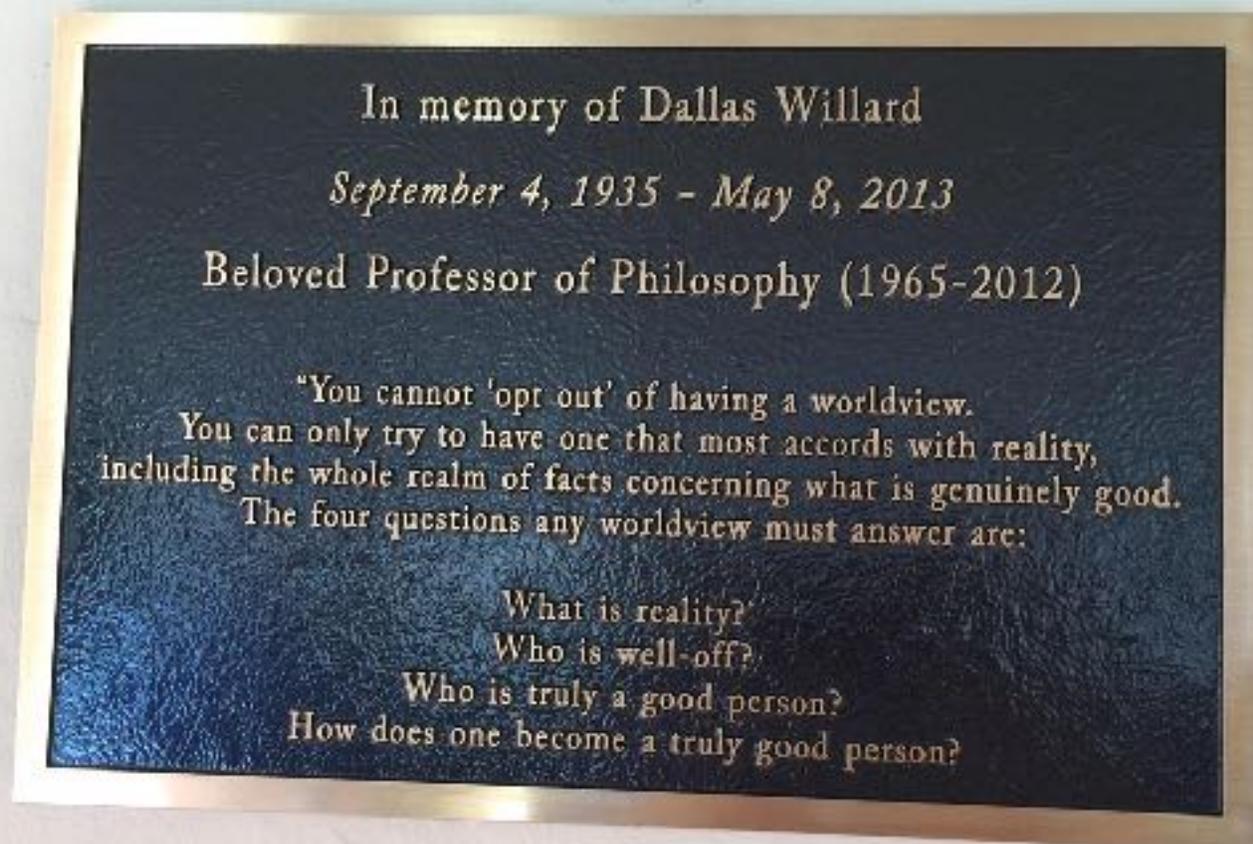


"Life's Four Big Questions"
Answered by Dallas Willard



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Scribe's Comments - *These sessions were transcribed from the recordings with good-faith effort but it is not verbatim. The **bold** and underline are headers & highlights added by the scribe. [Brackets] cross-reference other Dallas Willard teachings.*

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The Divine Conspiracy Lecture #4 (4:30) [1:27:50-1:32:20]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT1phEMrS7E>

#1 - What is Reality?

Knowledge and truth help us come to terms with reality. Being Christ's people means we affirm the reality of the Kingdom of God. What is reality?
Answer - **God and everything that comes from His hand.**

#2 - Who is well off? Who has the good life? Who is Blessed?

Answer - Anyone alive in the Kingdom of God.

What about the poor? He said Blessed are the poor, for they too can have the Kingdom of God. Blessed are the poor in spirit, people who have no religion going for them. They are poor in spirit like His apostles. He chose people like that to make His messengers to the world. It is certainly because He did not want anyone to take a human fix from the world. He wanted people to understand the cure for the world is life in the Kingdom of God.

#3 - Who is a really Good Person?

Answer - Anyone permeated with agape love

Love is comes forward out of the nature of God, brought to human beings, Christ shows you how to realize it, what it is and then finally...

#4 - How do you become a really good person?

Answer - Becoming a disciple of Jesus

Jesus answers each of these far superior than anyone else. Just compare.

* Peter, "To whom shall we go?" (That is a real question isn't it.)

People in LA, Manilla, Bombay have the exact same questions.

How does Christ compare to Krishna? Buddha? L. Ron Hubbard?

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

[NOTE: Also in "The Divine Conspiracy" Lectures - Search for "Well Off" and "Good Person" for teaching on the Sermon on the Mount for answers to these four questions]

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The Divine Conspiracy Lecture #7 (16:30)

[00 - 16:30]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxkaVGVhkuA>

1. What is reality? - God & His Kingdom. Everything under that is real. You depart from that and you become increasingly less real.

2. Who is well off? "Blessed" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, Chapter 4)

Will mean peace and not peace if you understand where well being lies and it lies in the Kingdom of God . The good life is found in God not somewhere else. Human beings worry if well being lies somewhere else. **We people in ministry often spend a lot of time worrying about if we're in the right place.**

* Gen. 28:12 - Jacob's Ladder.

"God is in this place and I did not know it."

Imagine angels ascending & descending on you. It is very important to understand God is where we are. We don't need to be someplace else. We do not have to say, *"Who will ascend into Heaven to bring Him down?"*

"The word is nigh thee. It is in your mouth. It is the word of faith that we preach."

God is where you are. Where you are is the doorway to Heaven. Remember Heaven does not mean what happens after you die. Heaven means the presence of God, the Kingdom of God is here. It does not matter what you are, who you are, what you've got for you, against you. Answers the driving question, "Am I in the right place for God's will?"

That's the lesson of **The Beatitudes** - You only understand the gospel of the Kingdom of God if there is no limit to whom you can go and say, "Blessed."

[2 Contexts: Humans healed by Jesus; Spiritual presence of the Kingdom]

* Write your own Beatitudes - "Blessed are the _____ ."

Put somebody in the human scale is thought to nothing. Nobody. Someone who is not blessed. **Remember, they are not blessed because they are in the condition they are in, they are blessed because the Kingdom is available to them.**

* Blessed are the...unemployed, the pregnant too many times; those who can't get pregnant, the fat...

The blessing is not in the condition it is in the Kingdom.

If you have trouble going to people who are considered un-blessable and pronouncing their blessing in the Kingdom, then you have not got the message of the Kingdom yet. The message of the Kingdom is precisely "All those human beings regarded as un-blessable are not un-blessable if they

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enter into the Kingdom. If they don't that's another story because the Beatitudes are all about the kingdom and entering into the Kingdom.

That is a radical message and it will upset most churches if you preach it. This message will break down the social barriers, the pecking orders that most people in our churches assume to be valid. Who are the "nobodies" in our church and how do they get treated? Does Jesus mean treat them all the same?

Read Chapter 4 of *The Divine Conspiracy*. **"Who is well off?"** is fundamental to human life. We are responsible for our lives. We make choices. We may feel shut out from God because we are among the un-blessable. That is where we have to understand what is contained in the phrase, "Whosoever will may come."

The Sermon on the Mount deals with the two central questions:

Who is well off? and Who is a really good person?

3. Who is a really good person?

[10:25]

"Unless your righteousness exceeds the Scribes and Pharisees..."

Matthew 5:20

"Righteousness" (diakosune) = what makes you a really good person (agape is goodness) [NT Wright defines 'diakousune' as "Covenant Justice"]

Entering into an engagement in your life and practice with the Kingdom of the Heavens. Jewish experience of Heaven and God. God appeared in the atmosphere - the "Heavens" - 1st Heaven = the atmosphere all the way to the ground. Entering into the Kingdom of the Heavens means to engage with what God is doing in the world around us.

Unless you get out of the Scribes and Pharisee mode and come to a different level of goodness, you will not be in interactive relationship with the Kingdom of the Heavens.

3 "Unless" passages describe what it means to enter Kingdom of God:

1. John 3:5 - Unless you are born again
2. Mt. 18 - Unless you repent and become like a child
3. Mt. 5:20 - Unless you exceed Pharisees righteousness

What is Jesus saying in Matthew 5:20 and following?

What is the righteousness of the Scribes & the Pharisees?

The Righteousness of the Deed - Mostly what one did not do. *"Shall not."*

The commands led to a system of righteousness which referred to what you did. "To go beyond the righteousness of the Scribes & Pharisees" means to locate your righteousness in something other than what you do.

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- * A thief is not just someone who steals. A Thief is someone who would steal if the situation were right. There is a great difference of the soul of a person who would steal if the situation is right compared to someone who would never steal no matter what the situation was. One can have the soul of a thief, murderer or adulterer and never do it. Perhaps because of the fear of what would happen if they did. It is better not to do it.

Jesus is saying unless you get beyond just *not* doing it, you're not going to be in interaction with the Kingdom of God. If you want to interact with the Kingdom of God, you have to move to a different level - your thoughts, feelings, character, habitual way you live in your body and your world.

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

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The Divine Conspiracy Lecture Lecture #6 (4:20) [17:50-22:10]
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upDQ6uk34u4>

The Great Life Questions

1. What is reality?
2. Who is well off?
3. Who is a good person?
4. How do you get to be a good person?

This is a framework for genuine witnessing for Christ. If you want to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, bring these questions to the minds of people. That's what all the philosophers and thinkers have tried to answer through the ages. That's what we want to keep before the people we teach in our fellowship and that's what we want to bring to the people not in our fellowship in the witness of the Kingdom.

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

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Worldview (UCLA Veritas) (8:00) [14:50-20:50]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6hwsG7AUZ0>

1. What is the Nature of Reality?

- What counts as knowledge of Reality? Knowledge enables us to negotiate reality.

"Reality" is often what you run into when you're wrong.

* Running out of gas = reality

Are human beings just a physical organism?

Are thought, will, artistic genius, aspiration, etc. just chemistry?

2. Who is well off? [Who is "Blessed"? "Wealthy?" "Successful"?]

"Blessedness" - The Good Life

Can you still be well off if you have cancer? Don't have enough money?

A profound world view question that reflects itself in nearly everything that we do.

3. Who is a "really good" person? [16:50]

Get a fight from someone if you question if they're a "good person".

Can discuss "well off" but don't try a person's "goodness".

One of the deepest world view questions, "*Am I a good person?*"

* "I am a stinker!" Or, "Joe thinks I'm a stinker!"

Blood pressure goes up.

4. How do you get to be a good person?

5. What counts as knowledge? [18:30]

All teaching institutions and teachers give answers to these questions.

There never has been anyone more influential in teaching answers to these questions than Jesus. He's not the only one - Plato, Buddha, Freud, UCLA.

In the university setting the dominating world view is expressed through what is accepted as research and what counts as possible knowledge.

Is there a single course of studies on UCLA, USC, Berkeley that you're engaged in that regards knowledge of God as a part of the subject matter? Where your grade might be determined by something you had to say about God? That is the sociological reality.

People who are caught up in the sociological wave will hear it all and dismiss it. To them it's just like the dinosaur. I want to take the time to insist that you are in a system which teaches a worldview without responsibly defending it.

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Jesus Worldview (2:00)

[25:25-27:25]

Jesus has an answer to these questions. We ought to think Jesus was halfway smart. After all He is the single most influential person in history. He got that way by being able to do a lot of stuff. If he didn't get that way by doing a lot of stuff, you'll have to explain how he got that way.

1. Reality is God and his activities [Kingdom] including the natural world (physical, social.)
2. The person who is well off has a life deriving from God and His Kingdom. [Blessed]
* Put that next to "Go to Sears and get the good life at a good price."
3. A Good Person is the person pervaded with God's agape love.
4. You become a good person by becoming an apprentice of Jesus Christ.

That's a worldview and that competes with a worldview from UCLA, USC, Harvard. You have a world view that is taught by inflection, action, model, and so on. If you get crosswise of that, you will soon find out you are not acceptable. It's very powerful. It's a sociological reality.

~ ~ ~ **End of Section** ~ ~ ~

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Streams in the Desert (Session 1) (21:40)

[25:00-46:40]

Free Download Audio Source

<https://christianaudio.com/church-staff-retreat-2004-dallas-willard-audiobook-download>

I. What is the nature of reality?

Sounds so abstract, so philosophical. But it's always the basic question. Always the issue with idolatry. Who is supreme? What is ultimate?

The primary message we have to confront today is the physical universe is ultimate reality. Spiritual reality is not often thought of as a subject of knowledge and genuine interaction but rather, something off to the side. There is a long sustained effort to place it there.

* John Dewey, *The Common Faith* - Spiritual reality is merely a quality of physical or social reality, not itself an ultimate principle itself.

* *Humanist Manifesto* - Redefine spirituality in a way that is a mere function of human life, not something ultimate in itself.

Psalm 46 is not talking about that. Psalm 46 is talking about spiritual reality as if it were an ultimate and irreducible reality from which everything else came.

The problem is in all of our areas of professional and academic competence, spiritual reality does not play a part. A PhD in any area I think in any school in the country, you'll find God has nothing to do with the subject matter. That's a point we have to address because as leaders in our congregations, we have a different story to tell.

The most important thing I have to say to you this evening - **We have to understand this is an issue of what counts as knowledge. We have to assert the teachings of Jesus as knowledge of reality.** That's one of the hardest things to do today.

Reality is what you're going to have to deal with. I will say to my students reality is what you run into when you're wrong. It's quite unyielding. The bitterness of truth is that it doesn't care what you think or want. Reality is the same way.

As we bring the Word of Christ and that teaching tradition of a God who is overall, we have to be sure that we present that as a body of knowledge, not as mere tradition, or mere faith in some sense short of knowledge.

I am going slow because this is tough.

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Knowledge (def.) "You have knowledge of something if you are able to present it as it is on an appropriate basis of thought and experience."

Knowledge includes the Bible & Christian tradition. There are a lot of things in the Christian tradition that is not knowledge. But there is a solid core of the creedal tradition of the Christian Church that constitutes a body of knowledge.

I think it is the single most important thing that we have to do in taking care of ourselves and watching our teaching. We understand and present the reality of God, the Trinitarian reality - God in Himself, a wonderful loving community creating a world and me in that world.

"A very present help in time of all trouble" (Psalm 46) I don't just mean I turn to Him not just in times of trouble but I turn to Him at all times. He is the primary atmosphere in which I live. That's crucial for us in our churches.

My experience - the primary battle - inability to believe in the reality of God.

We have placed so much emphasis on "profession" in our religion often for cultural and historical reasons that we often can not distinguish between professing something and actually believing it. We need to bring people to a place where they really do believe in God, really do believe that Jesus made clear what God is and made Him accessible, *"Through Him who believe in God."* **I Peter 1:21**

~ II. *Who is well off?*

A function of the nature of reality. This is what people pursue:

- Does our well being reside in good reputation, money, good health?

Jesus talked about this (Luke 6): *"Woe be to you that are rich."*

Not because there is something sinful about being rich. If you put your confidence in that, you're headed for trouble.

Blessed are the poor. Not because there is something glorious about being poor. It's not a good condition.

The blessing is not in the condition but in the Kingdom.

Q - What is the Kingdom? God in action.

What is well being that we bring to ourselves and others?

It is living in the action of God.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?"

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What are you seeking? You're not seeking the millennium or some political arrangement. You're seeking to be involved in what God is doing. God's kingdom is what God is doing. It's an everlasting kingdom. It's going to be around forever. **We are invited to count on that reality and base our life on it and become involved in it.** Whatever situation we are facing in life day by day or over the long haul, **our well being is a matter of being alive in the Kingdom of God and learning to act on it.** Jesus said if you do that, everything else will be added to it.

Joshua 1:8 - That's talking about finding the Kingdom of God. God's law is God's ways.

How do you seek it? How would you know if you found it?

Most people in our religious culture think, "I'm trying to get to heaven when I die." It's not about heaven when you die. That'll take care of itself? It's about knowing life now in the reality of God.

~ III. *Who is a really good person?*

Who is good and who is not has many claims and is often very political.

Jesus says a really good person is one who is pervaded by agape love - body, soul, spirit, character, all organized around agape love.

Agape Love is the intention to do the things that are good for the people that are loved. Love is intention for good.

* I love chocolate cake - I don't intend the good for it. I want to eat it.

We dwell in it, we learn it. That kind of love comes from being loved. We love Him because He first loved us. That goes all the way back up to the top. **The ultimate reality is at the center of the universe is a God of love not just that He loves me but He is love.**

~ IV. *How do I become a really good person?*

Answer - Being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Learning from Him how to live in the Kingdom of God from the abundant resources of His Kingdom and His nature and that releases you from all of the burdens of running your own kingdom. [37:25]

That's where our trouble comes from - running our own kingdom. We have to lay it down or we have all these other problems.

Psalm 46 - *"God is our present strength, a very present help in time of trouble."*

* Sunday School answer - "What is a lie?" "An abomination to God...and a very present help in time of trouble."

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* Children Lying - Children learn young. They know it is a way of managing to stay alive. We grow up and still have the same project. When we come to Jesus He has to help us change those habits.

"Don't lie one to another seeing you have laid aside the old person with his deeds." (Colossians 3)

We learn that by accepting Christ and His teaching into our lives in such a way that we know it is now safe to tell the truth.

The greatest relief being a follower of Christ is the burden that goes off once you concede it is safe to do what is right.

I was raised to believe I had to lead a life with a large part hidden. That's what we learn when we step into Jesus' teachings and begin to see that this is real. Then we can move into our local congregations and speak truth to one another. We can live on a basis of truth. We don't need to mislead people.

* A little child is naturally open but very quickly learns it has to hide and develops all the techniques of hiding and perhaps by age 30 they have to hire someone for \$250 an hour to find them because they have so much duplicity and deceit worked into them. It spills over into our organizations, our **families**, often into our churches. A huge burden falls on us to manage all of that.

A great part of what Jesus is talking about when He teaches,

"Come unto me all you who are heavy burdened...",
you can step out from under all of that. You don't have to manage the truth. You don't have to make things come out. You can leave that to God. The battle is the Lord's. You get to stand in the truth watch it happen. In the middle of that you can love the people who hate you, you can bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you. What an incredible blessing to learn what Jesus has to teach us.

• **Summary of the Four Questions**

[42:15]

All of the great teachers of life have to address this. These are unavoidable questions.

* When I get up in the morning, I have to decide first, "What is reality?" What am I going to have to deal with? Is the first reality God? Have I learned to meet it in that way? I can not manage it.

Help me God to be truthful, genuine, to recognize where I need to bring the reality of your Kingdom to bear on the life of another person. Help me to know when I need to send to someone by my prayer the joy you have given me into their heart.

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Those are first thing in the morning questions. And, What am I going to pursue? Who am I going to be? What am I going to learn from Jesus today about how to do all that?

I have had to learn things like it is not what I accomplish but the person I become. My life is infinitely ahead of me compared to this life.

We sing, "*When we've been there 10,000 years.*" Occasionally we need to think it. What are you going to be doing in 10,000 years from now?

What kind of a person will I be in God's world as He brings that to me.

I am very convinced that God's intent for each of us is to become the kind of person that He can empower to do what we want.

That's what human history is about. It's what "we" want. Now, our want will have to go through some changing - the last point is about changing the "wantee".

As we live in the school of Jesus we can progressively come to know the goodness of the rightness under God and we are prepared to sign off on the goodness of doing the thing that is right. [46:40]

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

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The Genius of Jesus (6:00) & (14:30)

[11:35-17:35]

http://www.veritas.org/genius-jesus/?view=presenters&speaker_id=1950

The reason that Jesus stands forth as someone who should be heard in a University context is because of the centrality of these four questions.

1.) Nature of Reality?

[11:35]

That may sound like a metaphysical question that is irrelevant. That is the most important question you ever deal with.

The University teaches an answer to that question. Not necessarily by a course on reality. We don't have them at USC. We need one. An answer is provided by the way we conduct ourselves.

What is reality? Reality is what you have deal with.

When you go through a University you pick up answers to that question.

What do I really have to deal with?

Reality is what you run into when you're wrong. Then you have to deal with it.

One of the beautiful things about truth is it enables you to harmonize your life with reality. Instead of running into it, you can prosper your relationship with it.

The most important question you're going to have to deal with. What is reality? What are you going to have to deal with?

The answer that most often comes in our culture - "Your body."

* Magazines - "Buns & Abs" — "Beautiful Skin"

If people understood and invested in the things that are really going to effect their lives as much as they do in the things that really make little difference, they would be much better off and much more able to live the lives they were meant to live.

What is the nature of reality? Every person has to deal with this question. Every institution deals with it. Our education is organized around it usually in some narrow focus so we come technically competent in some area and deal with that well but it leaves our life as a whole untouched.

2.) Who is well off?

[14:35]

Who has the good life?

Who has blessedness?

3.) Who is a really good person?

[14:50]

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This one is more important for most people than the second question. You can get in a fight quicker questioning their goodness rather than being well off. It goes right to the heart of a person.

Am I worthwhile?

Am I worth admiring?

Do I have something to contribute to the world?

4.) How do you become a really good person? [15:30]

You and I will practice answers to those questions no matter what we do or say. Every University conveys answers to those questions. There's a myth in our culture that at universities we don't teach morality. We teach morality. If you get crosswise of it you will find out how real and how forceful that morality is. We convey an impression as to who is well off and a good person. Universities answers these questions, not in a straightforward and responsible manner. You won't have a course in which you deal with these issues in being well off or being a good person in specific terms it will be conveyed by the whole spirit of the campus. The attitudes, the suggestion of language, the examples that are set, what is regarded as adequate teaching and research in the various fields. All those will convey answers.

For example - **Today it is assumed that in no field of knowledge is knowledge of God required.** [Absence of Theology in Universities]

The assumption in the answers that the University gives is that expertise in no field of knowledge requires the knowledge of God. It does not matter what field. The assumption is that God is irrelevant. That is not something that was discovered but it is something that has evolved. [17:35]

The Genius of Jesus (continued) (14:30) [21:00-35:30]

The Historical power of Jesus has been precisely the way in which He has responded to these issues of human life. [Four Main Questions]

Of those four questions we can go to anyone. One of the great things about the University campus is it should be open to examine all of the options. To look seriously at those who are going to answer those [4 questions]. It should be open. It has been in the past. When the field was open, the historical power of Jesus came through the power of the answers which He gave to those questions.

Arguably, without much question, Jesus is the single most influential person in human history. That is open for discussion. I don't who else you might suggest. In terms of influence I can't imagine anyone else who has that kind of influence. Currently there is tremendous influence of Jesus even

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on people in other religions who are not so sure or are antagonistic of Christianity as it is historically understood but being influenced by the person of Jesus.

Why is that? It is because of the power in the answers that He gives to the four basic questions. That is what made him such a force in history. His vision of reality, well being and life simply has nothing close to it.

I. What does Jesus say about reality?

[23:00]

This is the first story, the one that the Universities in the Western World as we know them was founded on. **Reality is God and His Kingdom.**

The kingdom of God is the range of God's effective will.

That would include nature in so far as God has created nature. This is one reason why people go out into nature and experience it and they seem so refreshed. They don't even have to believe anything when they experience the greatness of nature.

* Chesterton - Atheists - no one to thank for created beauty.

When people turn away from God they often turn to worship beauty in the arts or in nature. That's because these are expressions of the greatness of God.

Kingdom of God is where God wants done what is done.

In order to understand it, compare it to your kingdom, queendom or person-dom - the range of your effective will.

* Going through your backpack, immediately feel something is wrong.

* Driving off in your car. Something would be wrong.

That's your kingdom - what you have say over. The range of your effective will.

The Kingdom of God is what God has say over. He invites us to come and live in His kingdom and know it as an experiential reality.

The trouble of your kingdom is that it can not run on it's own. It is finite. It is limited. That's were the issues about conflict between truth and DESIRE and will - we find ourselves at war within ourselves and at war with those around us. We live in the midst of kingdoms in conflict. DESIRE is in conflict. There is nothing to subordinate that to. There is no greater reality in which people can be. On our own it is impossible to be simply what we know we should be.

Only life in the Kingdom of God harmonizes the lives of human beings. That is why Jesus taught the way forward is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and then you have the ability to love your neighbor as yourself.

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This is really important for us to think about because when we come back and look at University life - What does God have to do with it? [26:40]

God invites us to live in a spiritual reality in which all of the aspirations of the human heart for welfare and being a good person can be realized. Jesus understood what would make human life work. He understood that the basic problem for human beings is to find a spiritual home in which they can know that they are cared for, eternally cared for and from which they can care for others and not spend their whole life fighting over what to do.

* LA Riots - Rodney King - *"Can we all just get along?"*
The answer is obviously *"No, we can't get along."*

The question is - why can't we?

* Siblings, Parents & Children, Neighborhoods, Nations

We can not get along because we want our way, we want our kingdom to prevail and we can not find a larger kingdom in which to live together with others. **That is what Jesus brought into human life. He made clear what morality is and how it can be lived.** That is the number one problem or omission from University life today. It has nothing to say about that. It teaches a morality. But you don't teach a morality by preaching at people. You do it by body language, subtle suggestions, example, who you criticize, who you laugh at. That's how morality is taught. That is how it is taught in the home.

—> **Morality is a matter of passing on a certain kind of life.**

Morality (def.)

[29:30]

"A shared public understanding with associated emotional postures concerning what types of persons are to be or are not to be admired, approved, imitated, encouraged and supported without regard of whether they prosper or not. It is a matter of character and will."

In any context there is always a governing morality. There is one in our University and cultural situation but it is not the one that goes with the Theistic story because it is based upon a different reality, and that is taking humanity as an ultimate point of reference. As long as we do that we will never find the basis for living out the kind of morality that we know that we should. We'll never be able to do the things we know that are right. That's why Rodney King was wrong.

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Of course we use the words...

* Poster in the Cincinnati airport by Protective Insurance Company
"Treat others the way you would like to be treated."

Do you know where that came from? It came from Jesus.
Now, how do you do it?

The historical power of Jesus comes from the fact that He knew what to do and could enable people to do it. He was able to provide a morality that would actually make people good.

III. Who is a good person?

[32:00]

(The reason I go out of my way to make this statement is because I doubt you'll have anyone here represent a view on this matter in any faculty - "Who is a good person?")

[32:27] *"A morally good person is a person who is intent upon on advancing the various goods of human life with which they are effectively in contact in a manner that respects their relative degrees of importance and the extent to which the actions of the person in question can actually promote the existence and maintenance of these goods."*

Having said that, this is what Jesus is talking about when He said,
"Love your neighbor as yourself."
"Treat others the way you want to be treated."

What does that mean and how do you do it? (4th Life Question)

It is only for those alive in the Kingdom of God who are in personal interactive contact with the ultimate reality learning from that ultimate reality through Jesus and through His people is the only person who can spell that out and really tell you how to do it.

We can say, *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* What if you don't love yourself? There are a lot of people who don't. Much of the wrong doing that is done by people who have no idea what it is to value and love themselves. We talk about human dignity in our culture today but what does it really mean in a consumer culture where the pursuit of pleasure is confused with the pursuit of happiness?

That's why Jesus refines his teaching. He doesn't just say, *"Love your neighbor as yourself"* He says, *"Love one another as I have loved you."*

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That's different. He says, *"Greater love has no one than they lay down their life for their friends."*

With that fill in, you can begin to ask yourself, *"Has there been a single day in which I can say honestly I have loved my neighbor as myself? Is there progress? Am I learning how to do it?"*

If we follow up the teaching about love and morality and who the good person is by the question, "How do you become a good person?", that is where above all Jesus Christ shines greater than anyone else.

In an open discussion, we want to compare Him to any other candidates.

* Students come to me and say, *"Why are you a disciple of Jesus Christ?"*
My answer is always, *"Who else did you have in mind?"* [35:30]

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

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~ ~ ~ **"Life's Four Big Questions"**

Bringing Truth to Life (#3)

(8:30)

[15:20-23:50]

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33EPf_KB8RE

- 1.) What is reality?
- 2.) Who is really well off?
- 3.) Who is a really good person?
- 4.) How do you get to be a really good person?

Every religion, every culture is going to try to answer those questions.

Aristotle - you'll see that he extends himself to answer these four questions. The classical moralists like Plato or Aristotle were more interested in the 4th question than any other. Most of what they did to answer that question they were emerging from the Tribal life in which the answers were in the tribal stories. Greek culture was in a process of finding answers that were trans-tribal and not tied to the particular stories in Homer or others but were based in an understanding of human life and human nature.

Jesus Answers the Four Life Questions

[17:19]

1.) What is real? God and His Kingdom

What is real is what you can count on. It won't let you down.

An illusion will betray you. Sooner or later, it will let you down.

Reality will not betray you. If you get in its way, it will run over you. That's why truth is so important.

2.) Who is well off? Anyone alive in the Kingdom of God.

Does not matter what else is going on, how hard life is.

A poor person in the Kingdom of God is as well off as a rich person.

"Blessed are the poor" and "Woe be to you who are rich".

What is the difference? The Kingdom of God!

There is no blessing in being poor. The blessings is in the Kingdom.

Rich - you are blessed! No, that's not it.

Anyone alive in the Kingdom of God is well off forever.

3.) Who is a really good person? Anyone pervaded with agape love.

John - "anyone who loves is of God. He that does not love is not of God, for God is love." The whole law is summed up in God.

4.) How do you get to be a really good person?

You learn that and you'll be well off and situated in reality.

You learn that by trusting Jesus.

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You trust Jesus when you turn your life over to Him. Jesus is marching through history. The lost person is the person who missed out on Jesus. The saved person is now participating in what Jesus is doing on Earth. They have a life in them that is eternal.

Colossians 3:1, *"If you have been risen with Christ..."*

That's salvation - having the life of Christ living in you.

Only the Bible answers those questions in a way that is adequate to the human need and faithful to reality. You test them in the Bible and test them against life and you know their adequacy because of what you find when you live in them. You do that by discipleship. To say I am a disciple is to say,
"I am learning something right now from Jesus. I am His student and He is the maestro."

The maestro of life has come to town and is giving masters classes on how to live in the Kingdom of God. [22:45]

That's how we present Jesus as the master of life in Himself and His teachings. We make Him available through our lives and through our words. The word of the Kingdom of God that Jesus brings to us in His own person has a life of it's own and I don't have to do anything but do it and speak it.

~ ~ ~ **End of Section** ~ ~ ~

~ ~ ~ "Life's Four Big Questions"

The Value of Truth - LSU Veritas (6:20)

[39:00-45:20]

http://www.veritas.org/value-truth/?view=presenters&speaker_id=1950

The Great Questions We Need Truth On

For every great teacher - Buddha, Confucius, Freud has to answer these.

1.) What is reality?

What is the answer to that question that is given by LSU? There is one that is given. They don't teach it in class. There is not a "Department of Reality" at LSU. That's going to be true of all of these questions.

Faculty are by in large good people. They are doing the best they can. The problem is they are caught in a system that does not deal with reality.

You're going to have to deal with it.

—> Exercise - write out what you think is real.

Real is what you've got to deal with, what you can count on.

What do you think you can count on? What is reality for you?

2.) Who is well off?

[40:50]

Who's got it made? Who has the good life?

* Peugeot ad - *"Pursue happiness in a car that can catch it."*

Never mind there are lot of miserable people driving Peugeots.

* Sears - *"The good life at a good price."*

We have to think deeply about who is well off.

Jesus' answers:

1.) Reality is God and His kingdom, whatever God is doing.

2.) Who is well off is anyone who is living in the kingdom of God.

If you're living interactively with God you are well off. It doesn't matter what has happened to you, it's not going to ruin your life.

3.) Who is a really good person?

[42:30]

That question goes right the heart of our being. It effects our health, our moods that control our lives, how we approach others.

Let me ask, *"Are you a really good person?"*

I'm not getting personal but I'd like you to get personal with you.

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You might have some good ideas because the teachings of Jesus has so permeated Western Culture. That if I were to say to you, "A person is really good if their life is permeated with love. Love their neighbors, families, fellowships." Love means they are devoted to the good of others.

* Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Anyone can be great because anyone can serve others."

You want to be great? Be a person of love. Learn how that works down the level of your body, your social relationships.

There is not a Department at LSU or USC about "Really Good Persons."

4.) How do you get to be a good person?

[44:20]

That's a big question, isn't it? Everyone I know wants to be a good person. I ask, *"Anyone here want to be a bad person?"*

Jesus answers these questions.

You want to be a good person? Follow him. Put his words into practice. Trust him. Learn how to live with Him in the kingdom of God and that will be taken care of.

~ ~ ~ **End of Section** ~ ~ ~

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~ ~ ~ "Life's Four Big Questions"

Spiritual Formation in the Academy" 2008 (11:20) [24:00-35:20]

Session 3 - "Christian Teachings Banished from Knowledge" [YouTube 3/3]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP4SIYnAJ5I>

1.) What is the nature of reality?

What you have to deal with or what you can count on.

Or, what you run in to when you are wrong. It is unyielding. It does not give way just because you have a contrary opinion.

The University, the system of knowledge, provides no reliable answer.

They don't have a Department of Reality.

Actually, they surreptitiously present one by policy and personnel that gives you an impression of what is important and not important.

Is there an answer? In particular, is there a God and can you know that? What is the answer given by the University?

There is not a single area of knowledge in order for you to be qualified that you have to know about God. Could you have responsible teaching of an area without talking about God? Up until 1880, it was assumed you could not. If there was a God, and you omitted Him, you really left something out. It was decided, not discovered, that God had nothing to do with the subject matters.

George Marston, *The Soul of the American University*

* Cole & William Graham Sumner - God was left out of political science.

2.) Who is well off?

[28:45]

There is no Department of True Well Being

There is something communicated but it is pretty ragged. At USC, we talk about "success". If you are successful, you will have a good life and you will be among the blessed. The way to be blessed is to come to USC. Normally, that means you will get into a good professional school.

3.) Who is a really good person?

[30:00]

All worldviews answer these questions.

4.) How can one become a really good person?

[30:25]

That is spiritual formation.

The Universities have practically nothing to say. On the other hand, that has been the primary question ever since Plato up until the 20th Century.

Every great teacher or system must try to answer these.

Since Modernity - "How do we know the answers to Questions 1-4?"

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It was taken out of the hands of Christian institutions and the learning that was present with that. It now defaults largely to media and that's totally out of control. It's a matter of economics by and large.

In terms of the questions 2 & 3 & 4, the Christian comes along and says, "Here's the answer to the questions".

A good person is someone permeated by love, whose life is governed and developed around love.

How do you become a good person? You become a disciple of Jesus

Is that something we have knowledge about? The Christian church has forsaken the responsibility for knowledge. They made a deal over a period of years to hand knowledge over to the secular world, primarily the Universities in a period where they were splitting off historically and socially from the Church.

The question as we stand on the campus or in our culture, do we have moral knowledge to guide people? Are we representing moral goodness and moral development as it is on an appropriate basis of thought and experience? Or are we jabbering away with the thought that something will happen?

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

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~ ~ ~ "Life's Four Big Questions"

Spiritual Formation in the Academy 2008 (8:40) [04:00-12:40]

Session 4 - "Christian Spiritual Formation: Knowledge Fields" [YouTube 2/3]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcK4p-1-hEQ>

Four Big Questions

[4:00]

[Dallas states, "I gave you last time Four Big Questions. I want to return to them just to review." He teaches this in Youtube (3/3) @ 24:00 which means this talk labeled ("YouTube 2/3") is talk #4 of 4 and out of order in YouTube. Talk #2 or 4 is not available on YouTube.]

The academic scene has no intellectual response to these questions. The context out of which the Universities grew did. But as a result of specialization and professionalization, they lost it because none of the fields answer those questions.

1.) What is reality? God and His Kingdom. [5:00]

I wanted to give you a very simple argument for the existence of God. I gave you a passage in Romans 1. [Session 3 - 36:00 - 41:10]

You can know God exists. You can't know everything about him. That is a different story. That is important to know that. Knowledge has a different role in life and in spiritual formation than does belief, commitment or profession.

2.) Who is well off? [6:08]

Anyone alive in the Kingdom of God

This is the gospel of the Beatitudes - Proclamation of the Gospel

"Blessed are the poor."

Why? It's so wonderful to be poor! Poor people are just spiritual.

The blessing is in the kingdom not in the condition.

"...for theirs is the Kingdom of God."

3.) Who is a really good person? [7:30]

One whose life is pervaded with agape love, governed, inner-penetrated with agape love.

4.) How do you get to be a really good person? [7:45]

Become a disciple of Jesus.

If you can find anyone better, be their disciple but I recommend Jesus. He has a track record that runs around the world and through the ages. Bring anyone else up against Him as you wish. We want to be honest, open,

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thorough. The Christian wants everything to be exactly what it is. We're open, not hiding, ducking.

* I've never had a crisis of faith but I've had a lot of people who have had one for me. One day the Lord said to me, *"If you can find a better way than Jesus Christ, He'll be the first one to tell you take it."* He's not going to say, *"Well, that's better but it's not Christian..."*

Jesus is on the side of truth. He climbed up on the cross and said, *"Hit me with your best shot!"*

Becoming a disciple of Jesus - A challenge to anyone you meet, anywhere you meet them. If they think there is someone smarter than Jesus, make them give you their list. Just be open.

I wanted to say to you more than anything else in coming here, you have answers to these questions. If you want to, you can know them and you can present them as knowledge not your little leap of faith.

We don't need to be bullies or arrogant but if we're followers of Christ, we won't be. That takes care of that. Because we know who we can trust. We live with others in the light of the knowledge we have. Obviously there is a lot of stuff we don't know.

We have to interpret knowledge itself. I hope you will make it part of your business to interpret knowledge. That is a primary confusion that people wonder about. Try what I suggested to you. You can improve on it. Don't get a definition of knowledge with no one knowing nothing nohow.

If Knowledge is if you can represent something as it is on an appropriate basis based on thought and experience, you've got a winner. You can bring in traditions, scripture, revelation.

Do it honestly, openly, thoroughly and God will be with you.

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

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~ ~ ~ "Life's Four Big Questions"

Sermon on the Mount (Gordon) (13:20)

[5:40-19:00]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xq9Q1z5uWZo&list=LLHJmBk0sg4WoTB38asmaiqQ&index=2&t=0s>
YouTube title: "Spirit of the Disciplines - (3/3) Case Study - Sermon on the Mount. It is talk #2 (not #3)

Jesus addresses the **two** questions every thoughtful person who considers the human situation has to address:

1.) Who is really well off?

The gospel of the Kingdom addressed in the Beatitudes
People who are the last

2.) Who is a good person?

[8:30]

Unless your righteousness goes beyond, not more of the same, you will not make contact with, enter, become part of the Kingdom of God. Why? What Jesus knew is you can never succeed in keeping the law by trying to keep the law.

* Shooting a duck that's flying. Don't shoot where the duck is. Shoot where the duck's going to be.

That's the sense where you have to go beyond the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees. They try to keep the law by aiming at not doing anything wrong. Being a really good person has to go a long way beyond, "*I didn't do anything wrong.*" And a long way beyond, "*I did everything right!*"

You cannot succeed keeping the law by trying to keep the law.

Is keeping the law important? You bet it is

Jesus, "*The law will not pass away until it is fulfilled.*"

And he is not talking about it being fulfilled through His atoning death.

Whatever you say on that issue, that's not the point of Matthew

5

When He enunciated about how to keep the law, they thought He was coming to overthrow the government.

How do you do it?

You become the kind of person who keeps the law without thinking. What you have to think about shows your character.

* Jesus healing the man with the withered hand.

He asked a question, "*Is it right to heal on the Sabbath?*"

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What was most revealing? They had to think about.

What you have to think about is what reveals your character.

- * You visited me in prison. *"When did we do that?"*
- * Not letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Your right hand just does it and you don't have to think about it
- * Good Samaritan - *"He took pity on him."* He had compassion. What did the others do? They thought about it
 - * Jack Benny joke - "You're \$ or your life." "I'm thinking."

"Beyond the righteousness of the scribes & Pharisees" will bring us through a consideration of some the teachings in Matthew 5 to the disciplines.

Jesus is not about external/internal. The contrast is not between external and internal, it's between what you would do and not do. It's between the action and what you would do whether you'd do it or not. What is most important is what we could, might think or do.

* Thief - *not one who steals but one who would steal if the occasion were right.*

That's where you get down to the real stuff of your soul. That's not to be grim. That's to give you hope. Because that can be changed. When that happens you don't have to set on a guard on your heart to avoid doing what is wrong.

That's why Paul says, *"Love is the fulfillment of the law."* *When you love people you don't have to worry about killing them.*

* When I fly to Boston, I am not greeted by someone who says, *"Great, you didn't go to New Orleans."* I don't have to think about going to New Orleans because I was thinking about going to Boston.

This is the whole story. Then we can look at Matthew 5 and see what Jesus is talking about.

~ ~ ~ End of Section ~ ~ ~

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~ ~ ~ "Life's Four Big Questions"

Spiritual Formation: Obedience (6:30)

[4:30-11:00]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeiwAfK8SvM&t=89s>

Four Key Questions

[4:30]

1.) What is the Nature of Reality?

Reality is what you can count on. That's why truth is important. Truth enables us to come to terms of reality in a good way.

* Gun Aim mechanism: If it's true, you can hit what you are shooting at.

Come to good terms with reality. If you don't have it, you'll come to terms with it anyway. Reality is what you run into when you are wrong.

Reality is God's work. We don't construct it. One of the great myths today is "Constructionism" - we construct reality, we construct truth.

2.) Who is well off?

[6:50]

We want to be well off. That's where our reality assumptions come in. It has to deal with reality. It can't be about illusions.

It's important to get this right. Jesus' teaches us about that.

Reality - God in His Kingdom

Well off - Living in the Kingdom of God.

3.) Who is a really good person?

[7:45]

Someone who is permeated with Agape love.

In particular, not controlled by desire.

If you love something, you are set to achieve what is good for it.

If you love your plant, you take care of it. If you love your neighbor, you care for them. If you love God, you look out for what is good for God.

4.) How do you become a really good person?

[8:45]

Jesus - the answer to the question of moral knowledge [9:05]

Jesus is not an airhead who stands haplessly before PhD's. Jesus is the master of knowledge. When He speaks about moral issues and spiritual issues, we listen to Him as one who knows.

The central teaching about the heart of religion, morality and spirituality is:

Mark 12:29 "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

{That's the reality statement}

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

And love your neighbor as yourself."

The Torah, the Law, is not just a set of commandments, it is all we need to know to live and live well with God.

[— End of "Life's Four Big Questions" Teachings by Dallas Willard —]