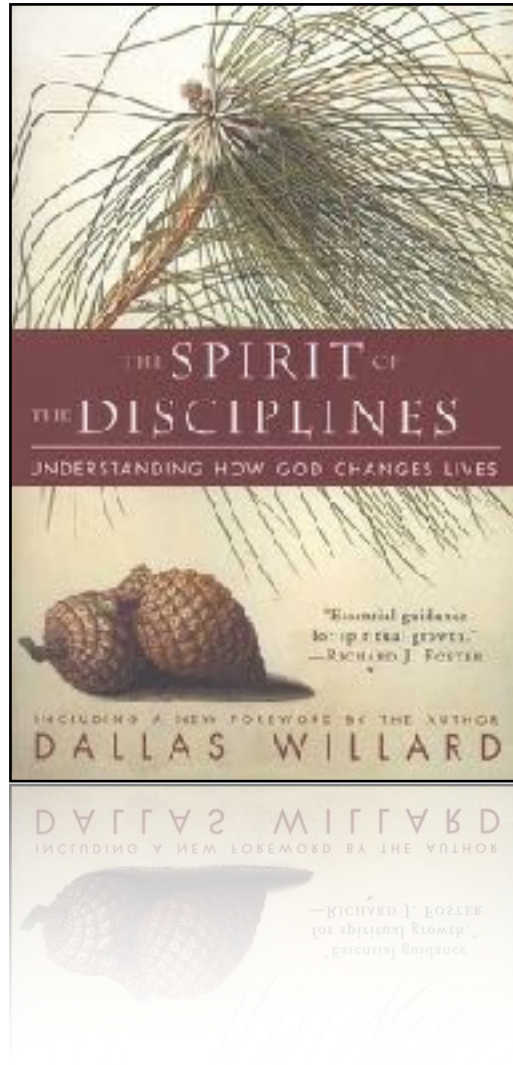


The SPIRIT of the DISCIPLINES Study Guide

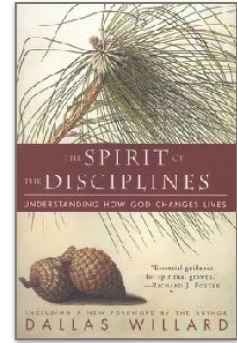


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present a 30 minute weekly webinar

“The Spirit of the Disciplines Course”

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- *Does God change lives? If yes, how?*
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Course Study Guide Table of Contents

Three Suggested Course Participation Levels	5
2022 Session Dates & Reading Schedule	6
Overview Course - 11 Session Outlines (1 page per Session)	
The Preface - An Age of Revolution	7
Session 1 - The Secret of the Easy Yoke	8
Session 2 - Practical Theology of Disciplines	9
Session 3 - Salvation Is a Life	10
Session 4 - “Little Less Than a God”	11
Session 5 - The Nature of Us	12
Session 6 - Spiritual Life: The Body’s Fulfillment	13
Session 7 - St. Paul: Psychology of Redemption	14
Session 8 - History and the Meaning of the Disciplines	15
Session 9 - Main Spiritual Life Disciplines	16
Session 10 - Is Poverty Spiritual	17
Session 11 - Disciplines & World’s Power	18
Additional Resources	
Twenty “Mere” or “Merely” quotes	19
Post-Script from Jesus College	22

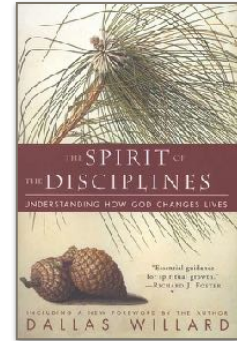
Three Suggested “V-I-M”** Participation Levels

ENJOY - *Peruse & Listen* — Overview the assigned chapter before each Session then join the weekly webinar to enjoy the dialogue.

PARTICIPATE - *Read & Inquire* — Read the entire chapter before each Session, take notes, and capture questions to bring to each Session.

RECEIVE - *Discipline & Engage* — Invest making this Course not simply a free webinar added to your routine, but an intentional discipline in your spiritual growth journey. Ideally, invite a partner to journey with you to better learn, apply & grow. Level 3 steps can include:

- 1) READ the assigned section/chapter before each Session. Capture notes in your book or electronically, reread the scriptures referenced, then review your notes again before the Session.
- 2) INQUIRE - Bring questions to digest the content and engage the presenters & other students. Linger longer for the “Q&C” after each Session.
- 3) VIEW - Complement reading with teachings from Dallas Willard at Gordon Conwell College, “[The Spirit of the Disciplines](#)” and “[Spiritual Disciplines](#)” through video links and content notes in the [Jesus College Library](#). Discover a growing library of teachings on the [Dallas Willard Ministries YouTube channel](#).
- 4) WITHDRAW - Invest solo time weekly spending an hour with Jesus discussing your key discovery from the week.
- 5) REFLECT - At the end of the Course, write yourself a letter or a journal entry summarizing the impact of the study.



[** V-I-M = *Vision-Intention-Means* — Dallas calls this the reliable pattern for spiritual change, really any change. As you envision a life of hearing God and truly intend to want to hear God, you will seek and find the means to practice a life of hearing God. For more on V-I-M, see *Renovation of the Heart*, chapter 5 ([Webinar on the book](#).) Another rich resource on V-I-M is in the [Life With God Bible](#) Introduction, xxv-xxxvi]

2022 Session Dates & Reading Schedule

DATE	SESSION	BOOK SECTION	CHAPTER & SESSION TITLE
March 1	Session 1	Chapter 1	The Secret of the Easy Yoke
March 8	Session 2	Chapter 2	Practical Theology of Disciplines
March 15	Session 3	Chapter 3	Salvation Is a Life
March 22	Session 4	Chapter 4	“Little Less Than a God”
March 29	Session 5	Chapter 5	The Nature of Life
April 5	Session 6	Chapter 6	Spiritual Life: A Body’s Fulfillment
April 12	Session 7	Chapter 7	St. Paul: Psychology of Redemption
April 19	Session 8	Chapter 8	History & Meaning of Disciplines
April 26	Session 9	Chapter 9	Main Spiritual Life Disciplines
May 3	Session 10	Chapter 10	Is Poverty Spiritual?
May 10	Session 11	Chapter 11	Disciplines & World’s Power

If you miss a Session, want to study more, or teach others this material, recorded Sessions + Slides PDF are posted in the [Jesus College Library](#) along with over 240 free Dallas Willard resources including 9 other Dallas Willard Courses.

Inquire about the Jesus College “*Master’s of the Master*” a recommended through (12) Courses on key Dallas Willard books & teachings. You will receive certificates of completion for each course finished. Consider this a personal growth and spiritual discipline commitment to strengthen your apprenticeship with Jesus under the guidance of Dallas Willard.

The Preface - “The Modern Age of Revolution”

For Christianity to succeed, it needs two things:

- 1.) Take human transformation seriously
- 2.) Clarify & exemplify realistic methods

The Book Outline

I. Chapters 1-3 — Clarify the nature of spiritual life itself, to show how it is the fulfillment of the human body and how our body is a primary resource for the spiritual life.

II. Chapters 4-8 — A perspective on the idea of “spiritual discipline”, and why the disciplines became for all practical purposes lost to us in Western Christianity.

III. Chapters 9-10 — The major groups of disciplines relevant today.

IV. Chapter 11 — A widespread transformation of character through wisely disciplined discipleship to Christ can transform our world - how it can disarm the structural evils that have always dominated humankind and now threaten to destroy the earth.

Key Phrases in the Preface

“We can become like Christ by doing one thing... _____” (p. ix)

“My ultimate aim is to change... _____” (p. xi)

“The Spirit of the Disciplines is nothing but... _____” (p. xii)

Local Assemblies as Children of the Light

“Our local assemblies must become academies of life as it was meant to be. From such places there can go forth a people equipped in character and power to judge or guide the earth.” (xii & 247)

Reading The SPIRIT of the DISCIPLINES

How many times can you find “Grace”, “Kingdom of God” & “Christlike” in the book? A form of “mere” is used at least 50 times. (See p. 19 of The Study Guide for 20 “mere” quotes.)

How does your “merely” following Jesus compare to “Mere Christianity”?

How do you read effectively? What is your method, your plan, your approach?

How can you retain more what you read as the very act of reading this book as a spiritual discipline?

Is your goal to understand the author’s intent or finish the book with a few good ideas?

It has been said with Dallas Willard like a CS Lewis, you don’t read Dallas, you receive his work.

Session 1 - The Secret of the Easy Yoke

Book Chapter 1

What is the Secret of the Easy Yoke? (pages 1-3)

The Cost of Discipleship and the Cost of Non-Discipleship - Proverbs 13:15

A Mere Wish? A Mere Idea? (*see the Study Guide for 20 “mere(ly)” quotes*)

Idolizing an Expert (3-4)

The Difficulty of “On the Spot” training (5,9)

The Art of Living (Plato) (4)

Grace not infused but exercised in godly living

Living as Jesus Lived “Taking the Easy Yoke of Christ” (5-9)

Growing up Yeshua — 18 years between the Passover trip and His public ministry

No “Short Cut to Sainthood” - M. Scott Peck (7)

Not “WWJD” but “Christlikeness” — Matthew 6:33 & the Sermon on the Mount

Is Such a Life Possible? (10)

“The secret of the easy yoke is simple. It is _____, _____, _____

Session 1 Meditation & Application

Matthew 11:29-30

1. How does “On the Spot” trying differ from “Off the Spot” training?
2. What is the Secret of the Easy Yoke? (p. 5, 8, 9, 10)
3. What does “Christlikeness” mean to me?

Session 2 - Making Theology of the Disciplines Practical

Book Chapter 2

Merely Not Sinning? (11-13) I John 3:9-10

Either I must _____ or _____. There is no 3rd possibility. (13)

How do we follow Jesus, not as a Pose or a constant Grinding Effort? (14)

Where is Our Practical Theology Today? (14-18) Ephesians 4:12

The Problem is... (18) Romans 12:1

Why the Interest Now & The Changing Protestant Church (19-24) II Corinthians 5:17

How is today’s church the same or different 34 years after Dallas published this book?

Liberal & Conservative Christians - mere mental assent to correct doctrine.

Taking Faith Seriously (24)

What do the disciplines promise to give our lives?

One Problem Still Remains — The Theological Basis for Spiritual Disciplines (25-26)

An informed theology for _____ people. (26)

The key insight - participation with Christ in the Kingdom comes only through... (26)

Meditation & Application I John 3:1-10

1. How would I describe and verify the seriousness with which I take my faith?
2. What in my theology of Spiritual Disciplines inhibits the way of my progress of Christlikeness?
3. What one discipline and scriptural focus will I practice today to simply follow Jesus?

Session 3 - Salvation is a Life

Book Chapter 3

“[In this section of the book] Willard reveals his clearest, most summative thinking, command of scripture, and logical consistency.” Gary Black, Jr., *The Theology of Dallas Willard*, p. 78-79

Religious Life or Daily Life? (28-30)

Looking closely at the great acts of Jesus and the practices that characterize them.

The focal point of the human personality and body to life in the easy yoke. (29)

Faith Removed from Daily Life (30-32)

Our _____ selves alive in the Kingdom of God (31)

More than “Mere Forgiveness”*, Salvation as Life (32-34) (*35, 37, 41)

A radical re-thinking of the Christian concept of Salvation (32)

Grace in salvation embodied in human _____ with Jesus in His easy yoke (33)

The Cross and the Indestructible Life it Reveals (34-36)

Mere vicarious suffering mistaken for God’s redemptive action (36)

The Resurrection & the Friends of Jesus (36-38) Colossians 1:13

Substituting _____ - redemption/regeneration - with mere forgiveness*, atonement (37)

Faith & Works (38-40) Philippians 3:20; Colossians 1:13

- 1.) The presence of new power within
- 2.) Transformation of character and personality
- 3.) Extra-human power over evil

The Vile Human Body (40-42) Romans 10:17

Salvation as a life is something we live in the body of a personality ruling for God

Meditation & Application **Mark 1:35**

1. What do I think my body is good for? And bad for?
2. Is my view of “Salvation” more than mere forgiveness? Why or why not?
3. What spiritual habit will I practice today to grace my body into Christlikeness?

Session 4 - Little Less Than a God

Book Chapter 4

“[Chapters 4-6] are devoted to an explanation, from the biblical viewpoint, of who we are and what spiritual life is.” (42)

Why are we here? *“Greatness & Dustiness”*

What “salvation” is depends upon what is being saved. What is the _____ and loss? (45)

The Biblical Perspective

Psalm 8:4-5 “A little less than a god”

Genesis 1:26 — *Imago Dei* (48, 49, 50, 51, 53) - “likeness”

- 1.) Govern the earth using P _____ C _____ V _____ A _____
- 2.) To live right with God & Others and _____ the earth with God

The Human Body as part of the Imago Dei - “Dust & Divinity” (52-55)

The potential power of “matter” — our bodies — comported by our c _____

The “flesh” - the natural physical substance of a person

In the fall in Eden, the power to rule over the earth with God was lost

“We are a little less than God only because our life is of such a nature that it can draw upon the _____ . (55)

Meditation & Application

Genesis 1:26-28 & Revelation 22:5

1. How does chapter three’s discussion of “salvation” influence my understanding of what is “saved”?
2. What does it mean for me to train now to rule with God for all eternity?
3. What does the “imago Dei” reveal to me? How does it impact my self-image and self-esteem?

Session 5 - The Nature of Life

Book Chapter 5

“The sayings of Jesus — not ethereal truth for religious people. Instead, mere observations about how life actually works. They say nothing about what we ought to do. They simply state how things are.”

To abandon ourselves to what lies beyond us — *Life: Inner power to live “beyond”* (56)

Governing at a great cost of blood and money without acceptable solution apart from a global return to the government of God - living under God among others in cooperation to fulfill our nature. (56-57)

“The amazing nature of life itself”

Life — The Power to Relate & Assimilate

Life: The ability to contact and selectively take in to support its own _____. (57)

Assimilating True Life

Eating, drinking, breathing, assimilating true life...not saying things we don't mean to get along. (59)

Individuality & Life

Not dehumanizing one person as _____, rather unrestrained like children, puppies, pandas (60)

Internal Complexity Growth

“To Him who has shall be given” Jesus Mark 4:25

Range of Human Life *Tools & Relationships* I John 3:2, *“We shall be like Him”*

Our astonishing power to use what is _____ ourselves...power begets more power (61)

Life Deformed *Evil from Spiritual Starvation* *“They do not know what they are doing.”*

Human Sin - equally terrifying phenomenon, a sad and depleted condition Eph. 2:1 (62-63)

What is Spirit?

Un-_____ personal _____ - like gravity (Sir Isaac Newton) - ordered personal power in God

The missing nutriment? *The relation to the spiritual Kingdom of God* (65) *“Tree of Life”*

Spiritual Life & Disciplines The Gospel of the Kingdom of God - New powers of cooperation

Method with No Quick Fix — The Bible & practices in cooperation with Grace...*little by little*

Meditation & Application

The Life of Peter - Matthew 26, John 21, Acts 1-2

1. Take a few minutes to consider what, and better yet, who gives you life?
2. What is/are the missing nutriment(s) in my spiritual life?
3. What about the life of Peter do I find most inspiring? Relatable? Insightful for my life?

Session 6 - Spiritual Life: The Body's Fulfillment

Book Chapter 6

The spiritual and the bodily are by no means opposed in human life — they are complementary. (75)
How? Interaction of our powers as bodily beings with God and His Kingdom. I Cor. 6:13 (76)

The Spiritual & Biological Together in Psychology

The physical human frame as created was designed for interaction with the spiritual realm and that this interaction can be resumed at the _____ of God...through the disciplines for the spiritual life. (77)

True Spirituality *Leading our lives before God, open, adventurous and reflective*

Alive to God in our embodied, socialized totality. (78)
...at play for “*spirituality is not a pious pose*” (L. S. Chafer) (79)

The Centrality of the Shadow Side

What Christians are missing is the wholesome liveliness springing from a balanced vitality within the freedom of God's loving rule. (80)

Temptation — Overcoming will be _____ if we are basically _____ in our lives. (81)

We are the Same as Our Body?

We do not have knowledge or experience that is free from involvement with our bodies. (82)
Personality is inseparable from the body. We are not mere physical mechanisms. (84)

The Body as a Battlefield

The body has a life of its own - body systems, food, sleep, sex to the point of mental illness.
In the full redemption of life by Christ, the embodied human personality is _____ and made _____ whole. (85)
After conversion - at peace with God, then a battle of spirit vs. flesh - tendencies long lived.
Through spiritual disciplines, the ways of God's _____ replace habits of sin embedded in our bodies. (86)

In Praise of the Flesh: A Stepping Stone to God and an Incorruptible Body (87-89)

Specific range of powers, potentially evil or righteous, from terrestrial to celestial - Phil. 3:21
“*Putting on incorruption*” I Corinthians 15:54; I Peter 1:4, Philippians 3:11

Sowing to the Spirit

Specific life _____ to spiritual growth or decay - “*yielding our members to holiness*” Rom. 6:19

Flesh — Not “Fallen” Human Nature *Adam & Eve before the Fall; Jesus post Resurrection*

Spiritual Disciplines in Full Redemption

God in regeneration renews our original capacity for divine interaction. Our body's substance is only transformed by daily _____ - spiritual disciplines to shape the embodied self. II Peter 1:2-11 (92)

Meditation and Application **I Peter 1:3-4**

1. What is my view of my flesh? How does my view of God interact with my body?
2. What is the role of spiritual disciplines in shaping my flesh?
3. What flesh molding discipline will I practice this week to shape one of my body's tendencies?

Session 7 - St. Paul’s Psychology of Redemption — The Example

Book Chapter 7

“We exercise unto godliness” I Timothy 4:7 = Life in the easy yoke of Jesus Christ

Paul, The Enigma Presented & Resolved

“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.” I Corinthians 11:1

We are blind to the information that should guide us to “grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 3:18) Talk of following Jesus, or Paul’s example, is emptied of practical meaning.

Disciplines in Jesus, Paul & the Early Church: Solitude, Fasting, Prayer & Serving Others

Paul followed Jesus by living as He lived. Activities that would train his whole personality to depend upon the risen Christ as Christ trained Himself to depend upon the Father. (106)

The Obstacle for Our Real Life Change

We talk ourselves out of the practices of Jesus & Paul as attitude or theological points (107-108)

Making Paul & Jesus Real to Modern Thinking - Dr. Paul, Psychologist Rom. 6-8; Col. 2-3; Gal. 2,3,5

The “School of Self-Denial” — To “die daily” (I. Cor. 15:30) is a real event in concrete existence

Today’s Failure: Inability to prove _____ guidance how to live like Jesus. (110)

Redemption - Progressive, real human & divine actions transforming _____ & _____ (111)

New Life in Christ - the whole _____ person in the social context (111)

Spirituality & Habit

Our body and its members are to be transformed into servants of God through the _____ of habits of sin by habits of righteousness. (114)

Holy Habits...How do we “Yield our members to righteousness”?

Stage 1: Baptized into Christ

Stage 2: “Reckon” a New Attitude

Stage 3: Submitting Our Members to Righteousness

Preparing the Body for Power to Live as Jesus Lived

Another Failure — _____ to the life of power Jesus & Paul knew so well (125)

Paul the Philosopher

As a result of Paul’s experience with Christ’s Kingdom, Paul recaptured the ancient, prophetic vision of the world being governed by the people of God — governing through the light and power resident in them as God’s earthly dwelling place. (127)

Meditation and Application Romans 6:1-14

1. Honestly, do I believe and live the actions & events of Jesus and Paul to know God’s power?
2. What does Stage 3 “Submitting my members” mean to me today, daily, now?
3. What spiritual discipline - Solitude, Fasting, Prayer, Serving - will I do this week to imitate Paul?

Session 8 - History and the Meaning of the Disciplines

Book Chapter 8

The “Good Life” Now

A right to do what they want, to pursue happiness, to feel good, to lead a productive life - self-contentment and material well being. (130)

Threshold of _____ to Christ — *“To hate one’s own life.”* (Luke 14:26) (131)

Rejection of Spiritual Disciplines

Protestantism refuted Christian salvation requiring disciplines for the spiritual life. (133)

Justification by faith *“struck at the root of monkery and mortification”*. (133)

Misunderstanding of Spiritual Disciplines

Fear, hatred of the material world, or manipulate or impress God & others. Self-flagellation. (134)

Jesus & Judaism — The “Sensible Ascetic” - Master of Life in the spirit.

When we look at Jesus - the disciplines have no value in themselves. The aim of the spiritual life — effective and full enjoyment of active _____ of God and humankind in all the daily rounds of normal existence. *“Practice what you are not good at.”* (138)

The History and Advance of Monasticism

Nothing has done more harm to sensible asceticism than monasticism. (139)

As the Roman Empire stumbled toward its end, people hungry for God took to the Egyptian desert as a refuge in which to find holiness and union with God. (140)

“Taking pains about taking pains” - a variety of _____. (144)

The Protestant Reaction against Spiritual Disciplines

The obsession with _____ and _____ of _____ as the only essential issue for the Christian’s concern simply would not permit the monastic system of Christianity to develop a pattern of spiritual disciplines that was biblical as well as psychological and spiritually sound. (145)

New life in Christ was replaced by forgiveness of sins for monks & Protestants. (147)

Monks — _____ sin or _____ forgiveness - *“out”* to not be *“of”*, not *“in”* the world.

Protestants — _____ disciplines as essential to new life in Christ.

What is our _____ in salvation? - We have not developed a coherent view. (148)

A New Look at Classical Asceticism & Spiritual Disciplines (148-151)

“Watch and pray.” (Mt. 26:41) Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119; Psalm 1

Suitable Means to Valuable Ends. (149)

To effectively lay hold of the _____ of _____ (134, 150)

What can we do? *“Taking appropriate measures”* (153) for *“unconscious readiness”* (154)

Activities of mind and body with our embodied personality

Meditation and Application

Matthew 24:36-46

1. How has my faith tradition and theology shaped my view of “spiritual disciplines”?
2. What is my part in salvation? Can I even ask that question without triggering theology alarms?
3. What am I not good at in emulating the life of Jesus? What disciplines can change this?

Session 9 - Some Main Disciplines for the Spiritual Life

Book Chapter 9

A Discipline for the Spiritual Life is...

_____ with the _____ of the Kingdom (157)

The Disciplines

Abstinence (160-175)

Engagement (176-190)

Solitude (160-162)

Study (176-177)

Silence (163-165)

Worship (177-179)

Fasting (166-168)

Celebration (179-181)

Frugality (168-170)

Service (181-184)

Chastity (170-172)

Prayer (184-186)

Secrecy (172-174)

Fellowship (186-187)

Sacrifice (174-175)

Confession (187-189)

Submission (189-190)

Are These Discipline Adequate? (190-191)

Which disciplines must be central to our lives will be determined by...

To help us receive the full _____ and become the _____ of
_____ that should emerge in the following of Him. (191)

Meditation and Application

II Peter 1:2-11

1. How do I assess the level of poise” in my life? (157) How does it reveal what Matthew 6:33 means?
2. What is/are my chief sin(s) that come(s) in the way of my relationship with God? See I Peter 2:11
3. What do I see in me when I look at the suggested 15 disciplines? Which one will I practice this week?

Session 10 - Is Poverty Spiritual?

Book Chapter 10

Should We Be Poor? Service to God would be better if _____. Money is _____. (193)

“All Nations Shall Come to Your Light” (217-218) [Chapter Summary with Quotes]

Poverty Aggrandized — Poverty as utter destitution is not spiritual _____. (217)

~ *The idealization of poverty is one of the most...* (195)

~ *A simple test: Own a great deal to give much more away or rid yourself of your money?* (198)

Poverty Romanticized — Poverty as non-possession with security of provision. (218)

~ Voluntary poverty is not _____. (218)

Poverty Im-materialized — Non-possession is not well suited to making provision for others

~ *Being poor is a one of the POOR ways to help the poor.* (198)

~ *Poverty itself is no recommendation to God and no means of* _____. (201)

Christian Stewardship - Models & Teachers embody and communicate the gospel of God’s government and prepare those in the “secular” areas as caretakers of the world’s good. (218)

~ *Our possessions vastly extend the _____ over which God rules through our faith.* (202)

~ *Jesus’ Teaching* — *Jesus refutes, from the vantage point of the Kingdom, human generalizations about who is certainly unblessable and who certainly “has it made.”* (208)

~ *Kingdom Well-Being* (208, 215, 216, 218) — *Rich or Poor: No _____ over each other* (208) extending *Respect & Honor to the Poor* (209-211)

The Church — Leading the way through charity, exhorting and advising public agencies. Show how to enter into full participation in the rule of God where they are to bring all nations to find a people who can form a world that is the unique dwelling place of The Immortal God. (218-219)

~ *Overarching biblical command - _____*. *The first act of love - _____*. (210)

~ *“New Eyes through the Cross”* (211) *without favoritism (James 2) associating with the poor in low-key and unassuming ways* (212-213) *and uniting the sacred and the secular.* (213-214)

~ *A inadequate vision of the Kingdom of God in Christian circles producing anemic faith.* (212)

~ *Kingdom perspective on human worth and well-being is the solution to the social problems of wealth and poverty in a new type of human being with the _____ of Christ into all areas of life.* (213)

~ *Wealth extends our _____ and our reign* (215) *by a “ _____ grace”.* (216)

Meditation and Application **Matthew 6:25-34, Philippians 4:11-13**

1. Do I consider poverty more spiritual than wealth in my theology and religious culture?
2. How do I see poor people, really see them? What does my attention and action reflect?
3. What stewardship of wealth and generosity has God placed in my reign of influence and how unassuming am I in using it for His Kingdom advance and the well-being of the poor?

Session 11 - The Disciplines and the Power Structures of the World
Book Chapter 11

[The Study Guide is being developed. You will receive the updated version prior to the session.]

[PLACE HOLDER]

Twenty “Mere” or “Merely” quotes

- * Mere Leaders - “The world can no longer be left to **mere** diplomats, politicians and business leaders. They have done the best they could, no doubt. But this is an age for spiritual heroes - a time for men and women to be heroic in faith and in spiritual character and power.” (SD, xvii)
- * Mere Wish - “The words of Jesus in Matthew 11:29-30 present an alternative to the desolation of life lived apart from God. Yet, in all honesty, most Christians probably find both Jesus’ statement and its reiteration by the author of I John 5:3 to be more an expression of a hope or even a **mere** wish than a statement about the substance of their lives. To many, Jesus’ words are frankly bewildering.” (SD, 2)
- * Mere Ideal - “Many Christians cannot even believe he actually intended for us to carry them out. What is the result? His teachings are treated as a **mere** ideal, one that we may better ourselves by aiming for but know we are bound to fall glaringly short of.” (SD, 2)
- * Mere Mental Assent - “Most conservatives by the early seventies generally accepted that being a Christian had nothing essentially to do with actually following or being like Jesus. It was readily admitted that most Christians did not really follow him and were not really like him. ‘Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven’ became a popular bumper sticker. The only absolute requirement for being a Christian was that one believe the proper things about Jesus. The doctrinal struggle of many centuries had transformed saving faith into **mere** mental assent to correct doctrine. (SD 22-23)
- * Mere Want - “We’ve all heard of ‘cheap grace’. But ‘cheap grace’ as a concept didn’t just come **merely** from our wanting to have God’s mercy and bounty at bargain basement prices. I believe that the misunderstanding of the spiritual disciplines’ place in life has been responsible for Protestantism’s adopting, ‘cheap grace’ as the dominant mode of its recent existence.” (SD, 25)
- * Mere Forgiveness - “The concept that has restricted the Christian idea of salvation to **mere** forgiveness of sins. Yet it is so much more. Salvation as conceived today is far removed from what it was in the beginning of Christianity and only by correcting it can God’s grace in salvation be returned to the concrete, embodied existence of our human personalities walking with Jesus in his easy yoke.” (SD, 33)
- * Mere Forgiveness (continued) “The ‘hands on’ viewpoint was replaced with another. The church’s understanding of salvation then slowly narrowed down to a **mere** forgiveness leading to heaven beyond this life. And Christ’s death came to be regarded as only the merit supplying means to that forgiveness, not as the point where his life was most fully displayed and triumphant, forever breaking the power of sin over concrete human existence.” (SD, 36-37)

- * Mere Standing - “How can this vile, dangerous thing [the body] possibly be of benefit in realizing our deliverance? The answer, of course, is that it cannot if we take it **merely** to be what we find it to be in this world set against God. And certainly it does not contain in itself alone the resources of redemption. But still, I must insist that it was not made to be what we find it to be in its alienation from God. The human body was made to be the vehicle of human personality ruling the earth for God and through His power.” (SD, 42)
- * Mere Governance - “Governance by a person, whether over other people or animals, is at its best when the outcome is harmony, understanding, and love, and at its best then the governed experience that ‘rule’ as **merely** doing what they would want to do anyway.” (SD, 50)
- * Mere Instruments - “The astonishing human power to use what is beyond ourselves is one of the main clues to who and what we are. We extend our powers over the earth and its inhabitants to a degree both awe-inspiring and terrifying promising to heal the agony of human history or threatening utterly to destroy the planet. The more power we get, the more power we can get - for good or evil. We not only make ‘tools’ to extend our power and life, but we also live in relationships of such vast and pervasive effect on ourselves and the cosmos as to far transcend the category of **mere** instrumentality. Those relationships enter into the very substance of our life. They are the most powerful of our cultural and social relations and structures, - the artistic, the commercial the scientific, and the military - and they are the ones seen in action in the major phases of human society and history.” (SD, 61)
- * Mere Philosophy - “It is extremely important for us to realize that what we are discussing here is not **mere** matter of fine philosophical speculation or psychological theory. It deeply concerns Christian practice and its effects upon others.” (SD, 80)
- * Mere Flesh - “It is now time to put in a good word for flesh. ‘Flesh’ in its biblical usage seldom means the **mere** physical substance that makes up the parts of the body. The term is sometimes used as the equivalent of ‘meat’. But flesh is generally spoken of in the Bible as something active, a specific power or range of powers that is embodied in a body of a specific type, able or likely to do only certain kinds of things.” (SD, 86-87)
 - The body we are commanded to ‘put off’ could not be the **mere** natural body of our fleshly existence, since we cannot put it off - short of suicide. So far as we can tell, the first human beings had fleshly bodies before they sinned, and hence the flesh is not the same thing as fallen human nature.” (SD, 90-91)
- * Mere Attitude or Arrangement - “Our age fails to understand that Paul’s teachings about salvation are unavoidably psychological but note the less theological because of that. This has turned his most brilliant and profound passages - Romans 6-8, Colossians 2-3, Galatians 2,3,5 - into a quagmire of theological speculation or into vaguely inspiring exhortation with no power of practical guidance. We are then forced to try capturing Paul’s thoughts and experience in

abstract theological ideas **merely** about God’s attitude toward us or about some arrangement God has made in heaven.” (SD, 113)

- * Mere Mechanical - “The condition of life in God that we seek is not to be thought of as a **merely** mechanical result. It is a widespread fallacy that careful and thorough preparation precludes freedom, spontaneity, and personal interaction. In fact the very person best prepared for any situation is the one who experiences the greatest freedom and spontaneity in it. The spiritual life is a life of interaction with a person God, and it is pure delusion to suppose that it can be carried on sloppily. The will to do His will can only be carried into reality as we take measures to be ready and able to meet and draw upon Him in our actions.” (SD, 152-153)
- * Mere Abstract (no) - “The level of this deadly ‘readiness’ to do evil in all of its forms is variable from individual to individual, but it is very high in almost everyone. It is no **mere** abstract possibility but a genuine tendency, constantly at work.” (226)
- * Merely Decent Lives - “The tyrants, satanic forces, and oppressive practices of this world play upon our ‘**merely** decent’ lives as a master organist dominates his or her instrument but is wholly powerless without it.” (234)
- * Mere Poetry (not) - “But in our distorted judgment about the nature of life, we have tried to turn the Beatitudes into **mere** poetry, rather than treating them as realistic announcements about how things are.” (236)
- * Merely Testifies - “I believe that the coming rule of God is to be a government by grace and truth mediated through personalities mature in Christ. It will not be by force, but by the power of truth presented in overwhelming love. Our inability to conceive of it other than by force **merely** testifies to our obsession with human means for controlling other people.” (238)
- * Mere Progressive Advance - “But both human nature and the biblical record suggest to me that the coming government of God, which will displace the power structures of the present world, will not come by any **mere** progressive advancement of humankind in general. A distinct reentry of the person of Christ into world history is required to complete the world.” (238)
- * Mere Dream - “Justice can not prevail until there are enough people properly equipped with Christ’s character and power, in something like the Mosaic distribution throughout society, who cooperatively and under God constantly see to it that the good is secured and that the right is done. Is this possible? I don’t believe it’s a **mere** dream or a desperate delusion, once we understand how the disciplines mesh with grace, on the one hand, and embodied human personality on the other.” (241)

Jesus College Postscript

Thank you and God bless you for venturing further up, further in the Kingdom Among Us. We trust you have had a fresh hearing of Jesus. May your quietly transforming, conversational friendship with God immersed in the Trinitarian community be pervaded with joy, relaxed with shalom, and filled with agape, as you practice and become the kind of apprentice of Jesus who willfully seeks the good of God, others and yourself.

For more resources to strengthen your life in the easy yoke with Jesus through Dallas Willard’s wise, warm, winsome teaching:

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The Study Guide work was prepared by Doug Webster of Jesus College. We welcome your comments, suggestions and ideas on how we might better help you strengthen your apprenticeship with Jesus in the With-God life.

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