

"Bringing Truth to Life"

Dallas Willard, Navigators, Colorado Springs, 2008

Scribe's Comments - The session was transcribed from the audio recordings in good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold** and underline offer the scribe's emphasis and the [brackets] offer commentary or clarity to the content.



"Bringing Truth to Life" Series (separate files)

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| 1 | "Truth Overview & Relational Discipling" | [41:55] |
| 2 | "What is Truth?" | [1:05:30] |
| 3 | "Good News that Makes Disciples" | [48:40] + Q&A |
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Session 3 – "Good News that Makes Disciples" (audio)

~ Introduction: Truth to Life

We're talking about "Bringing Truth to Life."

Last time [Session 2] we spoke at length about "truth". I hope your feeling comfortable with the idea of truth and not let people intimidate it with silly talk about it being relative for example. One thing you know about truth is truth is not relative. No one has ever made a belief true by believing it. People try to hide and mess with the truth because the truth is merciless. It doesn't care what you think and what you feel.

* If you think you've got gas in your tank" - reality doesn't say, "Well, you were very sincere, we'll let your car run down the road."

Truth is like that to help us.

* People lost in the forest with different compasses.

"My compass is true for me." Someone has to decide which one is right and follow that path. There never going to get out of the woods. Someone has to decide a path.

That's why truth is so precious and we never mess with it.

Truth (def.) **An accurate representation of how things are.** [1:30]

Truth is simple. It is not always easy to find out how things are. Truths in the plural sometimes are not simple but truth itself is always simple.

Children understand it. You have to have a PhD in two different areas to not understand it.

[see Willard's "What is Truth?" @ 34:20 and

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["The Value of Truth" by Dallas Willard @ 3:30\]](#)

~ Truth & Discipleship to Jesus

"Bringing Truth to Life" - the essence of that - is discipleship to Jesus.

That's how you bring truth to life.

There are a lot of little truths you can have without knowledge of Jesus.

The truth about how to live is what Jesus is about. The truth about Jesus we'll expand more on that this evening*, that's discipleship to Jesus.

[2:45] [[* "Good News that Makes Disciples" Talk #3](#)]

A person hears the truth and sees the truth in Jesus and says, "I'm going to follow that." It's putting it into practice. To do that with the truth that Jesus brings, you have to be taught by him, you have to be his disciple.

One of the great mistakes people make about Jesus is you try to do what Jesus said. That's a disaster. It will kill you.

No, you learn to do what He said.

In our culture we have Faith over here - Obedience over there - and no way to get from here to there. That's why we wind up with a non-discipleship Christianity. That's how you get tradition after tradition that falls into legalism. Take one verse and build a whole denomination around it.

* Willard's rule of thumb for Hermeneutics - If it says it only once, don't worry about. Worry about the stuff it says over and over again.

The way you are liberated into the teachings of Jesus, you learn. I'm afraid when I talk about obedience people will take it legalistically.

If you want to keep the law, you don't try to keep the law. You try to become the kind of person who will keep the law without thinking about it a great deal.

* The person who has to think a lot about not stealing is already in trouble. That's true of all of the law which is good and right and wonderful.

You have to understand you become the kind of person who does that in fellowship with Jesus. You take Him as your teacher.

The great temptation in discipleship is to define it in a way that falls short of learning to obey Christ.

I Peter 2:21-22 - "You have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps. He committed no sin. No deceit was in His mouth. Being reviled, He did not revile. He died for righteousness. By his wounds you were healed"

How are you healed? By sharing the wounds that have come to you through Him and from the Trinity. Follow in His steps.

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Following in His steps is much more than "WWJD?" One of the things Jesus would do is he would not have to ask that question.

We need to understand that fully. The early disciples, it was very simple. He was here. All they had to do was stay in his presence.

They were with Him learning to be like Him.

You can see how easy it was for the disciples in a sense. How it is easier for you - Jesus wants to be with you and me wherever we are all the time. We don't have to leave our business, family and so on. We have to forsake them in our hearts and the most important thing is learning from Him. We can be disciples wherever we are. That's exactly where you become a disciple of Jesus - wherever you are. Discipleship to Jesus is not a religious thing, it's a life thing.

Matthew 4:23, 9:35 - They watched Jesus proclaim the Kingdom of God, manifest it in power and teach about what it was. The ministry of Jesus.

"Proclaim" - To announce, not that there is a Kingdom of God, but that it was available to everyone because it was at hand. All they had to do was turn into it by putting their confidence in Jesus and very often it was putting their confidence in the needs that they had. And the multitudes flooded around Him. After a while, Jesus said to His disciples, "Now you do it."

Jesus sent them out 2x2 and I think then he took a rest at that point.

What would be one word to describe Jesus?

"Relaxed" because he was living in the Kingdom of God.

The easy yoke was His yoke. Rest is a major part of the Bible.

"Cast your burdens on the Lord and He will sustain you."

But He moved right along. **Luke 4:43-44** - Got up early to pray. *"I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also for I was sent for this purpose."*

What is the purpose for which Jesus was sent?

You might not say, *"To proclaim the Kingdom of God."*

We have to be careful with our understandings to read scripture and let it correct our thinking.

James 1:27 - *"Pure & undefiled religion is this..."*

Titus 2:11-14 - *"Grace of God for salvation that has appeared to all men, denying ungodliness and worldly lust and living soberly in this present world...looking for Jesus Christ who gave himself for us that he might purify*

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us from all lawlessness and redeem for Himself a peculiar people zealous for good works."

I John 1:5 - *"This is the message of John we hear from him, God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all."*

We need to fill out our understanding of the message of scripture and discipleship in this way.

~ The Good News that Makes Disciples

[16:20]

What is the message that makes disciples? The verses I just mentioned.

What kind of gospel do we preach that would have a natural tendency to produce disciples? We have experience with gospels that don't do that. We have a version of Christianity now that omits discipleship.

Where did that come from? The gospel that was preached.

1.) Gospel of *"Sins will be forgiven if you believe that Jesus died in your place."*

The gospel we most commonly hear. Jesus suffered your punishment.

That's good news but it doesn't make disciples. How do you know? There are multitudes that have accepted that and they are not disciples. Some who accepted go on and become disciples. They learn to love Jesus so much and all they want to do is serve Him and please Him. But the general tendency leaves people short of discipleship.

2.) Liberation - Gospel of the left. Jesus died as a member of the oppressed. He died to deliver the oppressed. You can do that too. It's not really worried about sin. Worried about structural evils are evils that no one did. Not really worried about forgiveness of sins because most don't think about an afterlife. In liberal churches that goes along with liberal politics and it doesn't make disciples. Is liberation a good thing? Yes. Central to the prophetic message of the Bible but it's just not the gospel.

3.) Churchmanship - You take care of your church and it will take care of you. Much more widespread in practice than you might think. It doesn't make disciples. It makes people who are serious about church but not disciples.

4.) Signs & Wonders - a natural expression of the presence of the Kingdom of God. But signs of the gospel are not the gospel.

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The Gospel is you can now live in the kingdom of God by putting your confidence in Jesus Christ and turning your life over to Him.

[22:00]

Matthew 11:11-12 - The response to Him was a violent one.

Anyone here greater than John the Baptist today? OK, you're coming along! [[see Session 1 "Bringing Truth to Life" @ 20:45](#)]

- * Woman wiping Jesus' feet with her hair and tears.
- * Leper coming to Jesus, "*Master if you would, you can heal me.*"
- * Roman Centurion

All of the people who under the Law & Prophets were shut out. The good news is whosoever will can come and live in **The Kingdom of God** is the range of God's effective will - where God wants done is done.

Stop and ask a sober question...

[25:50]

If what is preached today were preached in the beginning, would there have been any such thing as Christianity?

Would Jesus have been heard of again?

Does the gospel I preach have a natural tendency to produce disciples?

Or does it allow for discipleship of some sort?

The answer is often, "*No, it does not produce disciples, it produces consumers of religious goods and services.*"

We try to get people to come and consume the goods and services. The operation becomes discipleship-less Christendom.

The reign of God is present in the person of Jesus and available to all who put their hope in Him.

It is still true that...

"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

In many cases people are presented with a plan of salvation without the person of salvation. There is no plan only the person of salvation.

It's when we call upon the name of the Lord.

- * The Prodigal Son. The Father doesn't hold his nose and say,

"Go get a bath and we'll hug later."

The thing you have to know to be saved, "Jesus is the greatest!"

That's how children are saved. They become enraptured with Jesus. That's what happened to me when I was 9 years old.

Our personal relationship with Jesus is what saves us in every sense of "saves". There is no personal relationship to Jesus but that as Disciple to Him as Master, Teacher and Lord. The idea that you

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could trust him for forgiveness of sins but for nothing else is a psychological absurdity, a theological crime and nothing the Bible every heard of. It is designed to rationalize a pre-existing system that allows people to be Christians without being disciples.

John 14 - Thomas, "Lord, we don't know where you are going? How do we know the way?" Jesus replied, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.*"

~ **The Way**

[30:00]

If you want to go where I am going, to go to God, stay close to me. That's how to do it, "I am the way." He doesn't give us a map and say "Good luck!" He gives us a person.

** How do I get to the bank? I'm going there, come with me!*

That's what Jesus says, "I am going there, come with me." There is no plan, there is a person. You don't hand them a plan and go off and leave them. You introduce them to a person and they become a servant of that person. "Bond servant" of Jesus Christ - Peter, Paul. A bond servant stays close to his master.

~ **The Truth** - I am the correct representation of reality. [31:40]

"He that has seen me has seen the Father."

You want to know what God is like? Jesus is the truth. Truth is designed to allow you to deal with reality. Reality is what you run into when you are wrong. Truth helps you avoid unpleasant encounters with reality.

We were talking at breakfast about people who don't want to be exclusive because either know nice people who are this, that or the other. I don't want to be exclusive but I'm not in charge of that. But truth is exclusive. It does not adjust to anyone's opinions, thoughts or feelings.

Heaven & Hell - I don't particularly like the idea of **Hell** and I wish no one would go there but it might well be many people will be much more miserable in heaven than they will be in hell. Maybe the fires of Heaven will be hotter than the fires of Hell.

Heaven is not going to be a cruise ship or resort. That is a picture of heaven often presented by other religions. That's not the Christian picture of Heaven. The Christian picture of Heaven is life with God engaged with what God is engaged with, living creatively with Him in His purposes for ever.

If you didn't like being around God now, it's very unlikely once you get shoved right up next to God you're going to be very comfortable. The issue is not just making it in, but are you going to like it if you get there?

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"I am the correct representation of reality."

"He who has seen me has seen the Father."

* Paul on Mars Hill - *"God raised Jesus from the dead. He is going to judge every person by Him"*

Jesus is the ruler by which everyone is measured. People look pretty good, perhaps, as long as they are not standing right next to Him. Jesus is the standard because God has such a high aims for human beings.

* *"The hardest thing to believe about the Christian religion is the value it places on the individual."* GK Chesterton

Isaiah 53 - *"He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied."*

The people in His redeemed company.

Hebrews 12 - *"For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross despising it's shame and sat down at the right hand of God."*

~ **The Life**

[37:35]

Life is self initiating, self sustaining, self directing activity only perfect in God Himself.

* Dead goldfish - no longer self-initiating...sustaining...directing life.

To be dead in trespass in sins means there is no longer any self-initiating...sustaining... directing at the spiritual level. I have to be brought to life by God in Christ.

Eternal life in interactive relationship with God.

That's knowledge. **John 17:3** - *Know you and Jesus sent*

* Mary - *"How can I have a child? I don't know a man."*

She knew about men but she had not been in the appropriate interactive relationship to generate a child.

The Bible knows little about "head knowledge". There is no such a thing for it is an illusion of our culture.

* **2 Peter 3:18** - *"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

He saying grown in interactive relationship. That's how you grow in anything. You have interactive relationship.

* Learning auto mechanics by interacting with an engine

Grace - God acting in our life to accomplish what we can not accomplish on our own. Grow in knowledge, you grow in grace. Grow in grace, you grow in knowledge.

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Disciple - I am with Him learning to be like Him to lead my life as He would lead my life if He were I. I am learning to do all that He commanded.

~ Illustrate Discipleship

* *"Bless those who curse you"* [41:30]

A disciple of Jesus would be one who would learn how to bless those who curse them. That would be a process of coming to understand what "cursing" is and what "blessing" is. They would learn they are ready to curse in their body, their soul, their social situation so when the occasion occurs, it comes out. They would come to understand in order to learn how to bless those who curse you, you have to have blessing in your body. Your body is built to have blessing in it not cursing.

Your body is the primary spiritual resource you have as a disciple.

You are training your body. That's why all spiritual disciplines are in fact bodily behaviors. You are training your body because you live from your body. If the wrong stuff is in there, that's where your intentions and your actions get in conflict.

* Peter - "I will not deny you" but winds up doing it. It was in his body.

[Session 2 after 38:15]

If we are going to learn to bless people, it has to be in us.

It gets in there when you have disciples in a group who are going to learn how to bless those who curse us. Most of you have folks like that are pretty close. Just drive and you'll find them. Most of us don't have to go very far to find people who curse us.

"Blessing" (def.) Explicitly will their good under the invocation of God.

~ As a Disciple you have to learn to do what Jesus said

- *"Bless those who curse you"*

As a disciple, you have to learn things like that. We think it is like oxygen, it is just there in the atmosphere. You have to decide I am going to bless those who curse me.

In a group you can say, *"This week we are going to observe the occasions where people cursed us and how we responded."*

Then you get back together and talk about it.

You try to understand:

Where did it come from?

What was going on there?

Why did you do that?

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Maybe role play in the group.

You work with it. You keep a record. Within 3-4 weeks you are going to be able to bless those who curse you. Jesus will be present in this.

* Put in front of your Church,

"We teach people to do everything Jesus said."

Will you have a run on the goods? You might draw people in who are at the end of their rope, feel like failures and want to know how to do it. They probably respect Jesus.

You'll find a lot of people down on the church, Christians, the Crusades, but you won't find many people that are down on Jesus.

We want people to know Jesus and we want them to become His disciples, to learn to love Him, to stay with Him. The fruit of light begins to grow. We abide in Jesus' word and that allows us to know the truth and the truth orients us toward the reality of God and His kingdom is such a way that we are no longer in bondage to sin or in evil and we are prepared to say with joy,

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

because we have entered into a life that is eternal and undying.

~ ~ ~ End of Session 3 Teaching @ 48:40 ~ ~ ~

{Q & A next page}

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~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Q & A Session 5 [=15:50 total]

[49:00]

Q - [49:00] Tipping point between trying to do what Jesus said and learning to do what Jesus said?

A - The tipping point is mainly understanding how life works.

Training means you find out what when wrong when you tried and you fix it then you try again.

It is not true - "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Very likely you'll confirm your bad habits.

* JPL - *"If we blow up a rocket, we don't try again and blow up another rocket. We find out why that rocket blew up, then we fix that and then launch another rocket."*

The tipping point is when you realize there is a diminishing point of trying again. Legalists focus on the performance. "Bless those who curse us." They try again and they fail. They usually redefine issues so they can succeed.

That's why Jesus said, *"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees."*

The leaven is hypocrisy because they are trying to do something that is impossible so they have to have recourse to hypocrisy to hide their failures.

What is the way around that? Figure out what went wrong and fix it by the grace of God and by the presence of Jesus in your life.

Ask yourself, *Why can't I bless people who curse me?*

Maybe...

- You don't like people or certain kinds of people.
- I don't have trouble not cursing my granddaughter.
I have trouble not blessing her to pieces.
- Maybe I am just exhausted. You have to be in shape to do that.

The tipping when you realize there are things you can change. Grace will work with you and you'll be able to bless people who don't like you.

One of the greatest liberations in life is the ability to bless people who don't you bless you.

Q - Are you saying there is no salvation without sanctification? [53:10]

A - No, sanctification is a natural progression in salvation.

Phil. 2:12-16 - *"We work not to salvation but from it..."*

That means you have to understand Salvation as life from above or that won't follow.

Our present quandaries - we have dropped the doctrine of **regeneration** and tried to substitute **justification** as the whole of salvation - Justification

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is salvation. Theologically we need to rethink that. Regeneration precedes justification - life from above in the form of faith in Jesus, "*No man can call Jesus Lord except but by the Holy Spirit*" (**I Corinthians 12:3**). That's a divine act. That's regeneration and justification is a natural accompaniment of that.

* Abraham believed and God counted that as righteousness. I'd rather have this than had Abraham never done anything wrong. I am going to carry on my relationship with him. The relationship is salvation. My relation to Jesus Christ is salvation. When I get to Heaven's gate, I don't expect they will check the computer to see if my merits allow me to come in. I think they will say, "Here comes another friend of Jesus."

It is important to understand the connection to these two. Sanctification is a natural progression from Regeneration just as Glorification is a natural progression of Sanctification. They are so natural that you can't cut them clean. They overlap. So glorification even gets started in this life.

Q - [56:00] "*Narrow gate*" with those who seem like they are disciples but are not?

A - The narrow gate is the relationship of faith to Jesus. This kind of faith not some formula. It is reliance upon Jesus, dependence upon Jesus. You have to be careful because Jesus is talking about entrance but not how hard it is in any other terms.

* Narrow is the gate to the freeway." If you don't find it, you're in trouble. Reality and Truth set their own demands and we don't set the terms.

Being a Christian, state what you have to state, you live as you have to live and other people have to make their own decision.

Q - How does obedience apply to the Great Commission? [58:30]

A - The best thing you can do for your neighbor is to help them become a disciple of Jesus. The only way you can reliably do that is preach the gospel of Jesus that Jesus preached - the availability to the kingdom through faith in Him. That means righteousness and power that comes into the life and learning to do all things that I have commanded you, then that is a natural progression.

* Augustine - The reason we talk to people about becoming Christians is because we love them.

[[same quote in "Why Truth is Absolute" at 59:00](#)]

You can not love your neighbor and not want, long and make appropriate efforts to help them know the way of life. That means to know Jesus. There are one in the same thing. If you love them the way, you're going to love them in other ways they need help and blessings. Being a disciple for most of us is not being engaged in religious activities of identifiable kinds.

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Q - How do I become obedient to the Great Commandment?

A - By becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Life's Four Greatest Questions

[59:20]

—> "I am going to talk about those this evening."

1.) What is reality? **The Kingdom of God**

2.) What is well off? **Living in that Kingdom**

3.) Who is a good person? **Being filled with Agape love**

4.) You learn how to be that by **being a disciple of Jesus**

Buddha, Plato, Freud have to answer them. Doing DNA work...

Science does not have a shot at answering them because it does not deal with those questions. At USC or [your University](#) there is no Department of Reality, no Department of the Good Life, no Department of the Good person, no Department of how you get to be a really good person. Just vague suggestions like if you come to USC and pay all that money, you might get into a good professional school. Boy, is that a way off from the good life.

Learn how to love the Lord our God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and our neighbor. That's what we want to aim at when we talk about disciples. Don't fall short of that. If you have a gospel that falls short of that, when come to you say about what a disciple is, you're going to fall short of obedience to Christ.

That's what discipleship is about - Learning obedience to Christ and that means learning to love God with your all heart, soul, mind & strength and neighbor as yourself.

Q - Must forgiveness precede this process?

[1:01:50]

A - I think so. **Forgiveness means resumption of relationship.** God's forgiveness means now enter back into relationship because you are raised from deadness in sin to newness in life.

There is so much confusion about forgiveness. It means resumption of relationship for the sake of some greater good. It does not mean saying it never happened. It doesn't say it didn't matter. Because of the great good that would be lost, I'm going to resume the relationship with you.

* Pennsylvania community forgiving a shooter. Talking heads tried to get their heads around what was happening with these people and they could not comprehend it. They had forgiveness down real good. They didn't have to think about it. They just forgave. That was in their bodies. They didn't have to call it up.

Forgiveness is part of relationship. God resumes the relationship to human beings, corporately what happened in the fall and individually what

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happened when we decided to we run our own Kingdom as little children who began to take charge and make a mess.

* Abraham - I would rather have your trust in me than if you had never sinned.

Sin is going to glorify God in the end. Don't go out and sin so He has more to glory about. God is going to look better because of sin than He would ever have looked if it had never happened.

References his web page - dwillard.org - put a www before it...
WWW stands for Wild & Wooly Willard.

~ ~ ~ End of Q & A @ 1:04:30 ~ ~ ~

Information & resources about Dallas Willard Ministries — dwillard.org

Links to a Willard Toolbox with dozens of teachings with A/V & notes:

JesusCollege.com

[Dallas Willard Writing & Courses](#)

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