Because the old ways that he's talking about here are all ways that human beings have had of manipulating. Of controlling. Now that's what you're stepping out of.

And if you have a question about that, be sure and write it down, so when we come back to the question session we can go into that. Because this is the heart of the matter. This is the heart of the matter.

Matthew 6

[8:00]

Part I - Reputation - Mt. 6:1-18 - God's Kingdom People or Our Kingdom

And as I've said, Jesus starts with these more fundamental things about anger, and cultivated lust, and so on. But it all comes down to these day to day little things, where we have to make decisions, and the choice is, who are we going to be? Our kingdom people? Or God's Kingdom people?

Well, let's look briefly at chapter 6 now, and I'm not going to go in as great detail here as I have in the previous ones. I think the points are little most - a little simpler - though much, just as important.

And I said earlier when I was outlining all of this that in chapter 6 verses 1 through 15, sorry, 18, you have teaching about not performing for human consumption. Not trying to do things because it will impress people.

Church Performance

I didn't say much about this last night, but that's one of the biggest problems in our churches, is performing to impress people. And often it's done for what is regarded as good ends. We want to keep people coming back, so we want to have a good service. And a good service normally means one that they will enjoy.

And now, you know there's nothing wrong with enjoying a good service. There's much that's right and good about enjoying a good service. But the object of the service is not to have people enjoy it. See, the object of the service is to bring them closer to Christ, and more fulfilled in the kind of life that is Christ. That's the object of the service. It's to bring people to God. It's to honor God. It's to worship God.

And so those are legitimate means, legitimate ends for us to be doing. But they don't always coincide with pleasing people.

And it shocks people sometimes to hear it said, but when you watch how people get in to consuming services and judging them as to whether they're good or bad, you suddenly realize that very often the mode of being that church services have is theater. That what is actually happening is a performance is being put on.

That becomes very grinding to the people who have to do it, when they realize that, and they realize they're just having to put on a performance. And I think one of the things that we have to do, if we're going to use our times together as disciples of Jesus in a way that's really profitable, is to reject that idea that we're performing.

In chapter 6, you have three main areas where there's apt to be performance.
[10:30]

#1 - Alms - *"Practicing your righteousness to be noticed by men"*

And the first of those is, well, here it's called doing your alms. Practicing your righteousnesses, and Jesus says beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed of them. Otherwise you'll have no reward with your Father which is in heaven.

Now notice the problem is not being noticed by people. That's OK. That's not a problem. It isn't a problem that people notice you doing things. What is a problem is doing things to be noticed. To be noticed. So this is a strategy that someone has more or less adopted, a plan of action, and what they're concerned about when they give and when they pray and when they fast and so on, is that people should be noticed. And see that's human kingdom stuff. When I do that I'm running my show. I'm saying, I have...I'm taking control of things here. I'm going to do this, and I'm going to get that result. And so, in those days there were really pathetic lengths to which people went to get noticed. And sometimes having people who would blow a trumpet and call attention to the fact that I'm about to do something wonderful.

But Jesus - that's what's talked about in verse two here, When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you. (Matthew 6:2) People actually did that! Imagine you're walking along the street and here someone needs some money, and you have someone standing there with a trumpet. Everyone notice! Dallas is about to give some money to this person. Well, maybe we will...we don't do that, but there is a great temptation to make sure we get noticed.

The Discipline of Secrecy

Now, on the list of disciplines that I put up you may have seen the discipline I call secrecy. And secrecy is actually the practice of doing things in ways that they are not noticed. And why is that? That's to break anyone of the habit of needing to be noticed. It isn't because of something good about being secret, or something inherently bad about being noticed.

But the discipline of secrecy, and if you care to follow out more on that you'll find it discussed in, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, but you don't need it because I can just tell you what it is. It is the practice of doing things in ways that people do not notice. And the purpose of it is to free you up from being dependent upon the approval and disapproval of other people. So you practice not being observed. And that helps break the habit of needing to be observed.

#2 - Praying & #3 - Fasting

[13:45]

Now, Jesus goes on to talk about prayer, **praying to be seen of men and fasting to be seen of men**. We're...we really have a problem here with fasting. Many people when they start to fast do think that others need to know. Well, if it's your wife who's cooking a meal, or your husband who's bringing home food or maybe cooking a meal himself, they need to know, because you don't want to - they get the food on the table and you say, well, you know, I'm fasting. Not a good thing.

And indeed you know the old desert fathers and mothers, they had it all worked out, that if you were in a fast, and a person came to visit you, you would break your fast. And you'd prepare food. And you wouldn't prepare food for them and sit down and say, well you know I'm fasting, so I can't eat. No, you would eat with them. Even though you were fasting. See that, that's...they understood very well that disciplines are not righteousness. They're not law. They're wisdom. And so they understood that it was more important to be hospitable and loving than it was to carry on with your disc... You can start again. You can start again.

And actually if you go too far with it, you may have...you may need something to help you with your pride. I don't know how many people I've known who have set out say to have a 21-day fast. I'm not sure why that number seems attractive. And they're just about to get there, and then suddenly Aunt Mabel arrives from Cleveland on the eighteenth day, and they have to break their fast. I think that's actually probably a mercy from God, to help them be humble.

But the thing is that fasting isn't something that we present to God or others as a big deal. It's something we might do before the Lord, and we fast unto him, not unto people. And then when we do that, he interacts with us in a different way.

I haven't talked too much about fasting. The primary function of fasting is to align ourselves with the Kingdom of God. It isn't to convince God he ought to do what we want. It isn't to put him into a corner, or drive him by the glowing merit we achieve by fasting and denying ourselves. The purpose of fasting is to align ourselves with what God is doing.

And you see that if you read, if you study the Bible about fasting. See, I mean, Jesus in responding to Satan in Matthew 4 says that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)

Receiving from God

See, when you are fasting you are receiving from God. You're not just doing without food; you're receiving from God. You remember in John 4 Jesus was waiting out there at the well, and talking with this lady, and as he waits, the guys go into town to get food and bring it out because they're going to eat. And they urge him to eat and he says, look, I have meat to eat that you don't know anything about. My meat is to do the will of the Father. (John 4:34)

And that's one of those things in Jesus' teachings where you have to figure out whether or not you think he's saying something that's realistic, or is it just pretty words. And I suggest that you should think that he was telling the truth. That he did have meat to eat that they did not know of.

Fasting is Feasting on the Kingdom

And so fasting actually turns out to be feasting. It's feasting on another world. And fasting affirms the reality of that world, and draws upon it to nourish one's body and give one strength. I don't have time to talk at length about this, but I hope you will again do your inductive studies of fasting, look at important passages like Deuteronomy 8 and others, and try to understand what it is. So it has a real function in aligning us with God. Its function is not to impress people.

Trusting People versus Trusting God

And so here are three things that Jesus pulls out to help with this teaching, because they're things that everyone knows about. And the people of his day was very conscious. You remember he said - we were talking about the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew 23? And you remember he said they do all that they do to be seen of men. And that's what we're not to do.

Well, if the men are the one who are supporting you, that's going to be a problem isn't it. If human beings are the ones that are making your work go, and they're always going to be involved, aren't they. And we need them.

But the point is, they're not what we trust. We trust God. We count on his Kingdom to be present with us, and of course that has the wonderful benefit of freeing us up from the need to please human beings. The Proverbssays, the fear of man brings a snare. (Proverbs 29:25) If one is living in dependence on human beings, then there's a natural fear and concern that they will desert you and leave you. The person who is living from the Kingdom of God is consciously in a position of saying, I love those who support me. I appreciate them, I thank them. But I do not depend on them. And that's important in things like giving to the church. We don't give to the church, because the church needs it. We give to the church in order to be a part of what God is doing. Should I say that again?

Or, a ministry. Someone with a ministry, and some of you probably raise funds. Well the people who give you funds, the reason they do that is not because you need it. You have to remember that. The reason they do that is so that they can participate in the work of the Kingdom, that you are engaged with.

Now do you have needs? Yes you do. But in your needs you do not look to them. You look to God. And the Kingdom then steps in, and takes care of you, and you know who you're depending on, and who you're to be thankful for, and then in that context others will share the blessing that you have as a servant of the Lord. And if you read Paul's letters, for example, you'll see all of that laid out.

Part II - Wealth - Mt. 6:19-34 - Not Trusting Money & Physical [21:20]

OK, so now the last half of the 6th chapter of Matthew is about trusting money. First is about trusting people, and the second is about trusting money. And often they're connected, because if we think our support, the money that we get, depends on the people, we will think that we have to have a good appearance before people to get the money that we need. It's very challenging, I know, to deal with this, but Jesus just simply says that you should not trust in treasures that you might lay up.

Treasures in Heaven

Verse 20 and following. Don't lay up... (verse 18-19) it is. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroys, and where thieves break through and steal." In other words, any treasures you have on earth are subject to the vicissitudes on earth. The treasures you have in heaven are not. So lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break through and steal.

Discovering heaven's treasures

Now I ask you, how would you lay up a treasure in heaven? What kind of treasures can you lay up in heaven? Even the Internet doesn't run to heaven, does it? So you can't wire money. UPS doesn't go there. Post office. Only thing that goes to heaven is people. The treasure in heaven that you lay up is God. You let your treasures be God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, those things that belong to the Kingdom of God.

Now, go back to our thing we've quoted over and over, Colossians 3, If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above. (Colossians 3:1) What's above? God. God and his Kingdom.

Investing in God

So, when you talk about laying up treasures here, in heaven, you're talking about investing in God. And perhaps in other people, who are going there, and actually the only way you can get any money there is invested in people and in God. And then it will go there. So you make your treasure God, and then he takes care of you. He provides the money.

And if you put your treasure in money, then that's where your heart will be, and the vision you have of life will be split and divided. You'll be looking at money, and you'll be looking at God, and not knowing which ones to trust.

Laying down dependence

And so, we have to lay down our dependence upon money. We need money. Sure we do. God knows we need money.

Do we have to have money for various kinds of... Certainly we do. But we do not trust the sources of money that lie outside of God. We don't put ourselves in charge of that, and make...have to make it work. And there are many many illustrations, many of which you probably know from Christian history that help us do that.

Escaping Anxiety

Now the irony of it all is, is this is the way to escape anxiety. You can't escape anxiety in any other way than what Jesus says about not performing, and not trying to amass resources that will enable you to survive. The only way you can stop being anxious is to lay that down. You recognize the care of God, you experience it as you go along. Now sometimes you need to look back and see how it has happened, because it's easy to forget.

The Discipline of Celebration

Now this is where we need to... What I call the discipline of celebration is enjoying things in memory of the good that God has done for us. Once again, here, I'll just have to refer you to this discussion of celebration in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, and give you some scriptural passages to look at. And understand what this means. Celebration is basically, in old-fashioned language, it's counting your blessings. And counting your blessings enables you to know that God has actually provided. And that knowledge then helps you look at the future without anxiety.

Trust the presence of God

Jeremy Taylor, somewhere in his book *Holy Living*, has this line to the effect that the person who really trusts God is no more worried about the future than he is about the past. Probably none of us sit up at night worrying about what's going to happen yesterday. We might have some regrets about it, but we're certainly not worrying about what's going to happen.

And Taylor says when you learn to live in the presence of God, you don't worry about the future any more than you do the past. Because, why? Because you know that you're in the presence of the God who has provided in the past, and you look at that, and you realize, I don't have a thing to worry about. And you look at the abundant care of God for others; you don't have a thing to worry about.

Ask but don't worry

Now you still act. Do you need money? You may ask someone. You may work. But you don't worry about it, because you're not trusting yourself of the money. You're trusting the God who provides. And of course the story of the church is the story of that provision over and over and over again.

So that's the basis upon which he says in verse 25, For this reason, that is, God is in charge of money and reputation too for that matter, For this reason, don't be anxious. (Matthew 6:25)

Don't be anxious for your life. Don't be anxious for what you're going to have to live on. It will come. In the Lord's Prayer, you'll remember Jesus taught us to pray, Give us today bread for today. Not bread for tomorrow. Because God's going to be there tomorrow like he is today, and the provision will come.

It's hard to move into this, I know, because so many of us have had very little experience with it. I think maybe many of you have had more experience than most have had. The experience of actually not having the resources, and then coming to the time when you really have to have them, and there they are. And

sometimes you don't know how they come about.

Count on God's goodness

But we trust God day by day for the things we need, and we go ahead doing the things that we believe he wants us to do, and the things that he wants us to be. We count on him for the provision, and that's what Jesus is talking about here. And he's really saying that this is serious business. I mean you look at the length of the material in his discussion of these things. And you realize this must be very serious, and it is. Because this is really the only way that you can live in faith, in the goodness of God. You have to turn loose how you appear, and turn loose gathering resources to depend upon, where you're the one that's in charge.

[Mt. 6:33 - see p. 29 #3@1:11

Mt. 6:25-34 - see p. 32 #4 @ 14:00-28:30 [Seek First the Kingdom of God](#)]

Matthew 7:1-12 - The Non Condemning Community of Prayer [29:40]

7:1-5 Condemnation

Well, let's now move on to the 7th Chapter of Matthew, and look at this very crucial passage from verse 1-12. And I call this living in the non-condemning community of prayer.

"Do not judge, lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged, and by your standard of measure it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye but not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite. First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

This is one of the most challenging passages I think in the Sermon, as it's been given to us. And it's challenging partly because it just kind of looks like a list of things and we don't know what they are about.

Judgment and Condemnation

Now, so let me suggest to you what they're about. They're about trying to get people to do things. They're about trying to get people to do things. What is the typical case when someone comes in judgment in another in a family or in a church? Well, what is typical is they're trying to get them to do something different. And they do that by condemnation. They believe condemnation is a very powerful thing, in moving people and so they come with condemnation. So, just

try that on, OK? That's what's going on in these passages.

Attempt to force change

We're talking about how people try to get others to do things. And it's nearly always trying to get them to do good things. And so condemnation is a kind of heavy hammer that you might come on to people, especially if they're your relatives, and especially if you feel very responsible for them, you might come on to people trying to get them to do the right thing. One of the greatest temptations that human beings have. And they just lay on the condemnation like they might lay on a whip, trying to drive people into doing the right kind of thing.

Everyone I think knows that it just doesn't work. I mean, imagine a person who receives a good healthy dose of condemnation, and says, oh, well then, I'll stop drinking. Not very likely. Condemnation is a way of distancing people, and putting them down. It is a way of distancing people from you, and putting them down. It really is a form of disrespect. It is a form of contempt.

And now, again, as always, I mean, you have to think this thing through to see whether or not you believe what I'm saying, and that would mean you would test it against the facts. Have you ever been condemned? And isn't it true that you felt that you were being put down, and that people were regarding you as something less than perhaps you thought you were?

Condemnation & Judging are separate from discernment

See condemnation and judging is not the same thing as discernment. A dentist might look at your teeth, and say, you know that molar back there has really decayed. And we need to do something about it. What would you like to do? Now that would be discernment. That would be discernment. Nothing wrong with that.

But if the dentist is outraged at you, and starts slapping you and cursing you, say who do you think you are to mistreat your teeth this way! Right. That's not discernment. That's something more. And you're bound to take it personally as we say. You, probably you're not going to take it personally if he says you have a tooth there that's decayed and we need to fix it.

See, discernment is essential to human life. You cannot get by without it. It has to... And above all in the church we have to be able to discern and distinguish, say what things are not as they should be, and how they might be fixed. That's not judgment. Judgment is where there is expressed a condemnation, an element of superiority, and even contempt. That's where what Jesus is talking about occurs.

Create counter-condemnation

Now, notice how he puts it. Judge not that you be not judged. If the dentist says to you, you know that you have a decayed molar there. You're not likely to say back to him, well you have one too! Are you? But see, Jesus understood when you come with condemnation you're gonna get it right back.

And you watch how that works in families. In fact, we've had in the last fifty or so years a whole intergenerational thing that is basically predicated on what Jesus is talking about here. In the Sixties there was a generation that discerned and condemned the establishment. The older generation. And the effect of that was counter-condemnation. We're actually not out of that one yet. We're in a little better place than we were, but still it's a very serious problem. Intergenerational conflict based on judging.

Break into anger

But see what Jesus is talking about here is something where you have an attitude, a harmful attitude, that is addressed towards another. And often it does break over into anger. Very often when you see people in families or churches or other social groups, or politics, mercy just listen to how the politicians go after one another. They judge, and they're judged in return, aren't they.

How could one break that cycle? Well, you might try not judging. Could you still discern? Of course you could. And we need that... We need politicians who have discernment. They need to know how to lead, and see what's wrong and what's right with various policies. That isn't judgment. That's discernment.

And if discernment is experienced as judgment it may very well be, and often that is common today for example in our discussions about sexuality and so on. Where, if you say that something, sexual practice is wrong, then that's branded as hate speech. Well, it may not be hate speech. It often has been, in the past, but now if you are confused about this you get into a position where you cannot discern because it will be treated as judgment.

And so we can't say such things as I really love you, and I want to help you, but you're wrong. Because saying that you're wrong amounts to saying, I don't love you. I condemn you. And you see what kind of confusion that we get into here.

Living Without Condemnation

But what Jesus is actually saying here is that we really need to lay aside that attitude of condemnation. We don't need it. Don't need it. That's like anger. You... Anything you can do with it you can do much better without it.

What is the log he's talking about? Well I suggest to you that the log he's talking about precisely is the attitude of condemnation. And here you're trying to take a little speck out of someone's eye, and you have this huge log in your eye, and you can't even see their eye. You have to get that log out.

And then he actually goes ahead and says, does he not, if you get the log out then you can see to remove the speck. See that's the move from condemnation to discernment.

Now then, specks aren't good things. If you've ever had a cinder in your eye or a speck in your eye, you know it's not a good thing! Right? So, you need help to get it out. And that's not a bad thing. So Jesus is not saying that we shouldn't help people get specks out of their eyes.

Condemnation doesn't work

What he's saying is if you have the log of judgmentalism and condemnation in your eye, you won't be able to help people with what they need help on. That's really what this passage teaches, is ways that we try to help people that don't work.

Should I just say that again, because I think you need to get the basic ideas lined up here, and they're fairly simple. They're talking about ways that people try to help people that do not work. And in fact I think he's mainly addressing ways that involve taking a superior attitude, and so once you have the condemnation out, then you can discern.

And people will... It's amazing. If people are convinced that you are not condemning them, they will allow you to help them in many cases where they wouldn't even begin to allow it if they think you're coming in with an attitude of condemnation. ~ ~ ~

"Dogs & Hogs" (Matthew 7:6)

[41:00]

"Do not give what is holy to the dogs."

Well, keep that thought now, and let's go on down to the dogs and the hogs. Because this continues the same...the same idea. Look at what he's saying here. Do not give what is holy to dogs. (Matthew 7:6)

Now, people who have read that tend to concentrate on the dogs. And on someone being a dog, or a hog. And so, the suggestion here is that there are certain categories of people that are unworthy of your help, and that you should not waste your time on them. That might actually be true. But I would be very careful with

it. I would be very careful with it.

What Jesus is saying

And I don't think Jesus here is classifying people. He's not trying to say, there's some kind of people that just dogs. And you don't want to quote Scripture to them, or waste your prayers on them, or care for them, give your goods to them to help them. They're just dogs.

Now I want to reiterate. I don't think he's saying anything like that. What he's talking about here is what people can profit from, and what they cannot profit from. Now if you have a hungry dog, and you lay your Bible down for it to eat, what will happen? Immediately someone says, well that's a disgrace to the Bible. They start thinking about this holy thing that's going to be mistreated.

But what's going to happen to the dog? You come in the next day, and say, here Shep, here's another Bible. What's the dog going to do with it? Well at most maybe chew on it, play with it, and so on. But is the Bible going to do the dog any good? No. The dog cannot eat the Bible. And that leaves the dog the hungry.

If you keep giving that dog Bibles, that dog will die. It will starve.

The way to truly help

That's the lesson that Jesus is teaching. You want to help people? Don't just give them good stuff. Give them stuff that will help them. And sometimes our good stuff won't help them. For whatever reason. In the case of the dog, you don't want to blame the dog. It's just a dog! Dogs don't eat Bibles. Now, its digestive system isn't set up to profit from a Bible.

Same way with hogs. You might think Jews shouldn't be talking about hogs, but they had them. And they...there were uses for them. And Jesus knows about hogs. And one of the things you know about hogs is, they cannot digest pearls. You take your bucket of pearls, and you pour it in the trough, the hog looks at 'em - what's that?

So, like the dog that can't digest the Bible, the pig can't digest pearls. But you say, they're very good pearls! Well, so what? That doesn't help. Still can't digest 'em. Jesus actually carries that on, here; you'll notice he says, lest they trample them under their foot, and turn and tear you to pieces. (Matthew 7:6)

Now, I'll tell you something I know about hogs. I was raised down in the Missouri Ozarks, and we have razorbacks down there. Hogs will eat people. They will eat people. You get a hungry hog, and a human leg next to them, and there will be

some biting going on.

What is truly needed

And actually I think Jesus is teaching a very poignant truth about human relations. If you keep pushing stuff that people can't receive, and can't be helped with, they're going to hurt you. They're gonna hurt you.

This is a passage about how to help people. And how not to try to help people. And what we have to do if we want to help people is we have to be close enough to them and love them enough to find out what can really benefit them. See.

It was a great load off of my back, as a young person, to discover John 3, where it says, Jesus says, "I did not come into the world to condemn the world." (3:17) Condemnation was such a standard part of the religion and the life I knew. Even though I'll be the first to tell you, these were good people; they meant well. But they relied on condemnation. And they counted on condemnation to get people to change. I don't know why they did; I don't think they'd ever seen it happen. And I honestly can't tell you that I've ever seen anyone helped by being condemned. See. But that's the way we're trained.

Using Un-forgiveness

Same way with un-forgiveness. You talk to many people about forgiveness, and they'll be loath to give it up, because they think it's a means of hazing people into doing the right thing. And if I forgive you, you might just go ahead and do the same thing over again. You might just never stop. But if I'm unforgiving, maybe you'll stop.

Well once again, have you ever seen that work? I've never seen it work. What I've seen is just more and more anger, coming out of that kind of situation. I don't think it works. I think Jesus knew that it didn't work. And of course he also knew that we...that we had to get out of the position of trying to make things happen, and move into a different area, and we're going to talk about that in a moment. We take a different approach to things. It doesn't mean that we let things that are wrong go, or just ignore people that need help. This is not what Jesus is talking about. We're expected to be able to help people. We're expected to deal with issues.

And again, this is a question of how you do it. And what Jesus is teaching us here is that we can actually find a way of helping people that is not judgmental, that does not keep giving them good stuff that does them no good because they're not in a position to digest it. There is a better way.

Matthew 7: 7-11 Community of Prayerful Love [48:45]

So here's what he says. He says, verse 7, "Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you."

Seek persistently

Now, here's what happens with folks normally, is they move to that and think, oh no we're talking about prayer. And yes we are; we're talking about prayer. But not all prayer is to God.

What he's saying is, if you want to help people, then ask them. Talk to them. Seek, but don't go at it in a condemning way. Ask. Seek. Knock. That's progressive. You can be persistent. That's allowed. You can be persistent. But not condemning. And not persisting in using over and over things that the person you're dealing with simply cannot benefit from. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; to him who knocks it shall be opened. (Matthew 7:8)

Now there we have to throw the brakes on immediately, and remind ourselves that Jesus does not teach by giving us absolutely universal formulae that always bring down the result. He doesn't do that. He teaches by contradicting the practice. And the practice is the practice that was studied above in the first verses of the chapter.

Stop manipulating

And now he says, stop trying to manipulate people and go simply, directly to them and ask. You can ask, you can seek, you can stay with them. You can knock; that is, you can do it in a way that they have to hear that you're there. You don't have to become a nonentity in their life. You can be a real presence. Because that is the way that human beings are built to work.

Parent/child relationship Verse 9 [51:00]

He says in verse 9, he takes a particular relationship of asking. The relationship between a parent and a child to illustrate. And what he's opening up here is this great theme, this cosmic theme of asking as a principle of the world order under God. He says, What man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, he will give him a stone?

Now once again, you probably could find someone in world history who actually did that. Don't you imagine? You imagine some mean father somewhere in the world has done that. A little kid said, Daddy, I need a piece of bread. I need a loaf. Here. There are people mean enough to do that. But that's not the rule, is it?

Usually when a child asks, do they have to do anything more than ask? No, they just ask.

Ask directly

Asking is a great power, and you have to understand... I know people who will cross the street or walk around the block who will avoid someone who's going to beg from them. Did you ever see that? They don't want to go by that person and have them ask them. See, it goes right to the heart of who you are.

You ever eat a sandwich in front of a dog? What does the dog do? Sits there and looks at you. What's he doing? Looking at you, like, oh an interesting thing here on the landscape. No, that's not what he's doing. He's asking. That dog is asking. Now, how do you feel in the face of that? You're going to do one of two things. You're going to get up and leave the room, or you're going to give that dog some of your sandwich. Isn't that true?

And see, Jesus turns to the simple relationship between a man and his son. And of course, daughters are even more powerful. Right? On men. Right? Daughter asks for a loaf, you give 'em a cake. That's the way it works. You guys, you're just out of luck. Maybe you get a biscuit. See, it is so beautiful and so wonderful to see Jesus just dip into the realities of human life as God has made them and bring out the teaching.

Relationship Between God and Humans

"If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give what is good to those who ask him." (7:11)

Now then, did we suddenly change the orientation. OK now think about this. What's the continuum between human beings and God? When I go to ask, seek, and knock of human beings, when I don't condemn them, I don't try to manipulate them, I take God with me. And I bring him into the circuit of asking, seeking, and knocking. So that when I come to request I am simultaneously involving God in that.

Prayer and asking

[55:04]

Prayer is asking. Generically, that's what it is. It is asking. And I know that there are many people especially towards the left of Christian institutions bad movements that want to say oh no, you don't ask anything of God. But look at the teachings of Jesus; it's all about asking.

Now your relationship to God is not all about asking. And that's what confuses many people. Because I certainly have a relationship to Jesus and to God that is greater than asking. But people who are, they really don't understand prayer, and they really don't understand the Kingdom, they get into this area of prayer, and they start suddenly... Oh, you don't want anything for yourself, do you?

Asking and receiving

Well, imagine you had a child like that, that didn't want to ask you for what they needed, because, oh, I didn't want to be thought selfish. Well thank God children are spared from such crazy ideas of that. Not to mention dogs. They don't think about it at all. Well I wouldn't ask anything bow wow for myself bow wow. No, no. No. They just ask. And children just ask, don't they? And that's one of the greatest things about kids. They ask. But of course they also curl up in your lap and say I love you Daddy, and not to get something they want. It's just because they love you.

Well, see, our relationship to God is much bigger than prayer. But prayer is fundamentally asking and receiving and living in a relationship where that happens. [56:45]

So now, when I go to my friend, my neighbor, my son or whatever, I don't go to manipulate them. I go to ask, and as I ask I ask God, and I bring God into that operation. [\[2 Types of Causation: On my own and needing help\]](#)

Lessons on Prayer

[57:30]

There's so much I need to say about prayer, I won't have time to say about it, but you know we have two ways of getting things done. And sometimes what we're after is so big it can't be left to us. One of the most stunning passages to me as I study these things, you know - and I know you're the same way. You suddenly turn a page of the Bible, and you just see something that's so big, and you say why didn't I see that before?

Simon Peter and Jesus

But there's a wonderful statement here with reference to Simon Peter, and a part of his job as being the first Pope if you like, or Jesus' righthand man if you like, was that he's the illust...he's the sort of, what's that thing? The visible man? Where you can sort of look in and see all the parts of the human being? And Peter is kind of like the visible saint, because you get to look at him, and you learn all the things that you need to know by illustration. And we talked about Peter's denial and all of that.

But in chapter 22 of Luke, Jesus and Peter are going over this thing. And Jesus is saying to Peter, in verse 31 of chapter 22 of Luke, Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. And by the way one of the things that teaches us is that Jesus and Satan were talking all along. They... Wasn't that Satan just went away. He left for a season after the temptation. He came back; he's always talking. Satan has demanded permission, and permission has been given to him to sift you.

Prayer comes first

But look at what verse 32 says. "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31)

Now what's so stunning here to me, when I saw it, was Jesus prayed for him. He didn't just stop him. He could have stopped him. But he didn't stop him.

Now see, most of the things we are concerned about in human relationships are too big for us to do on our own. They're too big for us to do on our own. That's why there really is - that's part of the reason why there's such an arrangement as prayer. It's too big for us to do...

Action is appropriate sometimes

If you got weeds in your flowerbed, you'd better not pray about that, unless you've left them there so long that now you can't pull them up. You got weeds in your flowerbed, that's in your causation. You can go pull those. That's God's arrangement. That's one form of the causation that he's given us. You can pull the weeds in your flowerbed. No need to pray about it. Don't need to ask God to do it, or send an angel to do it, or don't need to do spiritual warfare against them. Just pull 'em! Right?

Prayer involves God

But if your sister, or brother, is addicted to cocaine, you probably better not try to do that. That's too complicated. That involves too much. Better pray about that. Better get God involved in that one. He knows what's going on. He knows what might be done in the right way to help that person, and what can't be done.

If you have someone who's unsaved, it's OK to talk to them. Don't try to manipulate them. Don't try to grind them into the Kingdom of God by condemnation and all sorts of pearls that you have found which they couldn't possibly use. And don't keep just putting them pearls in, saying boy, this is a good one. This is really a good one. Because they can't use it. That's where you go to

God. You can speak to them; that's fine. You should ask, you should seek, you should knock. But you should go to them with God. Not on your own.

Prayer engages in action with God

[1:01:40]

And that's why there is such an arrangement as prayer. What is prayer? Prayer is talking to God about what we're doing together. Prayer is talking to God about what we are doing together. Prayer is a way of engaging with God in bringing something to pass. It's not a way of putting the coin in the Coke machine, and expecting it to kick out. That's why prayer is very much a matter of staying with something.

Praying With People

Though there's wonderful pattern of praying; I mentioned Wimber the other day, that he knew and taught to his people, about praying with people. That you got with them. And you talked with them, and you let what is needed come out, and take form, and then you begin to pray. And you don't walk off; you stay there. And you say, is anything happening? And maybe you talk about that. And then you pray more, and you stay with it. That...

The dive bomb is just, you come in, you swoop down, you drop the prayer, and you're out. That's not prayer. Prayer is getting involved in something. It's staying in action with the Kingdom of God. It's staying there. You have a part. You can't make it happen. But you have to do something.

Power steering

A mechanical illustration of it to me that is very helpful is power steering. You have power steering in your car or your truck. If you don't touch the wheel, nothing's gonna happen. Or you better hope nothing's gonna happen. You don't want the thing to start steering itself down the road. Well, today you know, we have to think about all these experimental cars where you do do that. Then you do want it to steer itself. But you're probably going to be in control anyway. See, you touch the wheel, and the power takes over. You don't touch it; nothing happens.

Two Elements of Prayer

Prayer is fundamentally important, and it is important because of these two causal roles, one of which is placed in our power, and the other which is done with God. These Benedictine words, laborare and aurare. And their slogan is laborare est aurare. Oh folks on the left really love that, because that says when you're working you're praying.

Working and praying

But anyone who's worked and prayed knows that it isn't necessarily true. But they do go together. And praying is actually working, and if you've ever done much of it you know the truth of that statement. So praying is getting involved with the Kingdom of God, and staying there.

Jesus' Teachings on Prayer - Matthew 6, Luke 11 & 18 [1:04:55]

And Jesus' great teachings on prayer- in Matthew 6' we have a teaching in Luke 11 and Luke 18 - they are all statements about how prayer works by bringing to bear the action of the one who is praying.

Now, you can talk about this theoretically and so on, but you probably know, and if you don't I hope you will, you know how this works. When you pray for something, you really get involved with it, and you stay there. You pour out your energy in prayer. And as you do that, the normal thing that happens is you will begin to see things happen. They won't necessarily be just what you had in mind. Sometimes they will. But if you ask for the stone, and what you really want is bread, probably you'll get bread. If you need something to eat. Because that's where the Kingdom of God takes over and directs the prayer.

Jesus' Parables on Prayer

And Jesus' teachings are always predicated on this idea that praying is asking, and the idea is you get involved, and you stay there, and as this great passage in Luke 18 says, "Jesus told a parable that men ought always to pray and not give up." They ought to keep praying.

The Widow and the Judge

And then he tells the story about the widow and the unjust judge, and again if you look at that you're going to see there's one thing present, and that is the power of asking. (Luke 18:1) He takes the widow and the unjust judge because they're the sort of the...opposite poles of social power. The widow is a nobody. The unjust judge he describes him, this guy doesn't fear God and doesn't fear human beings. He is one mean guy. But he's a judge. And here comes the little lady, has no pull on him. All she can do is come and ask.

Persistence

Do you remember what the unjust judge said? I'm going to give this lady her request lest her...lest she will wear me out with her frequent coming.

Now again it just takes your breath away to think that that might somehow apply to God, but it does.

The Visitor at Midnight - Luke 11

[1:07:30]

We stay involved, the same way with the story in Luke 11. You'll remember, this is the case of the guy who comes at midnight and says, I need some bread. I've a friend who's come to me, he was late on the road. Freeway was blocked up. He's hungry. I don't have anything to feed him. Give me some bread. (**Luke 11:5-8**)

Again, it's simply the power of the request. And the householder's in the house; the door is shut, he's in bed with his children. That's a story in itself, you know how they slept, I mean you get the kids down in a sleep. They sleep with you. You wake up, they wake up. They didn't have Schlaug locks on the doors; they had bars, it was a real operation to shut the door. The door is shut; the children are in bed with me. I can't. But he did.

And why did he do it? Well, it's a very interesting term to try to translate there. But really, it's just shamelessness. That's that dog again. See the dog is utterly without shame. It just sits there and locks its eyes on you, no shame whatsoever. It just says, "I wanta, I wanta, I wanta, I wanta..." That's all it says. Utterly shameless. Dogs don't know any better. And this fellow that's asking doesn't know any better. He's just standing there. He's thinking about that guy back at the house. Doesn't have anything to feed him. He doesn't want to go back there and tell him that, he has nothing to feed him, and so he just keeps on standing there, and pretty soon the man inside gets up and gives him what he asks for. This is one of the deepest teachings about the nature of the universe and of God. And prayer is the way that you enter into it.

Prayer and Community

[1:09:30]

Now, when you do that, then you transform everything in the community. It's no longer a battle of will against will. It's a process of coming to grips with things that are needed, and things that need to be said. But we put those requests in the context of our overall walk with God, and then our business is his business, and his business is our business. And that's the way we learn to stay in prayer in the community of love.

In asking, I recognize and welcome God's presence with me. I make myself present to him, and that's the nature of the asking. Just presence of one person to another. Now that's also, if I go to my brother or my sister, that I want them to change. I ask. I just make myself present to them.

Now what you'll observe often is when you do that they will not make themselves

present to you because they're hiding. But the pressure is still there, and then you bring that under God, and you are waiting for God to move. And that's the context of change. That's what prayer is really about. Prayer is a way of allowing us to count. Prayer is something that God has worked out as a special arrangement. Just so that human beings can be free, and also can be significant.

There's a lot of theology here that's very harmful, and you have to work your way through it - if you want to call it openness or closedness or whatever it may be, the basic practical issue is, does God ever do anything in answer to prayer that he didn't intend to do in the first place? Or does he not do things that he intended to do in answer to prayer.

And here you need to read your Bible, and your biblical stories, but in the end it comes down to this: whether or not your praying makes any difference. Or is it just mood adjustment like a cocktail hour? See that's the way many people present it. Is, oh, you feel so much better if you pray. And you do, and it will adjust your moods. But the real issue is whether or not the universe is the kind of universe in which there is more to be done as a result of our prayers, than just what would happen anyway.

The Strange Arrangement of Prayer

[1:12:15]

Well, just a little comment here on why there is this strange arrangement. And it is an arrangement that allows us to learn to begin to be involved in what God is doing, and to make a difference. I said the other day that giving and prayer are the two baby steps in learning to act in the Kingdom. And this is really important to understand.

Prayer and giving are opportunities for the smallest, the most, the youngest, the smallest, to make a contribution that God can then act with. And acting with God is the secret of life in the Kingdom of God. This arrangement is one which allows one to step right in and begin to work with that, without allowing you to hurt yourself. And that's what we do in teaching and growing and every aspect of life with young people. We try to arrange things where they can begin to get involved without being hurt, without hurting others. And they grow and they learn, and they become more and more capable.

This arrangement allows one to step right in and begin to work without allowing you to hurt yourself. That's what we do in teaching and growing and every aspect of life with young people. We try to arrange things where they can begin to get involved without being hurt or hurting others and they grow and learn and they become more and more capable.

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I mentioned here the case of the widow's two mites. **(Luke 21:1-4)** Now, I mean, think about that story. And if you remember Jesus is standing over against the offering plate I guess you'd say. Watching people put in their gifts. And people come by and putting in their big tax deductible checks. And here comes this little widow again. Why do you think Jesus pulls out widows so often? Something to think about, isn't it? Well, widows again were the people who had the least going for them in human terms. Blessed are the widows.

Now here's the teaching in this passage in Luke 21. Jesus said, This widow who has put in her...the mites, mites were the two smallest coins that were running. He said, She has put in more than all the others.

Now see, that's one of those statements that you read in the Gospels from Jesus that you don't really perhaps know quite know what to do with. Well maybe we should make a song out of that one. The widow with her two mites, and so on. But is it really true? Did she put in more? Or is it just flowery language, you know. Jesus was given to flowery language. He's a great poet. Right? He was that. See, that's like, I have meat to eat you know not of. Did he really? Did she really?

There used to be a slogan that Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision, used, "Little is much if God is in it." See that's the insight that you need to understand the teaching of Jesus here. The widow actually did put in more, because what she put in more was with God. With God. And so the total of what came in for the Kingdom of God with her two mites was greater than all of what came in with the others.

The Lord's Prayer...in Kingdom language; *The Divine Conspiracy*, 269[1:16:00]

We need to understand that, and we need to take Jesus's great prayer, and put it in Kingdom language. It's beautiful the way it is; it almost feels sinful not to say "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." (Luke 11:1-4)

But wait a minute. What do you mean, "when in heaven"? And most people mean way off and way later. But that's not the Kingdom of God. What that really means, "our Father always near us." Our Father who art in heaven means our Father always near us, because the heavens are accessible to everyone, and everyone is accessible to the heavens.

Our Father always near us, may your name be treasured and loved. What does hallowed be thy name ? Most people never heard the word hallowed unless it's in the Gettysburg Address or the Lord's Prayer. What does it mean? Or, comes close in Halloween, doesn't it? It means treasured and loved. May your name be treasured and loved. May your rule be completed in us.

What does it mean to say, "Thy Kingdom come, your will be done here on earth just the way it's done in heaven."

"Give to us today the things we need for today, and forgive us our sins and impositions on you. In the way we're forgiving anyone who offends us. Please don't put us through trials, but deliver us from anything bad."

See, this is a child's prayer. Deliver us. Lead us not into temptation. Don't let us walk into trials. Say but well, I thought trials...you're supposed to be happy in your trials. You are. But, you shouldn't seek 'em. You should ask not to be put through trials. That's what Jesus is teaching.

Deliver us from everything that's bad. Because you're the one in charge. Thy Kingdom come. Thine is the Kingdom, thy Kingdom come, thine is the Kingdom. You're the one in charge. You have all the power, and the glory too is yours forever. And that's just the way we want it. That's what amen means. Means that's..."let it be that way". Now, if you really got into it, you might want to say whoopee instead of amen, and that would be OK. That would be permitted.

You see, prayer opens up the Kingdom and makes it possible for us to be present to others and present to God in a way that creates a wonderful community of love and non-condemnation. And that's how we can live together under God in the Kingdom of God. That's what Jesus is talking about.

~ ~ ~ END of Session 12 @ 1:19:15 and END of Lecture Series ~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~ **Highlights by Topic** ~ ~ ~

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The Kingdom of God

Jesus taught mainly about the Kingdom of God where the Trinity is King.

#1 @ 11:30

If you don't know the Kingdom of God, the human self will is all that is left. The cross is designed to help people see what self will does. What living as one's own king does. Looking at that, recognizing that and turning to God in Christ and giving up one's self will and live in the invisible kingdom of God which is now available.

#1 @ 1:02:00 (p.9)

The crucifixion is the center point of the revelation of the hidden kingdom.

Colossians "reconcile all things to Himself."

#1 before 1:00:50

When you live in the Kingdom of Heaven as a disciple of Jesus, you are related to something greater than John the Baptist. Keep that in mind when you are thinking about your nature.

#2 after 1:02:15

That's what presented in the gospels over and over again. The presence of the Kingdom in the presence of the King Jesus. One of the deep sicknesses of our theology is that we preach a Jesus without a Kingdom. #2 before 1:15:20

Live in the Kingdom. Let the results take care of itself. I had to get out of God's way and let the kingdom work and count on the life that is in the Word of the Kingdom. This is one of the most important things for us to understand if we are to participate in the Divine Conspiracy if as leaders and ministers in the Kingdom to have confidence in the power in the Word of the Kingdom.

If someone wants to find the Kingdom, I should present Jesus to them. I should talk about Him. I should speak about the unspeakable riches of Christ. I should magnify Him and lift Him up and say the wonderful things about Him that are true of Him. That is the way to bring people to the point of understanding the Kingdom and to bring them to the point where they are prepared to enter the Kingdom of God. We must start with the nature of God because it is His kingdom. The Kingdom is a spiritual reality. The Word of the Kingdom is a spiritual reality - a life of it's own. Jesus said they have to eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:62)

3 @ Intro

Kingdom of God - Out of God's operation He will bring a group of people who have the quality of the Trinity in terms of their unity in love. Those are the people whom He can empower to do what they want.

3 @ 26:00

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Christ came to break God's Kingdom out of cultural captivity. Can one be a Christian and not a Jew (which emerged out Antioch of Syria in a group of non-Jewish Gentiles) which expanded to disciples of all nations. The system of mediation was set aside for one simple thing - Jesus. "There is one God and one mediator the man Jesus." All that is required is the presence of Jesus. The Kingdom is present with Him. You have Him, you have the Kingdom. God took the Kingdom of God out of a strictly cultural, institutional setting.

#3 @ 45:00+

The Kingdom of God comes and says, "Enter the Kingdom, live in the Kingdom, allow your lives to count for things that are good, permanent, enduring, lasting forever." That enables one to live on a different plain. That presupposes the Kingdom is real. That is not just imaginary. As you interact with the Kingdom, that carries you, gives you strength, gives you direction and that means power that has to be learned how to deal with.

#3 before 52:30

"The Kingdom is not in word but in power" Corinthians. The Word of the kingdom produces a kind of life or a results. Jesus is living in a personal reality which is the Kingdom of God. That's why we don't have mechanical results. It's personal and relationship.

#3

after 52:30

Conformed into the image of His Son (Romans 8:28ff). The hard things turn to our good when we have a vision of life in the Kingdom. We are carried forward by meaning of the drama of the Kingdom. "Drama" refers to the ups & downs of meaningful existence in the pursuit of good against opposition. Living in the eternal kingdom gives us this framework.

#3 @ 57:30

Kingdom followers do not stand on the Jewish proprieties (see Luke 16:16). They charge in.

#3

after 57:30

The Kingdom of God is manifested by a kind of righteousness or goodness, peace & joy that can only be supernaturally produced. The Kingdom of God is the announcement that God is here that anyone who wants to find Him can come through Jesus Christ and find the Kingdom of God.

#3 before 1:11:00

How do you seek the Kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33)? Find out what God is doing (the Kingdom) and do that. How? Observe Jesus Christ. Look at Him. Listen to what He said. Watch what He did. Now do that where you are and you will find the Kingdom of God and the kind of righteousness that God has. When you find that everything else you need will be provided.

#3 @ 1:11:00

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The understanding was (is) that the Kingdom will be a political, social kingdom.

“Will you restore the kingdom to Israel?”

One has to be an ontologist - understand "being" to understand the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is God's ruling, reigning - His governing, His acting. The Kingdom of God is the Person of God and the instrumentalities by which He rules - His Son, Spirit, Angels, His Word, His Church. #4 Intro

The biggest threat to the Kingdom of God is my kingdom and the kingdom of darkness. #4
Intro

You make a disciple by ravishing people with the Kingdom. Once you understand the Kingdom, discipleship is the greatest opportunity you'll have in life.

#4 @ 28:30

A True Disciple is a full time student in the Kingdom of God. #5 @ 21:55

Lift Jesus up in all of His glory and with Him comes the Kingdom because He is a great King. #5 after 30:45

Discipleship = from running our own Kingdom to bringing our whole being into the presence of God often one step & part at a time. #5 @ 45:00

Any work can be done in a spirit of love in the power of the Kingdom. I'm an Apprentice in Kingdom Living. He is the Master in the Kingdom. It's the easy way of living (Mt. 11:28-30) #5 @ 1:00:00

The good news that we can live now in the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ. I have confidence in Him for everything. I want to be as close to him as possible and learn from Him everything I can. I do believe that all of His commandments are for my benefit. Anything He tells me to do will be for my good. I will be much better off when I do it. You can only understand that if you get the background of the Kingdom. #6 @ 16:55

Why don't we hear the gospel of the kingdom? (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 59)

"I can not remember hearing a sermon on the Kingdom of God. Where has the kingdom been?" Peter Wagner #6 @ 19:25

How do we act with the power in the Kingdom? Prayer and Giving are the two baby steps in learning Kingdom life. We ought always to be undertaking things we can not do. We are meant to live in the Kingdom of God under the direction of God. Counting on God to do big things. #6 @ 25:00 +/-

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Walk through the book of Acts and watch how the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel of Jesus come together. You will see them separate at the beginning and together at the end. Acts put a face to the Kingdom and a Kingdom to the face. People did not know what Jesus was talking about when He talked about the Kingdom of God. #6 @

28:00 +/-

When you invoke the name of Jesus, you can invoke the action of the Kingdom. Col 3:17 - The name of Jesus ties into Kingdom. #6 @ 32:00 +/-

At the end of Acts when Jesus & the Kingdom come together, the face of Jesus has been put on the Kingdom and the Kingdom is presented in terms of the King Jesus. A King always brings a kingdom so they come together. #6 @ 33:00

If Jesus is equal with God and now we have a person that we relate differently. We come to seek the Kingdom in Jesus and live in uncompromising obedience. #6 @ 39:00

Central to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom is the inversion of Human ranking. God has a different ranking. "First, last. Last, first." #6 @ 40:00 +/-

The Beatitudes don't tell you to do anything. They are announcements about the reality of the Kingdom of God in the kingdom of man. The Beatitudes are proclamation of the Kingdom not practices of the saved. The meaning of the Beatitudes is the openness of the Kingdom to all who trust in Jesus. That's the story of the gospels - person after person coming to Jesus. You see the remarkable generosity of Jesus in the Kingdom of God. He's comfortable with all of them because he is solidly situated in the Kingdom of God. We have to grow as His disciples before we can enter into that kind of thing. But we ought to have in mind that we can be anywhere with anyone and be perfectly safe and perfectly strong in the Kingdom of God. #6 @ 1:06:50

When you track with the law, you begin to draw on the abundance of the Kingdom of God. That is how you seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Everything you need will be provided. If you don't track with it, you won't because you won't be tracking in the abundance of God's provision. #7 @ 40:00+

Transformation as the self as whole is what we look at when we are cultivating and growing the righteousness of the Kingdom. #7 at the End

"Without me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) That is why there is not boasting in this matter. It is by grace. Boasting disrupts everything in kingdom living. #8 @ 3:00

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The gospel is the vision - "Living in the Kingdom of God". #8 @ 19:00

Out of these [spiritual disciplines] will come a richness of life in the kingdom that will allow you to do things Jesus said at a walk. All of the struggle and tension will move out of your life and you'll understand when Jesus said, "My yoke is easy. My burden is light." (Matthew 11) #8 @ 30:00 +/-

Being saved is not a matter of where you are going but who you are now. You are a participant in the life that Jesus is now living here. That's what salvation is. That all fits together once you start at the right place and keep Jesus at the right place. Keep Jesus central. You see him as King over a Kingdom in which He invites you to live with Him now. #8 @ the End

Gifting given with extraordinary power to accomplish the ends of the Church. Manifestation of the Kingdom power. The Kingdom comes into the Church. People in Leadership are exercising gifts from Christ beyond human ingenuity. #9 @ 7:00

If you are the light of the world, where you are is your appointment. You will be the light of the world by living out the Kingdom of God in that place. You bring the Kingdom in and let it work. You will be a person who will do the right thing because you are a person of love and faith and by faith you do the right thing and God will stand with you. #10 @ 33:00 +

We can't if we are living on our own resources and all we know is controlling things so that they come out the way we want them. If we abandon that, there will be cases where people will ask you for something who have no claim on you and you will give them based on need. Giving based just on need is a characteristic of people who have learned to live in the Kingdom of God. Will you make a law of it? I hope not. #11 @ 1:12:35

For the child of the kingdom, they will be many circumstances in which you will go contrary to these assumptions because you are alive in the kingdom. #11 pre 1:18:00

You can't catch the reality of the kingdom in a set of rules. #11 @ 1:19:00 +/-

There is not a single situation you have to deal with that is not affected by a shift into the Kingdom. #12 Intro

We have to make a decisions and the choice is who are we going to be - our kingdom people or God's kingdom people. #12 @ 7:45

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If humans are the ones making our work go, they'll always be involved and we need them but they are not what we trust. We trust God and His kingdom. This frees us from the need to please human beings. "Fear of man brings a snare." (Proverbs). The person who lives in the kingdom of God does not depend on people. #12 @

12:00+

Prayer is staying in action with the Kingdom of God. #12 @ 1:01:40

Giving & Prayer are the two baby steps in learning to act in the Kingdom. Opportunities for the youngest and smallest to make a contribution that God can act with. Acting with God is the secret of life in the Kingdom of God.

#12 @ 1:12:15

The total of what came in for the Kingdom of God with her 2 mites was greater than what came in with all the others. #12 @ 1:15:00

Prayer opens up the Kingdom and makes it possible for us to be present to others and to God in a way that creates a wonderful community of love and non condemnation and that's how we can live together under God in the Kingdom of God. That's what Jesus is talking about. #12 @ 1:19:00

~ ~ ~

The Gospel

If you're preaching a gospel that does not mean redemption for your whole life, you haven't got the right one. #4 @ 10:43

~ ~ ~

Salvation

Salvation is participating now in the life which Jesus is now living on Earth. Of course it involves forgiveness & Heaven afterwards. It is not a question of omitting those, it is a question of making that the whole deal. #6 Intro

~ ~ ~

The Divine Conspiracy Purpose

Divine Conspiracy is God's plan and process of overcoming evil with good in human history. #1 @
15:45

The primary issue in the Divine Conspiracy is Truth - Is it truth or falsehood?
#1 @ 29:55

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God's intent for each of us that we become the kind of person whom He can empower to do whatever we want. The real issue - what kind of person am I?

#1 @ 42:30

The Divine Conspiracy is to overcome evil with good in the grinding process of human nature. #1 @ 58:00 (est.)

The Divine Conspiracy means to elicit love & obedience through the development of character so that out of human history comes a certain kind of community that then is going to have a role forever in the universe.

#2 @ 46:50

The Divine Conspiracy is God's aim to defeat this dreadful declension from God's world and God's kingdom by bringing out a world and history wide community of people who have the character and power of Jesus Christ Himself.

#2 @ 1:18:00 +/- (end)

Out of God's operation He will bring a group of people who have the quality of the Trinity in terms of their unity in love. Those are the people whom He can empower to do what they want. #3 @ 26:00

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The Challenge for God's People

The greatest challenge facing the church today - do they have knowledge that is essential to human life or is it another wild faith project where you launch yourself into something and pretend you are being delivered? #1 @ 30:00+ (est.)

The greatest challenge of the people of Jesus Christ today is to stand in our world as representing knowledge of reality with love and intelligence to show that we have that knowledge by the lives that we lead. #2 @ 1:07:00 (est.)

~ ~ ~

Human Nature

I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe. #2 @ 1:05:00 + (est.)

~ ~ ~

The Church

If it was assumed that the church had essential knowledge of life, without which human beings could live well or live at all, there would be no question of the separation of church and state. It's all predicated on the idea that religion had nothing to say about reality. #1 @ 30:00

The Church is not the Kingdom of God but a peculiar manifestation of the Kingdom of God. #1 @ End

The Church Today - Should it matter?

Q - Why does the New Testament say nothing upon those matters of which the church today spends most of its time?

A - It might be because nearly everything we devote our attention to today doesn't matter. Something else matters. Not the things we spend most of our time thinking about. #9 @ 26:30

How are people going to gather? We have to think in a different way.

Our choice: Natural ways people will be together - or - have them meet in one place. Demographics make it impossible to gather together in today's urban communities. 3-5% reached if you filled all the churches/synagogues once a week. The church has to be located in a different way. People will still meet. We have to think in a different way about what we do as we carry out the mission.

#9 @ 29:45

The primary field of evangelism today is the American Church. The gospel of discipleship and kingdom living needs to be taught in the large array of non-discipleship Christianity. They need to be evangelized. They need to hear the gospel. If we do that, discipleship will naturally emerge. People are not disciples because they have refused it. By and large they have not been invited. An intelligent invitation to be a disciple of Jesus. #9 @ 45:00+ (est.)

It's a real struggle because you are essentially trying to change the understanding that the people have who come and who support financially and by their presence and by their efforts. Tough to negotiate and get through. Recognize the problems but not be detoured from the goal. The goal [of the church] - Leading ourselves and leading others to change to the point that they become people who routinely do the things Jesus said do, not as the exception but as the rule of their life.

#10 @ 5:00

Not Trusting People & Performing for Human Credit (Mt. 6:1-18) is one of the biggest problems in our churches. Often done for good ends. We want people coming back because they enjoy it. The object of the service is not to have people

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to enjoy it. The object of the service to bring them closer to Christ and more fulfilled in the kind of life that is in Christ. To honor God, to worship God. Very often the mode of being that church services have is theater - a performance. That becomes very grinding for the people who have to do it. One of the things we have to do is to reject the idea that we are performing. #12 @ 8:00

Immerse Disciples in the Trinity - Church Services are a primary problem in this whole project. #5 @ 38:10

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Church Growth

Jesus' Plan for Church Growth - If we preach the unsearchable riches of Christ rightly, we are ready to move into that plan. If we do not, we can never go there and we will have to do something else. That is the history of the church, very largely doing something else. You go down through the ages and watch the ebb and the flow and you come up to the present and say, "What are we doing today?"

Go to the scriptures to see what is positively taught about life and reality and put it to the test. That gets us back to "Ground Zero planning". Now we're going to do something following Jesus Christ as if there was no one already there that had to be justified for what they are doing. If you'll do your ground zero planning, it will do the best thing you can for the people who (Christians) are already in the game. Many are good people, sincere people who want to follow Christ. But they are hindered by taking care of a lot of stuff that is irrelevant. One of beauties of the Great Commission is that it strips all of that away. #4 @ the end

Church growth is not more Christians but bigger Christians. #9 @ 12:00 (est.)

Church Growth - Numbers are not to be despised but the truth is you get more numbers when you have this kind of growth than if you don't. The natural process for the spread of the gospel and bringing of people into the body of Christ is one on one contact with individuals who have in them something so strong and so powerful that other people by and large will naturally want it. The ordinary person will, when they see this, this realization of Christ in individuals, they will come. You won't have enough room to hold them. #9 @ 14:10

You're not going to do it by a slick plan for church growth. You are not going to do in an any other way but by your own transformation and that spreading out to other people. That's the only way it works. #10 @ 29:00

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Preaching

Does the gospel I preach make disciples of Jesus or more consumers of religious goods? We have a spectator, nonparticipant, consumer version of Christianity. Not rooted in the body of Christ, personal transformation. Not rooted in the power of G that you can bring to bear and stand as His person and expect the Kingdom of God to make a difference you can never do on your own. #4 @ 1:50:00 (est.)

The Gospel Heard Does not produce Disciples - The central problem is the message preached or at least the one that is heard. The one heard does not have a natural tendency to produce disciples. #5 @ 1:00:40

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Discipleship & Disciplines

Discipleship Confused with Church Involvement - These don't come to transformation into Christlikeness to be what it's supposed to be and do what the church is supposed to do = people progressing to the place where they routinely & easily do what Christ taught us. #5 @ 21:50

[Churches] have to organize program of spiritual growth around the disciplines. You can not get growth in Christlikeness out of church as usual. There just isn't enough there. A couple of hours in church, some giving, isn't enough. You have to plan for more. Many churches are making available more intensive experiences. [Session 8 @ 33:18]

What does this {disciplines} have to do with being saved? Situation in our churches - Discipleship is one thing and being Christian is another. #8 @ 35:40

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The Ministry - Dallas Willard's personal experience and discovery

So, the Kingdom of God is like leaven. It enters into a reality, works away and now, it has a life of its own.

"The teaching about the Kingdom of God saved my faith in Christ"

Mark 4:26-29 - "All by itself" principle

The part that saved my faith was "the seed sports up and grows. How it does he does not know." As a minister and a Christian, I do not have to make it happen. I learned the more I tried to make it happen, the less it would work. What I had to do was to learn to speak the Word and live in the Kingdom and let the results take care of themselves. When I would do that I would begin to see change in the

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people I was ministering to. I had to get out of God's way and let the kingdom work and count on the life that is in the Word of the Kingdom.

Progressively I think I learned not to try to get people to do anything, to just stop that all together. It was hard because I was in ministry in a Southern Baptist Church and I was expected to produce results.

* DL Moody to a staggering drunk. "Mr. Moody, I am one of your converts."

"You must be one of mine because you're clearly not one of God's."

I could get out of the business of making things happen.

Do I still win souls? Yes. It is more in terms of putting the sickle in, watching for people who need a little help at a certain transition. Most of what I'm doing is watching the seed grow. Plant the seed, watch it grow. You don't make it happen. That is one of the most important things for us to understand if we are to participate in The Divine Conspiracy as leaders and ministers to have confidence in the power of the Word of the Kingdom.

#3 @ Intro

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Pastors and leaders have the primary responsibility of enabling people to be together in way that they will flourish and grow in Christlikeness. They will develop spiritual competence. They will be able to do things we associate with being a Christian - be able & competent in things like speaking the Gospel, helping people who need help, praying, enduring suffering joyously. That's what we're aiming at. [Session 9 @ 4:00]

~ ~ ~ Postscript from Jesus College ~ ~ ~

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