

"Spirit of the Disciplines" Series  
"Spiritual Disciplines"  
Dallas Willard - Session 3 of 3

*Scribe's Comments - The session was transcribed from the recording in good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold**, and underline disclose the scribe's commentary and cross-references other Dallas Willard teachings*



**Spiritual Disciplines**

[47:08]

[["Spirit of the Disciplines" Series audio links](#)]

- 1.) ["Changed Lives - Is it real?"](#)
- 2.) ["The Sermon on the Mount"](#)
- 3.) ["Spiritual Disciplines"](#)

Give you a perspective to help you get a hold of your own life.

\* Handout on "Hurry"

I believe it is helpful for most of us to look this diagram. The thing that troubles us is the present. No one has found an answer to live elsewhere than the present. It is hard to drain the swamp when you have the alligators snapping at you. It is helpful to get a perspective. You need to look at this and say, **"What is running my life?"**

**Job** - For many of us, our job is running our life - What you are paid to do. If you allow your life to shrink down in that, your life is at the mercy at the job. Sometimes your job may be your family. Think of your job in the context of your ministry...and this is not just for those in ministry.

**Ministry** - A full time job in ministry is not a good thing. Every person's calling is to ministry the Kingdom of God. Your part in God's kingdom is what God has intended for you. Sit down and ask, "What is my ministry?"

**Work** - Larger than that because the Kingdom of God is to live and to count that God will work with. Your work consists of all the enduring value you will produce in your lifetime.

\* Children, Buildings, Art, Knowledge, Teaching

It really is not ministry but there might be some confluence between your work and your ministry.

**Life** - You without regard to your work, ministry or job.

That may be the hardest part for you to think about but that is the part God is most interested in. God is more interested in your life than He is in your ministry, ore interested in your lief than your job, more interested in

you than your work. What God gets out of your life is the person you become. Which is pretty much what you get out of your life, too.

Those of us who are most concerned about the work of the Lord and devoted to it, most need to hear this. You see people get in all kinds of problems. "Falling" always means one thing for a minister. You never hear of a minister who has fallen because he was vain. Your life is just you. God brought you into this world at this time and this place so you can be the salt of the Earth and the light of the world where you are. You are not going to do that by your job, ministry or work. You are going to do that by who you are. That's what God is most interested in.

## **The Disciplines**

[7:00]

...designed to change you at the level of who you are. Once you get the basic idea, you'll work your way through to get an understanding.

I'm going to stay on Abstinence - The "Catholic side - Monkish"

~ **Solitude** - The most fundamental for growth in our spiritual life.

We go alone for long periods of time. We learn how to be alone. The point of solitude is precisely do nothing. The aim is not to catch up on your reading, listen to sermons. Where you rediscover your own soul. That's no simple thing.

\* Prodigal Son - "*He came to himself.*"

That's what solitude is for - it is to come to yourself. Once you get to yourself, God might meet you there. We need to make arrangements for it.

The need for solitude in the past was often naturally fulfilled, but now now. Think of how ways people can get at you now that they could not get at you 75 years ago. You have to make a point of solitude.

Jesus spent a lot of time in solitude. You can pray and do other things but you must not miss the element of just being alone.

The answer to busyness is solitude. If you practice solitude, you learn there is no reason to hurry. You learn the things you should not be doing.

Solitude is the answer to loneliness because you discover you are never alone.

It occurred to me once, if Jesus needs 40 days in the wilderness, I might use one or two. That was a big change in my life. I began to look at Jesus and his practices.

\* John Ortberg *The Life you Always Wanted*

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"Dallas for Dummies" (p. 11)  
Extended Solitude Plan (p. 95)  
Begin your preparation the night before.

Leave lots of room for rest.

\* Elijah running from Jezebel. He out ran the chariot and went to sleep  
An angel woke him up and fed him then he slept again.

Last time I looked the *Law of the Sabbath* is still on the books.  
1/7 of your time you shall do no labor. Rest!

Solitude is a fundamental discipline where we turn loose of the world. We decide to accept our place without continuing our struggle before God. We lay it down. You will rarely find anyone who has made much progress in one way or another who has not practiced solitude. Very often it includes scripture.

Solitude is like all of the disciplines, if you don't need them, don't use them.

1.) Disciplines are like medicine. They are there to help a condition of soul which we'd be better without. If you able to walk free of the claims of people around you obsessing you, driving you, you may not need much solitude. Jesus practiced less solitude as He completed His mission, more in the way of service.

2.) Disciplines are not Laws. They have nothing to do with merit. They are wisdom. There is a difference between being dumb and being sinful. A lot that bothers us are "weights" (Hebrews 12) different from the sins. Disciplines often work in the area of our life that is not a sin but is not wise.

?.) How much solitude? Be careful, not too ambitious to begin.  
Don't be a hero with any discipline.

## ~ Fasting

Fasting sets us free from food and to teach us the absolute sufficiency of God to our bodily and whole personality needs. Fasting is feasting on the reality of God.

**Matthew 6** - "Don't look miserable when you fast."

Many people think, "I will be miserable." You will not be miserable when you fast.

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Jesus was not in the wilderness to be tempted by Satan because He was weaker there. That was the place of His strength.

We learn to sustain and continue to be strong and good even when we don't get what we want. That will take care of most of the anger in your life. Anger is a response to frustration of the will. You never get angry unless your will is crossed. No matter how trivial, you will get angry unless you are trained. You won't get what you want. What you want is different from what is right. You can pursue what is right on a basis other than what you want. You can be set free to stand for righteousness without become hateful.

Fasting frees us up from the round of food and the society that it is built into. We are trained to respond to that very deeply. For so many of us, our lives are a constant round of food. Learn how to not eat for 1,2 or 3 days. Simply drop it and notice how your life changes.

~ **Silence**

[20:35]

Two dimensions:

- 1.) Getting away from racket, noise.
- 2.) Not talking. We learn the subtleties of that.

\* Being silent together is a wonderful experience - Couples, Retreats

The results are overwhelming for people.

*"Silence is complete solitude."* Henry Nouwen

Be careful in silence and solitude, you will have withdrawals. You'll settle into it. When you are in silence you feel the breath of eternity blowing on your face. God is with you and you discover the substance of your own soul.

When you don't talk, you lay down the burden of manning the facades. So much of our talking is arranging how we appear. Solitude is a good place to start because you are already out of that context.

\* Testimony from a Japanese young woman (p. 165 *S of the D*)

She has stepped out of the space of appearance. She becomes less skeptical, less judgmental. When we are with others in silence, we pay attention to them in completely different ways.

A sub-discipline of Silence is not having the last word. It is a good place to begin. You reran in from the having the last word and you notice people continue to survive.

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These will retrain the inner person. The retraining in all of these disciplines have a particular point.

~ **Secrecy**

[26:00]

- Not allowing your good deeds to be known.

The disciplines are not in the area of wrong & right. There's nothing wrong with eating, speaking, music. The point is not there is nothing wrong, the point is we want to retrain the inner self. All of the disciplines are designed to do that.

You have looked at your life as a whole. You have begun to take disciplines to take control of your time. Gradually you begin to see a shift in your overall orientation. Here's what happens...

From an improper subordination - Body, Soul, Spirit, God last [27:10]

"Idolatry" - God is the servant of the whole system

Many people are into idolatry in the form of Christianity. They regard God as their servant. That is a natural approach when I take my body first, then I serve the overall needs of the personality.

After the disciplines have done their work, God is first. We love God with all our heart, mind, soul & strength and our neighbor as ourselves. Out of that comes a different life in which the human spirit is subordinate to God in contact through faith in Jesus Christ. "You through Him who do believe in God." (Peter)

Our soul, mind & emotions into subordination to God including our body in the social environment to our soul.

Before redemption, our body, not our God is running, or ruining our life.

**Romans 1** - Perfect description of how that works out - the degeneration of human life. Not only do people do wrong, they give approval of others who do so. The body is governed by the three things in the world: Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the Eyes and Pride of Life.

Life is pervaded by fear, anger & pride - the inner character of the bad tree that brings forth bad fruit.

When we reverse that, we change the inner character of the tree and it becomes a good tree and good fruit naturally flows from it.

That's what we bring when we parch the Kingdom of God and introduce our people into the practice the disciplines of the inner life. If what we are doing is working, we don't need that.

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If I don't do this, will I go to Heaven when I die?

God will permit into Heaven who, in His considered opinion, can stand it.  
The fires of Heaven may be hotter than the fires of hell.

Not just - "Am I going to make the cut?"

What if I find out I don't want to be there because of who I have become?

**The Gospel of Jesus Christ**

[32:10]

*"Repent, for the Kingdom of the Heavens is now available."* (Matt. 4:17)

Repent - think about how you have been thinking in light of this new fact.  
The Kingdom of the Heavens is now available and you no longer have to run your own kingdom. That's good news! You can bring your kingdom into the Kingdom of God. Wonderful news!

**This works!**

[33:05]

If you would like to test the reality, it is open and available for testing by anyone, who with faith in Christ, will step into the disciplines of the spiritual life and begin to put them into practice. If you do that, you will know the reality of it.

\* Closing Letter - Email from a reader of *S of the D*

[34:00]

*"I suddenly had the power to shed off certain sin patterns that had been defeating me for years."*

If you have something you'd like to change and if you'd like to enter into the reality of the things that Jesus taught and enter the reality of the Great Commission, it is yours for the taking. It is a gift of Christ.

*~ ~ ~ End of Teaching @ 35:40 ~ ~ ~*

**Q & A**

**Q** - Difficulty experience fasting.

**A** - 36:05 - Very common when you're beginning to learn to fast your body is defending itself. Push back but don't push hard. Your body is learning something. Your body has a knowledge of its own. When we begin to fast, we learn what it knows. Pray specifically for relief from your headache. Drink plenty of water. Your body is yelling,

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*"No! I am your Lord and Master. You feed me!"*

Don't press, don't try real hard. Back out and learn. Same thing with solitude. Things can get a little jittery in solitude. Don't force it.

**Q** - 37:45 - Look to change ourselves.

**A** - 38:10 - That's the way we change. "Put off the old person" is something for me to do. I don't do it alone.

- Galatians 5, *"They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof."*

You don't have enough hands to crucify yourself.

- Romans 8:13, *"You through the Spirit"*. That's where you get the extra hand. We are not on this trip by ourselves. This is fundamental. *"Without me you can do nothing"* but remember, *"If you do nothing, it will be without me."* Watch people who do nothing and see how far they get. It is not for merit. If you go into a discipline and it does not work, you have not sinned. Don't get guilt. Just say, this is something I need to learn.

~ Prayer - I was too worried if God was going to answer it. I had to come to the place where I didn't care if God answered, I was just committed to prayer. You have to pray, fast until you get the habit of praying, fasting. You practice it until you don't think about it. Same with exercise.

**Q** - [41:20] - To practice discipline, you have to have discipline?

**A** - [41:35] - The disciplines are not the answer to everything. You do have to be in a position to exercise discipline. Many people need to hear the gospel, ministry, friendship, instruction, and some need deliverance.

The formula - *"A discipline is something in my power which I do to enable me to do what I can not do by direct effort."*

We find something *"in my power"*. With faith in Christ, we act there. Many people can not start. This is why I say "solitude" is the most fundamental discipline. Solitude is the place where you begin to be able to do what you can not do even in the way of discipline. Some can't even do that.

Disciplines are not the answer to every problem. Prayer is not the answer to every problem. The biggest problem with disciplines is the lack of understanding. When people come to the point when you do them without thinking about them, they began to be really powerful. Then you begin to exercise that kind of life in which the Kingdom of God settles on you. You do what is right without thinking about it.

**Q** - [43:50] - Inaudible

**A** - [44:15] - We will do them only if we believe they are essential to bring us to the place we want to be. I have emphasized "Intention" to obey Christ.

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For many people, disciplines have no place, because that is not a living intention in their life.

*"Very few people have any sense that obedience to Christ has the least essential value for their lives."* *The Divine Conspiracy* opening.

If that's not a value, what's the point of doing disciplines?

Disciplines are for disciples who believe the most important thing is to learn to do what Jesus said. People who believe they have found the pearl of great price, the field of treasure and they will sell everything and buy it. They will find the time. The first step always involves failure. Then you learn as you go.

What is the opposite? Drifting through life.

*What are we doing in life?* is the final challenge.

*What are we hear for?*

*What is good for us?*

All the things in our Christian culture are taking us away from us. Many people walk away saying, *"I don't think I'm interested."*

If we look at the teachings of Christ and faithful to Christ, I don't think they lead in that direction.

We are trained to say, *"Well, I'll get to Heaven."* We sit on the highway of life waiting with our hood up waiting for the Heavenly AAA to be take us out.

It's not my picture of the quotation we started with:

*"The glory of God is a human being fully alive."* Saint Irenaeus

"Fully alive" means we have learned to live in the Kingdom of God in the goodness of the rightness of all the things Jesus taught.

~ ~ ~ **End Q & A @ 47:07** ~ ~ ~

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