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RENOVATION  
OF THE HEART

RESOURCE GUIDE

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# Introduction:

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## FOREWORD

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Although it might make him blush a bit if he hears you say it, Dallas Willard has earned the title “America’s answer to C. S. Lewis.” Each established an impressive academic reputation at a respected secular institution and watched it become dwarfed by the impact of his Christian writings. Both Lewis and Willard provide such a fresh and appealing look at the teachings of Christ and the glorious possibilities of life in his kingdom that it makes even seasoned Christians, pastors, and seminary professors long to go further up and further in.

*Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ* completes Dallas Willard’s gospel quartet. Each sings different but harmonious notes to the same song—a melody about authentic transformation of life and character.

In 1984 Dallas Willard wrote a book titled *In Search of Guidance*, which was later released as *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship With God*. In this book he reminds readers that God has created us for intimate friendship with himself—now and forever. Hearing God, developing a conversational relationship with our maker, is but one dimension of an interactive relationship into which we are invited. *Hearing God* is not your typical guide to practical discernment. It’s about God’s invitation to us to reorganize our lives in such a way that we walk so closely with him that it becomes easy to know his mind and hear his voice.

But it was *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, published in 1988, that put Dallas on the ecclesiastical map. In it, he claimed and then demonstrated that there is a way of spiritual transformation that is accessible to all people and really effective. The book took on a life of its own, and its influence slowly rolled through seminaries and local churches. Readers were introduced to the kingdom of God with hope and clarity that had not been surpassed in Christian writing since Augustine penned *The City of God*. (Yes, I realize what I just typed.)

Our relationship with God was brought into focus as a transforming friendship in which we meet and dwell with Jesus and his Father in the disciplines of the spiritual life. The spirit of the disciplines, we learn, is nothing but the love of Jesus, with its resolute will to *be* like him whom we love.

By the time Dallas Willard wrote the much acclaimed *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* in 1998, he was a secret no more. The book grew out of series of lectures Dallas had delivered on understanding the kingdom of God. Richard J. Foster was so enthralled with the book—and Dallas as a person—that he placed it in very rare company—alongside the writings of Bonhoeffer, Wesley, Calvin, Luther, and Teresa of Avila. Foster rightly said that *The Divine Conspiracy* was warm and accessible, and it went to the heart of Jesus’ teaching. In it we find a “conceptual philosophy for understanding the meaning and purpose of human existence.” (from foreword to *The Divine Conspiracy*, ix)

What is the “Divine Conspiracy”? God’s intent to reclaim the universe, one transformed heart at a time.

*Renovation of the Heart*, in my opinion, is the lead singer in the quartet. It is here Dallas Willard informs the reader—from both a theoretical and a practical perspective—how to enter into the divine world (the kingdom among us) by the path of inner transformation.

*Renovation of the Heart* is a realistic guide to discipleship and the real challenge of Christian formation. For all would-be apprentices of Jesus, *Renovation of the Heart* is for you. Its aim is to help you find and fully live in the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

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## HOW THIS RESOURCE GUIDE IS ORGANIZED

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This resource guide is divided into thirteen sessions (lessons). Each session involves an integration of a section of the *Renovation of the Heart* video with material presented in the RESOURCE GUIDE and worksheets for the students.

For each session, *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Video

For each session, *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Pen or Pencil
- Participant's Guide (Optional)

Each session can be divided into nine parts:

(*Note:* The seven sections from Introduction through More Dallas serve as the session outline. The additional section—Before You Lead—is a resource for the participants that the leader will decide how to use each week.)

- Before You Lead
- Introduction
- Warm-Up
- Content
- Bible Study
- Transforming Exercises
- Summary
- More Dallas
  - *Key Term Box*
  - *Where Else Did He Say That?*

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## BEFORE YOU LEAD

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Before the lesson itself, you will be presented with a brief overview that will include a synopsis, outline, list of materials you will need, and (for some sessions) some recommended readings. It is not necessary to complete the additional reading. All you need in order to be an effective group leader is contained within this packet and between your ears. However, if you teach this course several times, you may want to read for additional depth and breadth.

### ■ Overview

The material provided in this section is for the leader's information. The synopsis is a lesson summary that contains a story, illustration, or teaching emphasis tied to the main idea for the session. These summaries are always tied to an object and can be used as part of your introduction or to help stimulate further discussion. Some of the worksheet activities will be related to this synopsis of the lesson.

### ■ Session Outline

An at-a-glance overview of the content and activities to be covered throughout the lesson.

### ■ Materials

The materials listed above are very important for both the leader and each participant. When additional materials are needed (very rarely), you will find them listed in this section.

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## THE SEVEN-PART SESSION

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### ① Introduction

Includes calling the class together, an opening prayer, and a brief preview. This time period should be customized to the personality of the individual group—but should not exceed 5 to 10 minutes.

### ② Warm-up

These stories, exercises and questions are designed to help everyone begin thinking about the session topic. The warm-up section usually includes a retelling of the illustration presented in the synopsis and refers to an exercise presented in the Participant's Guide.

### 3 Content

The majority of class time is focused on the content section through which you will guide the students. This will always include viewing the video vignettes (both Dallas Willard's summary lecture and a portion of the conversation among Dallas, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg), tips for leading discussion, and suggested questions that are provided for the video lecture, video conversation, and the specific chapter of the book which is being addressed.

This section also includes a bulleted summary of the key points from the lecture and book chapter.

### 4 Bible Study

A Bible study worksheet is provided for each lesson. There is a copy in your RESOURCE GUIDE and in the Participant's Guide.

### 5 Transforming Exercises

Each week five homework exercises are suggested that focus on the five dimensions of the person: thoughts, emotions, will, behavior, and social interactions.

### 6 More Dallas

#### ■ Key Term Box

Provides quick reference definitions for key concepts discussed by Dallas Willard in each chapter.

#### ■ Where Else Did He Say That?

Quotes from three other books by Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*, and *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*, are presented here. The quotes are selected based on relevance to the chapter topic that is being presented.

### 7 Summary

This section will include a review of what was covered in the session and occasional suggestions for "homework" or "journaling" exercises. Following the summary section will be a collection of worksheets corresponding to the lesson.

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## BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

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The *Renovation of the Heart* curriculum is designed to be user friendly. We know it is the rare teacher who has several hours each week to prepare for leading class. We suggest the following preparation (probably less than one hour of your time):

- 1 Watch the appropriate video segments and have the tape cued for class.
- 2 Make sure there will be enough pens or pencils for the participants.
- 3 Familiarize yourself with the standard structure of presentation (see above).
- 4 Read through the RESOURCE GUIDE for the lesson and make a few notes for yourself in the space provided in the margins.

### ■ Unique Features

- 1 No requirements for students before coming to class.
- 2 Homework and additional readings for students who become inspired during class and want to go further.
- 3 More material than you will need—handouts can become homework.
- 4 The leader is more of a facilitator than a verse-by-verse teacher.
- 5 Flexibility concerning presentation style (e.g., you may use a small group or large group format for discussion and use of worksheets).

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## TIPS FOR LEADING GROUP DISCUSSION

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- 1 Allow group members to participate at their own comfort levels. Not everyone need answer every question.
- 2 Ask questions with interest and warmth, and then listen carefully to individual responses. Remember: No answer is too insignificant. Encourage and affirm each person's participation.
- 3 Be flexible: Reword questions if necessary. Take the liberty of adding or deleting questions to accommodate the needs of your group.

*And speaking of flexibility, whenever discussion times are teeming with life, do not feel obligated to complete the entire session plan. As a rule of thumb, good discussion beats a structured lesson, but the recommended structure beats lifeless discussion. Again, flexibility and sensitivity are the keys. Any of the hand-*

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*outs can become “homework” assignments if the group becomes pressed for time due to helpful and energetic discussion.*

- ④ Ask for (and expect) differences of opinion and experience.
- ⑤ Don't be afraid of silence. Allow people time to think. Digestion takes time.
- ⑥ Have a plan for ensuring that appropriate numbers of photocopies have been made.
- ⑦ Never force someone to disclose “homework” or “journaling” activities. In fact, assure them up front that such disclosure will never be required.
- ⑧ Many items in your session notes (particularly those labeled “Question,” “Exercise,” and “Discussion”) are written in second person to allow the leader to read these words directly to the participants.
- ⑨ Allow participants to decide if they would prefer to do worksheets in small groups (four to six members) or as a large group (entire class).

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## TIPS FOR USING THE VIDEO

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- ① Before class time, always view the section of the video to be shown in class.
- ② When you listen to the tape, walk through all areas of the room to make sure the volume is set correctly.
- ③ Have the videotape cued to the right place to start.
- ④ Make sure all the equipment you need is in class and appropriately connected. This may mean arriving early for class—allowing enough time to preview the tape.
- ⑤ Be aware that your video player may need tracking adjustments and periodic cleaning. Try to avoid discovering this after your students have arrived for class.

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## FINAL WORD

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Please note that you will be provide with more material than you need for a 45- to 50-minute group session. We recommend one of three approaches for handling this bounty of teaching resources.

- ① Pick and choose. Based on the desires of your class, you may want to emphasize only one area (Bible study, discussion questions, group exercise, experiences with the transforming exercises, etc.) to cover in class—in addition to the video presentations.
- ② Use two sessions to cover each lesson. Begin each new lesson with a session where you focus on the video lectures and discussion questions, and then allow the class to complete the Bible study and transforming exercises as homework assignments. The second session for each chapter will focus on the group exercise, Bible study, and discussion of each member's experience with the transforming exercises.
- ③ Use the materials as part of an extended retreat, again deciding whether to take the one hour or two hours per chapter approach.



SESSION ONE:

# Introducing Spiritual Formation



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Overview and Illustration: “Priming the Pump”

*You’ve got to prime the pump  
You must have faith and believe...*

(“Desert Pete,” The Kingston Trio)

Do you remember hearing the story about a desert traveler who discovered an old pump standing in the middle of nowhere? Hanging on the pump was a metal bucket containing about a quart of water. The traveler, desperate and parched, lifted the bucket to his cracked lips, but at that moment remembered—pumps must be primed to produce more water. He lowered the bucket and stared into his dilemma.

For the traveler, whose body was at least a quart low, rehydration would be as easy as swallowing. And besides, who knew if there was any water in the well, anyway?

But to empty the bucket into the well might create an abundant supply of water for both him and those who would follow.

You know how the story ends. The traveler mustered the faith to pour the water into the well, and the priming of the pump brought up a gushing supply—which is exactly how Dallas Willard says Christian spiritual formation works.

This story is special to me for a couple of reasons. First, it brings back memories of my grandfather showing me how to prime a pump. I can close my eyes and see him pouring water from an old, dented bucket into the base of a five-foot-high contraption that appears to me like a one-armed scarecrow. He then grabs the weathered red handle—letting

me reach up to help—and with all the strength I can muster, and a little bit of his, we work the lever up and down until water begins to pour out, overflowing the priming bucket and several more.

“Remember,” he says. “You have to pour a little in if you want to get a whole lot out.”

The second reason the illustration seems important? It reminds me of Dallas Willard’s description of the process of Christian spiritual formation in *Renovation of the Heart*. He begins the prelude with the following verse from John’s Gospel.

*Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never again be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.*

— JESUS OF NAZARETH (John 4:14, Para.)

Yes, these are the snapshots which best capture the process of Christian spiritual formation. The Word of God—in the form of Scripture and the very presence of Christ—is used to prime the pump (our heart). We take Christ down deep into the center of our being and there discover an internal spring of “living water”—the Spirit of God Himself, bubbling up through our thoughts, emotions, will, behavior, and social interactions.

When this process of spiritual formation—Jesus in, Jesus back out—is active in the life of the believer, he or she is no longer thirsty—“being driven and ruled by unsatisfied desires” (p. 9)—and instead is awash in the transforming presence of God.

Christian spiritual formation, as we will discover, is the process of priming and pumping. According to Dallas, it requires three things: *faith* in an unseen reservoir, *effort* of activities that put us in a position to receive, and the *grace* of limitless supply.

Spiritual formation is not just formation of the spirit (human spirit and soul), but also *by* the Spirit (the Word and Spirit

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





of Christ) entering into the depths of our being and then gushing back out.

*“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”*

PROVERBS 4:23

### ■ Note to Leader

In this *RESOURCE GUIDE* you are provided with more resources than you can possibly use in a typical 45- to 60-minute group meeting—by design. Here is what we suggest. At the end of each lesson is a one-page outline sheet to help you organize your presentation. Find it first (see Appendix 1-C) and use it for note taking as you read through the chapter.

Which of the resources and ideas you use will depend on you and the desires of your group. We assume that most people like overviews and object lessons. So we begin each lesson with this form of synopsis (overview/object lesson). For lesson one, the imagery of priming a pump is compared to the need to take the Word and Spirit of Christ into the heart as the first step in Christian spiritual formation.

The overview/object lesson is presented as background and for your information. You may, however, decide to retell the illustration to the participants as part of the warm-up time or in summarizing the lesson.

We also assume you will be showing the designated video clips as part of each class.

Where you go from there is up to you and your group.

Some groups may want to focus most of their attention on the *reflection questions* that are presented in each lesson—after the video content is viewed. These questions flow from the video clips or text itself.

Other groups may desire to spend the majority of the time together on the *Bible study* or *Scripture meditation*.

For others, the *transforming exercises*—designed for hands-on practice each week—may be used to promote accountability (and support) for entering into the process of spiritual transformation.

And still others may choose to focus on understanding the *key terms* presented and the “*Where else did he say that?*” section.

You make the call. Our desire is to provide a potpourri of resources that you can mix and match to meet the needs of your group.

*Note: For groups that wish to complete all of the lesson materials, it may be best to spend two meetings on each chapter—one to view the video and focus on the object lesson, chapter summary, questions, and group exercise (always presented in Appendix A). The second meeting time could then be devoted to the Bible study and various exercises.*

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: old water bucket, glass of water

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil





SESSION ONE:

# Introducing Spiritual Formation



## INTRODUCTION

### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session one of *Renovation of the Heart*.

Depending on your familiarity with the participants, you may want to introduce yourself—tell the group your name, a little about yourself and your family, and why you are excited to be teaching this particular class.

### ■ Prayer

*“Heavenly Father, please increase our desire for your transforming presence in our lives. We know that to live is to be formed. Help us to desire, more than anything else in the entire universe, to have the life and character of your Son, Jesus, formed in our lives. Amen.”*



## WARM-UP

Before going any further, have the participants complete the worksheet labeled 1-A. After the worksheets are complete, read or share (in your own words) the following:

### ■ Everyone Is Formed—Every Day

Dallas Willard wrote *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ* for a very practical reason. Simply put, he aims “to help those who are ‘seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness’ to find them and to fully live in them.” (p. 26) It is written for any seeking person who desires to put on the mind and character of Christ. It’s about how to be formed in the image of Jesus.

To be spiritually formed is not difficult. In fact, it’s unavoidable. To be alive is to be in the midst of a process of spiritual formation. According to Dallas, “the human spirit is an inescapable, fundamental

aspect of every human being; and it takes on whichever character it has from the experiences and the choices that we have lived through or made in our past.” (p. 13)

We are formed by the commercials we watch on television, by our work environments, conversations, and the songs we listen to on the radio. A nursing child is being formed. A teenager listening to MTV or sermons from her youth pastor is in a process of formation. Whether we are reading Tom Clancy or C. S. Lewis, paying income taxes or building a Habitat for Humanity home, the raw clay of our souls is being formed into what it will be forever.

William Barton, writing under the pen name “Safed the Sage,” provides a wonderful illustration of both the subtlety and power of formation. His parable goes like this:

### ■ The Crumbs and Bubbles of Formation

Safed was spending time with his beloved granddaughter when the little girl noticed that it had begun to snow.

“Grandpa, can we go outside and play in the snow?” she asked.

He could not tell her no, so the two went outside. It was not long before Safed became amazed by the words the little girl used to describe the falling snow.

“Look how it falls down in crumbs and bubbles!” she exclaimed.

“What do you mean, ‘crumbs’ and ‘bubbles’?”

“See, Grandpa, it falls on your face in little bubbles and on your overcoat in crumbs.”

And she was right. The snow falling on Safed’s face melted quickly, resembling a bubble. The snow that found its way to his overcoat did not melt and looked like small crumbs of bread.

He marveled at the little girl’s creative use of language.

They played in the crumbs and bubbles until they became tired, and then went inside to get warm by a fire. It was close to evening. After an early supper, they both went to sleep for the night.

The next morning Safed awakened to a world that was strangely silent. During the night the snow had piled up in great drifts that closed the roads and sidewalks. The whole world was still and quiet.

Then he remembered the words of his little granddaughter and how she had described the crumbs and bubbles of snow, such small and powerless things. But now these crumbs and bubbles had piled up in such great drifts that they were able to stop trucks from driving down the street.

And so it is with the crumbs and bubbles that form our lives. Taken one by one, these activities and events seem inconsequential, but over the course of a lifetime they pile up in drifts that form the land-





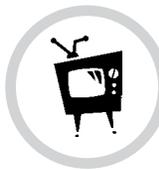
scape of our characters, whether we are becoming a Mother Teresa or an Adolph Hitler.

### ■ Exercise

Take a moment to consider the “crumbs and bubbles” of a typical day in your life, as expressed in Exercise 1-A. How much of your time is being given to activities that help your spirit to be formed into the image of Jesus?

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share her reaction to Exercise 1-A?



## CONTENT

You are about to view a couple of video vignettes. In the segments we will see today, we will have the opportunity to meet Curt Cloninger, who will be serving as emcee. Curt knows that Dallas is way too smart, and he’ll be doing his best to keep a string attached to the kite of high intellectual discussion. Or as Curt likes to say, he’s our “designated dummy.”

The vignettes themselves consist primarily of Dallas giving a mini-lecture (usually 7 to 9 minutes) to a small group. The lectures parallel and summarize each of the thirteen chapters in *Renovation of the Heart*.

You are also invited to be a fly on the wall for an unscripted conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg concerning the process of authentic transformation. Since Dallas is often called “America’s answer to C. S. Lewis,” we wanted to create the feel of a meeting of the Inklings.<sup>1</sup> These three authors and lecturers are in the midst of a very transparent conversation about spiritual life and the process of real change.

Each week there will be approximately 15 minutes of video presentation, which is intended both to summarize the book *Renovation of the Heart* and to serve as discussion starters for your group.

1. The Inklings were a group of writers who used to read their work to one another and discuss it in Oxford, England. The best-known members of the group were C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams.

## ■ Video Vignette (Dallas' Lecture on Chapter One: Introducing Spiritual Formation)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the class the reflection questions which have been provided.

## ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- We all have the problem of knowing how to live.
- Jesus came into the world to help with this—and does so from the inside out.
- In Christian spiritual formation the inner self is transformed until we become like Jesus.
- The secret of transformation into Christlikeness is to realize that if you change the inside, the outside will follow.
- Jesus came to start a world revolution—one person at a time.
- We need more models of people who have actually become new creations in Christ.

## ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Lecture

- 1 In the video vignette, Dallas Willard states that we all have the problem of knowing how to live. Do you have a rudder or mission statement that helps you determine how to live? Please describe.
- 2 How would you contrast spiritual formation with Christian spiritual formation? (See pp. 19-22)
- 3 The secret of transformation into Christlikeness is to realize that if you change the inside (of yourself), the outside will follow. How can you go about changing the inside of yourself? (See pp. 22 & 23)





- 4 Jesus came to earth to start a world revolution. How do you know when you are with someone (or a group of people) who are actively revolting (from the pull of the world) in the way Jesus had in mind? (See pp. 14 & 15)

### Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

#### ■ Reflection Questions

##### Video: Conversation

- 1 During their conversation, Larry Crabb asks a couple of poignant questions: “Can I really...change? Is that ... a possibility?” How satisfied are you with your own journey of spiritual transformation?
- 2 What is the vision you would most like for your life?

##### Book: Chapter One

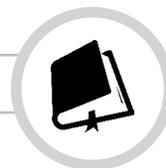
- 1 In his prelude to *Renovation of the Heart* (p. 10) Dallas Willard states the following: “The perceived distance and difficulty of entering fully into the divine world and its life is due entirely to our failure to understand that *‘the way in’ is the way of pervasive inner transformation and to our failure to take the small steps that quietly and certainly lead to it.*”
  - What does it mean that the way in is the way of inner transformation?  
Can you relate this to the notion of “priming a pump”?
  - What are some small steps you can take (today) that will lead to inner transformation?
- 2 What does it mean to say that you live from your heart? (p. 13)

- 3 In what ways are you seeking first the kingdom and God's righteousness? (p. 14)
- 4 It was Jesus' aim to start a "perpetual world revolution" (bring all of human life under the direction of his wisdom, goodness, and power) by making apprentices, one at a time. (p. 14) What does it mean to be an apprentice of Jesus?
- 5 Dallas says that the "revolution" could be called a "revolution of character." Name several components of your inner life that are affected as your character is being changed. (p. 15)
- 6 If genuine transformation is beyond human reach, how can it be accomplished, and what role can you play in your own transformation? (See pp. 20-23)
- 7 What does it mean to say that formation is both *of* the Spirit and *by* the Spirit? (p. 24)

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## BIBLE STUDY

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As we consider all this information, let's turn to the Bible for a frame of reference. A short Bible study is found in Appendix 1-B and may be used in class as a brief Bible study. (If the discussions have gone overtime, or if you want to spend class time on other activities, you may want to assign the exercise as a "homework" activity.) Let's get into groups and work through the passages and questions. (The participants may wish to work in small groups of four to six or as a larger group—entire class.)

### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercises in class. If you are short on time, the Bible study can be completed at home.

### ■ Leader's Insight

In these passages Paul provides a picture of Christian spiritual formation that uses the image of childbirth—Christ being born in you. This is a loving picture that also casts Paul in the role of a midwife.





It is possible to read biblical descriptions of Christian character (such as 1 Corinthians 13) and feel burdened by the list of “impossible to do” behaviors that we are obligated to perform. But, as Dallas points out in *Renovation of the Heart*, these are not descriptions (see also Galatians 5:22-25) of things we are to do, but rather of what Christ already is. Christian formation is about desiring for the Word and Spirit of God to enter into the deepest parts of our beings and then to be released through our thoughts, feelings, will, behaviors, and social dealings. It’s not about white-knuckled determination to do better. It’s about priming the pump that allows the wellspring of God’s presence to gush out of our lives onto others.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Anything worth reading is worth reading slowly. Encourage the group participants to spend 10 or 15 minutes with the Bible study between meeting times. Ask each member to reread the passages, allow his attention to focus on just one verse, and read it until it is memorized. Then suggest that he continue to say the verse to the rhythm of deep, slow breathing and ask God to reveal what meaning it may have for his life.




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## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

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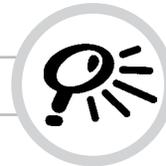
- **Thoughts:** How do you understand the notion that Christian spiritual formation requires both effort and grace? (See pp. 23-25)
- **Emotions:** Use a journal, and for one week reflect on the one time each day that you felt closest to God and the time you felt most distant. Make sure you write about the feelings you experienced during these times.
- **Will:** Some devotion masters believe that the path of surrender (to the will of God) begins each morning. This week make an extra effort to ask God how he would like for you to spend the day. Then determine to pay attention to how he desires to direct your every thought and word throughout the day.
- **Behavior:** Make a list of some things to do that you know are Christlike. Then resolve to do at least one item on your list each day.

- **Social Interactions:** Dallas Willard believes that we are called to be apprentices (students) of Jesus—living in awareness of his presence and listening to his voice—sent out to “set afoot a *perpetual world revolution*.” (p. 14) What are things you could do in the context of your family that would help fan the flames of revolution? Cool. Now go start the revolution in your family.

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## SUMMARY

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- **Review**

*Renovation of the Heart* was written to help human beings like you and me become apprentices of Jesus and experience authentic transformation of thoughts, emotions, will, behavior, and social interactions until we have put on the very character of Christ.

The first step in this process is to embrace a willingness to prime the pump by taking in the Word and Spirit of Jesus. As Christ enters the heart, the person begins to learn from him how to become a citizen in the divine kingdom that surrounds.

Dallas believes that the perceived difficulty of entering fully into the divine world and its life is due entirely to our “*failure to understand that ‘the way in’ is the way of pervasive inner transformation and to our failure to take the small steps that quietly and certainly lead to it.*” (p. 10) These small steps have been referred to as the “crumbs and bubbles” of spiritual discipline—ways in which we participate in receiving God’s transforming grace.

- **Recommended Readings**

- *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ* is the fourth of a quartet of books Dallas Willard has written concerning Christian living. You may also want to read the other three (which we will be quoting from in each lesson under the “Where else did he say that?” section):
- *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship With God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988.





- *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998.

You may also want to explore books written by Larry Crabb and John Ortberg by visiting the following Web sites.

- For additional books and materials by Larry Crabb, go to: [www.gospelcom.net/newway/](http://www.gospelcom.net/newway/)
- To see books by John Ortberg visit: [www.willowcreek.org/](http://www.willowcreek.org/)



## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

#### Kingdom

- “When we open ourselves to the writings of the New Testament... the overwhelming impression that comes upon us is that we are looking into another world and another life. It is a divine world and a divine life. It is the life in the ‘kingdom of heaven.’ Yet it is a world and a life that ordinary people have entered and are entering even now.” (p. 9)
- The kingdom is the range of God’s effective will. “Our ‘kingdom’ is simply *the range of our effective will*. Whatever we genuinely have the say over is in our kingdom.” (DC, p. 21)
- God’s presence (and heaven) is not far away, but here and now, all around. (DC, p. 71)
- “... ‘The gospel’ is the good news of the presence and availability of life in the kingdom, now and forever, through reliance on Jesus the Anointed.” (DC, p. 49)
- Christ saw the universe as a kingdom, which “does not work merely by pushes and pulls. Essentially it works by the *communication* of thoughts and intentions through words or other symbols, for a kingdom is a network of personal relationships.” (HG, p. 122)

## Formation

- “The human spirit is an inescapable, fundamental aspect of every human being; and it takes on whichever character it has from the experiences and the choices that we have lived through or made in our past. That is what it means for it to be ‘formed.’” (p. 13)

## Spiritual formation

- “*Spiritual formation, without regard to any specific religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite ‘form’ or character. It is a process that happens to everyone.*” (p. 19)

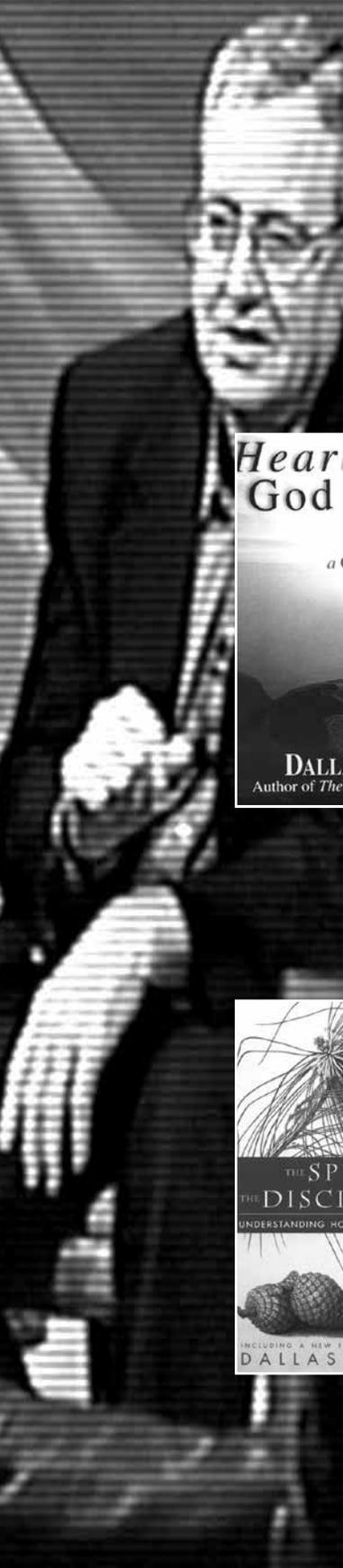
## Christian spiritual formation

- “Genuine transformation of the whole person into the goodness and power seen in Jesus and his ‘Abba’ Father—the only transformation adequate to the human soul—remains the necessary goal of human life. But it lies beyond the reach of programs of inner transformation that draw *merely* on the human spirit—even when the human spirit is itself treated as ultimately divine.” (p. 20)
- “We can say, in a preliminary manner, that *spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.*” (p. 22)
- “Christian spiritual formation is focused entirely on Jesus. Its goal is an obedience or conformity to Christ that arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through purposive interaction with the grace of God in Christ.” (p. 22)

## Disciplines

- The disciplines then are a means to that grace and also to those gifts. Spiritual disciplines are “exercises unto godliness . . . activities undertaken to make us capable of receiving more of his life and power without harm to ourselves or others.” (*SD*, p. 156)
- “A discipline for the spiritual life is, when the dust of history is blown away, nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom.” Since grace (*charis*) is gift (*charisma*), we see “that to grow in grace is to grow in what is given to us of God and by God.” (*SD*, p. 156)





## Apprentice

- Student (p. 14)

## “Within”

- “This ‘within’ is the arena of spiritual formation and later, transformation.” (p. 16)

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## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

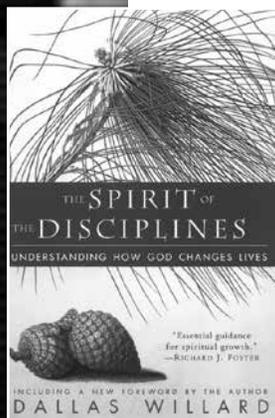
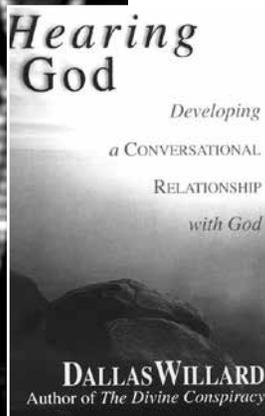
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### ■ Hearing God

- “The watchword of the worthy servant is not mere obedience but love, from which all appropriate obedience naturally flows.” (p. 12)
- According to the theologian Wilhelm Herman, “We hold a man to be really a Christian when we believe we have ample evidence that God has revealed himself to him in Jesus Christ, and that now the man’s inner life is taking on a new character through his communion with God who is thus manifest.” (p. 24)
- We misconceive the very nature of our heavenly Father and his intent for us. God is more concerned with character development than anything else. (p. 28)
- Jesus came to earth “to respond to the universal human need to know *how to live well*.” (p. 212)

### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- “We gain insight into how and why his [Jesus’] path works and receive a power far beyond ourselves as we take the simple steps of his trusting apprentice living in his Kingdom...” (Foreword)
- This is the transforming friendship explained by Leslie Weatherhead. “We *meet* and  *dwell*  with Jesus and his Father in the disciplines for the spiritual life.” (Preface, xi)
- “The Spirit of the Disciplines is nothing but the love of Jesus, with its resolute will to be like him whom we love.” (Preface, xii)
- “From the practical point of view, then, the radical problem concerning the power structures of this world is how to transform *normal* human character away from its usual high level of

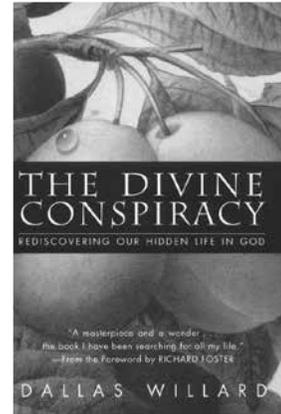


readiness to disregard God and harm others for the sake of our own fear, pride, lust, greed, envy and indifference.” (p. 232)

- “When Jesus walked among humankind, there was a certain simplicity to being his disciple. Primarily it meant to go with him, in an attitude of study, obedience, and imitation.” (p. 260)

## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “My hope is to gain a fresh hearing for Jesus, especially among those who believe they already understand him.” (Introduction, xiii)
- Jesus, the smartest man ever, tells us how to live. (p. 93)
- “... ‘The Lord is my shepherd’ is written on many more tombstones than lives.” (p. 105)
- [From C. S. Lewis] “The command to ‘be ye perfect’ is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command.” (p. 129)
- “But if I am to be someone’s apprentice, there is one absolutely essential condition. I must be with that person.” (p. 276)
- “And this, among other things, is the reason why an extensive use of solitude and silence is so basic for growth of the human spirit, for they form an appropriate context for listening and speaking to God.” (p. 277)
- “Following up on what has already been said then, a disciple, or apprentice, is simply someone who has decided to be with another person, under appropriate conditions, in order to become capable of doing what that person does or to become what that person is.” (p. 282)





SESSION TWO:

# The Heart in the System of Human Life



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

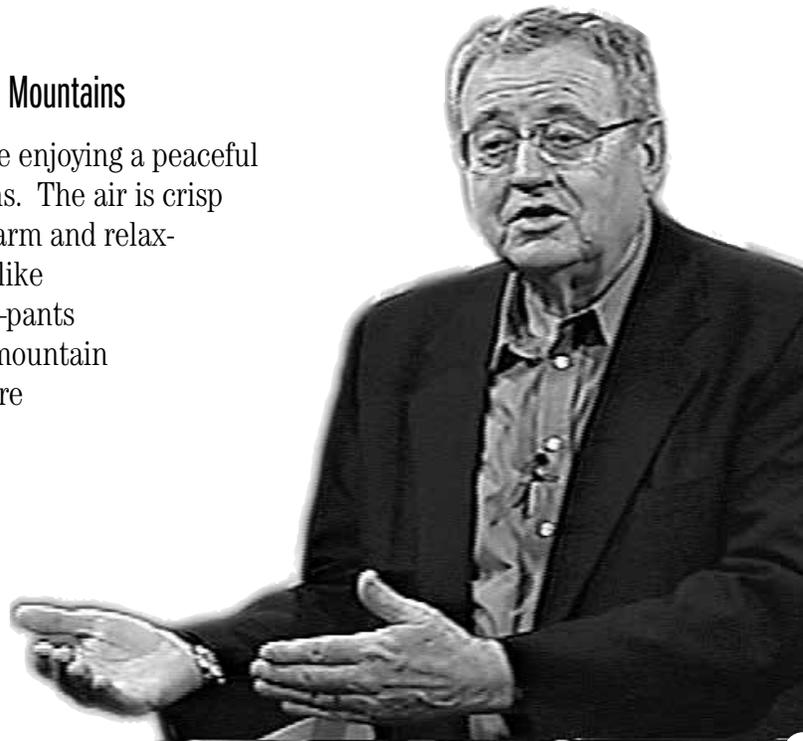
Dallas muses that “we might have titled this chapter ‘Hi, I’m Joe’s Heart’—in the spiritual sense of ‘heart.’” (p. 28) He then states that his aim in the present chapter is to explain the nature of the heart (a.k.a. spirit or will) and its function in the person as a whole.

Before going further, let’s take a moment to consider the functioning of the physical heart to see if pondering its operation may help us understand its spiritual counterpart (the subject of this chapter).

### ■ A Quiet Day in the Mountains

Imagine that you are enjoying a peaceful day in the mountains. The air is crisp and cool, the sun warm and relaxing. You are sitting like Huckleberry Finn—pants rolled up, feet in a mountain stream. Your eyes are closed, to help you focus on the pleasures of the moment.

Without thought, your abdomen moves down and out, pulling fresh



mountain air into your lungs. Without conscious effort, your heart pumps blood through 60,000 miles of arteries, veins, and capillaries. It transports oxygen (freshly produced by the local vegetation) and nutrients to organs and tissues throughout your body, and brings back to your lungs and liver a potpourri of waste products.

Your physical heart is the engine of your circulatory system and the central part of your physical being. Each day it moves 7 tons of blood through your body—2 to 3 ounces per beat. When this pump stops working, death races in—within four or five minutes.

Your physical heart is “ground zero” to your physical life.

When Dallas Willard uses the word “heart” in this chapter, he is not referring to the pump that pulsates within your chest. But there are many parallels between the physical and spiritual heart.

Like its material counterpart, the “heart” occupies the center or core of our being—“to which every other component of the self owes its proper functioning.” (p. 29) And also like the physical heart, your spiritual heart is the engine that helps transport the good stuff and expel the bad.

Let’s go back to the mountains for a closer look.

Imagine yourself again sitting by a mountain stream. Slowly you become aware of a profound spiritual truth. It is more than air that envelops your being. You exist in the midst of the ocean of God’s loving presence. He is as here-and-now as the air we breathe, but extends beyond the boundaries of our atmosphere, solar system, galaxy, and universe.

Now imagine that with each breath, you are drawing the very presence, power, and passion of God into the center of your being. Imagine the presence of God’s Spirit circulating throughout every particle that is you, bringing in the nutrients for spiritual life and taking away the waste products—the desires for and actions of a life apart from God that could cause spiritual disease or death.

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

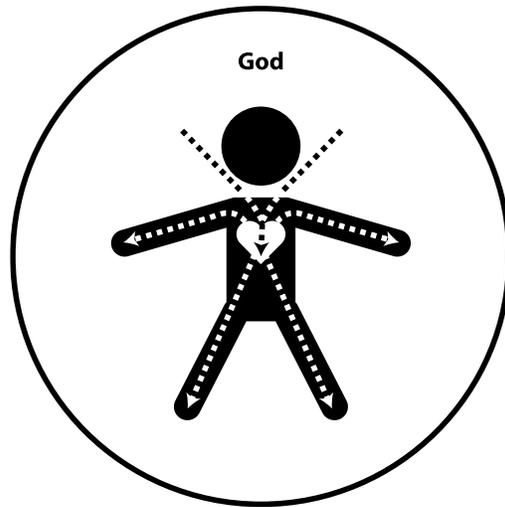
- Review



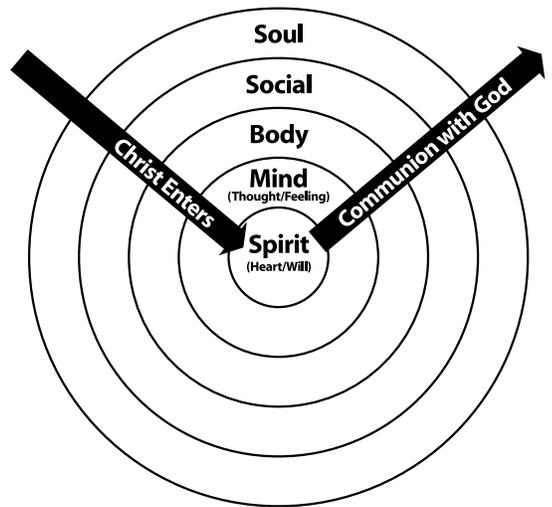
### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





**God in - God out**



As with your physical heart, your spiritual heart is the pump that circulates life (the love and presence of God) throughout the various components of your whole being, keeping each one vital and alive.

Unlike your physical heart, however, your spiritual heart is more than a pacemaker of life: 1) It is the primary mechanism for producing real change—transformation of the self to reflect the love and character of Christ; and 2) It serves as the CEO of your life.

### ■ Note to Leader

As you are now aware, the *RESOURCE GUIDE* provides you with more resources than you can use in a typical group meeting. As with Chapter One, our suggestion is that you locate the one-page outline sheet provided in the appendix section of each lesson and use it to organize your presentation.

The resources and ideas you use will depend on you and the desires of your group—which may have already come into focus. We assume that most people like overviews and object lessons. So we continue to begin each lesson with this form of synopsis. For lesson two, the imagery of the functioning of the physical heart is compared to the role of the spiritual heart—the subject of this chapter.

The overview/object lesson is presented as background and for your information. You may, however, decide to retell the illustration to the participants as part of the warm-up time or in summarizing the lesson.

We also assume you will be showing the designated video clips as part of each class.

Where you go from there is up to you and your group—but unless you have more than an hour to work with, we don't suggest that you try to do it all.

Some groups may want to focus most of their attention on the *reflection questions* that are presented in each lesson—after the video content is viewed. These questions flow from the video clips or text itself.

Other groups may desire to spend the majority of the time together on the *Bible study* or *Scripture meditation*.

For others, the *transforming exercises*—designed for hands-on practice each week—may be used to promote accountability (and support) for entering into the process of spiritual transformation.

And still others may wish to focus on understanding the *key terms* presented and the “*Where else did he say that?*” section.

Our desire is to provide a potpourri of resources that you can mix and match to meet the needs of your group.

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: a lawn chair (representing outdoors), a photograph of a beautiful landscape (maybe from a recent vacation), a beach towel spread out on the floor

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil





SESSION TWO:

# The Heart in the System of Human Life



## INTRODUCTION

### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session two of *Renovation of the Heart*.

Depending on the participants' familiarity with one another, you may want to have the members (or perhaps just the visitors) introduce themselves individually and state briefly what they hope to get out of this series of meetings.

### ■ Prayer

*"Heavenly Father, please continue to increase our desire for your transforming presence in our lives. As we prayed as children, please come into our hearts and live there forever. Make yourself comfortable and at home in the center of who we are, and teach us to be comfortable with your transforming presence."*



## WARM-UP

### ■ Does Your Life Need a New CEO?

Dallas uses three different words to describe your heart. In his words, "I believe it will become clear that heart, spirit, and will (or their equivalents) are words that refer to one and the same thing, the same fundamental component of the person." (p. 29)

- *Heart* refers to its position in the human being, as the center or core to which every other component of the self owes its proper functioning. Heart suggests location and vital function.
- *Will* refers to that component's power to initiate, to create, to bring about what did not exist before. Will represents the ability to *choose* to live inside or outside God's kingdom.
- *Spirit* refers to its fundamental nature as distinct and independent from physical reality. (p. 29) This term suggests unbodily personal power.

Put the three terms together and you get the full picture. At the center of your being is a spiritual reality that has the power to initiate and create—and communicate via its spiritual reality. It may be described as your *heart*, *will*, or *spirit*. It is the CEO of your human life and makes decisions each moment of the day that affect your whole person.

The most fundamental choice of your CEO is the same one that originally confronted Adam and Eve: to live in an intimate, conversational, and communal relationship with God, or to initiate and maintain a separate existence—to choose *willingness* (life with and under submission to God) or *willfulness* (life apart from God).

For there to be a CEO, there must be a company to run. Every coach needs a team; every chief needs braves; every *heart*, the components of a whole person.

Dallas proposes that there are six basic aspects of a human life. (p. 30) “These together and in interplay make up ‘human nature’”:

- *Thought* (images, concepts, judgments, inferences)
- *Feeling* (sensations, emotion)
- *Choice* (will, heart, spirit, decision, character, the “CEO”)
- *Body* (action, interaction with the physical world)
- *Social context* (personal and structural relations with others)
- *Soul* (the factor that integrates all of the above to form one life)

There are only five things that a human being can do. We can think, feel, choose, behave, and interact with others. The soul, as distinguished from the CEO/heart, is the invisible computer that keeps everything running and integrated into one person—but more on the soul in later chapters.

### ■ If You Were a Fortune 500 Company

If you imagine yourself as a Fortune 500 company, an ideal existence—administrative harmony—might work something like this:

The CEO, who makes the choices, sits at the head of the table in a conference room. She is surrounded by five division heads representing research and development (thought), human resources (feeling), labor (body), corporate relations (social context), and information services (soul).

In an ideal situation for your company, all essential parts are effectively organized around its mission statement—its purpose and reason for existence—that was put in place by the board of directors. The CEO seeks the higher good of the organization and its mission. In the best of worlds, the five division heads cooperate and comply with the administrative will of the CEO.

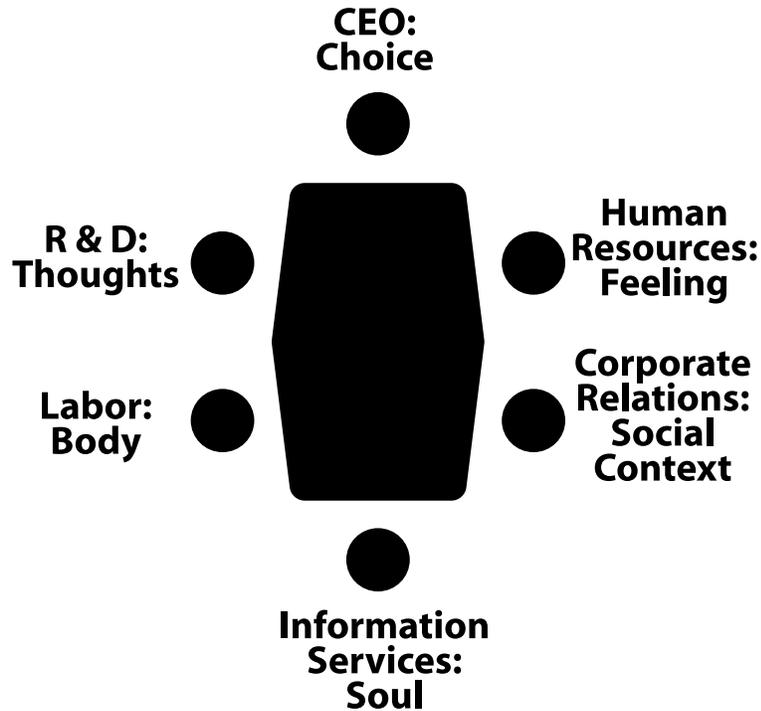
In an ideal situation for running your life, all your component parts (thought, feeling, choice, behavior, social interactions, and soul) are effectively organized around God (the chairman of the board) and





the mission statement of loving him with your entire being and your neighbor as yourself.

Your heart plays the lead role—as CEO—in assuring conformity to God’s will and the fulfillment of your mission (i.e., keeping the supreme commandments of Christ). The division heads work in harmony with the CEO. In an ideal situation, as your life runs, it is in the process of being restored and sustained by the Chairman of the Board—God. In an ideal world.



Unfortunately, ever since that first hostile takeover back in the Garden of Eden, there are very few ideal corporations. Most of us are more like “Fortune 5,000,000,000” companies and work more like this:

The CEO (will) arrives late for the meeting with the division heads. He has been busy transferring funds from the corporate account to his personal account—packing a golden parachute in case the company goes belly up.

The meeting begins. Research and development (thought) reports that in today’s business world, it has become far too costly to pursue the present mission statement. A proposal is presented for establishing independence from the Board and plotting a new course that will provide quick profit—by dabbling in other, albeit risky, opportunities.

Human resources (feeling) is concerned about the potential impact on employees—but is quickly appeased by a reminder from the CEO that R & D’s proposal includes a provision for high compensation to each of the division heads.

Labor argues that the work force will go along with the plan only if the workweek is reduced to three days and breaks are expanded. Corporate relations—wary with actually having to relate to other corporations—is giddy about the possibility that the new plan may produce enough cash for some hostile takeovers, and the information services division head is not present. The computer network is down because of a virus that came in via some Internet porn site.

Okay, that's a bit ridiculous—but only a bit. Dallas suggests, *“Spiritual formation in Christ is the process leading to that ideal end [where all essential parts of the human self are effectively organized around God, as they are restored and sustained by him], and its result is love of God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and of the neighbor as oneself.”* (p. 31) If he's right—and he seems too smart to be wrong—then the task of maintaining our inner worlds as ideal “Fortune 500” companies—where each division (component) cooperates toward the end of achieving this central mission—is very difficult.

In fact, it is so difficult that it is impossible. A smart CEO will request a private meeting with the Chairman of the Board and confess, “Running this company is beyond my ability to do alone. Please help me—sit by my side and mentor me—as I try to execute your wishes.”

### ■ Exercise

Take a moment to consider the functioning of your “Fortune 500” company—how each of the divisions is functioning. Exercise 2-A will help you organize your thoughts.

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share his reaction to Exercise 2-A?

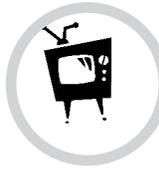
### ■ Note to the Leader

Participants may find it helpful to work with Exercise 2-A while examining the two diagrams presented in Chapter Two (see pages 38 and 40 of *Renovation of the Heart*.)

While there may be some discussion about trying to do, think, and feel the same things Jesus did, thought, and felt, the ideal fix for our “companies” is to have our CEO (heart) in close communication with the Chairman of the Board (God). To repeat Dallas' definition:

*“Spiritual formation in Christ is the process leading to that ideal end, and its result is love of God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and of the neighbor as oneself. The human self is then fully integrated under God.”* (p. 31)





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## CONTENT

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You are about to see two video vignettes. In the first segment Dallas will be giving a brief lecture that summarizes Chapter Two of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

### ■ Video Vignette

#### (Dallas' Lecture on Chapter Two: The Heart in the System of Human Life)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the class to respond to the reflection questions which have been provided.

### ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- There are six basic aspects (components/dimensions) of human life: thought, feeling, choice, body, social context, and soul.
- Spiritual formation in Christ results in a harmony of functioning among a person's component parts and a pervasive sense of being in love with God and others.
- The heart/will/spirit serves as the CEO of one's life.
- When it functions as it should, chooses what is good, and avoids what is evil, the heart/will/spirit can have a tremendous impact on transformation of the person—it can help unite a divided heart.
- Each aspect or dimension of the person will be a source of weakness or strength to the whole person, depending upon the condition it is in, and the condition it is in will depend, finally, upon the heart.
- Temptation = both the thought of *and* inclination to sin.
- Our actions always arise out of the interplay of the dimensions of human life: spirit, mind, feeling, body, social context, and soul.
- Actions never come from the movement of the will alone.
- In the life away from God we are dominated first by body and last by God. In a life under God we are dominated first by God and last by body.
- *"It is the central point of the book that spiritual transformation only happens as each essential dimension of the human being is*

*transformed to Christlikeness under the direction of a regenerate will interacting with constant overtures of grace from God. Such transformation is not the result of mere human effort and cannot be accomplished by putting pressure on the will (heart, spirit) alone.” (p. 41 & 42)*

## ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Lecture

- 1 What does it mean to say that the heart is the center of the human self?
- 2 Contrast Dallas Willard’s use of the terms *heart*, *will*, and *spirit*. Why does he not use just one term?
- 3 Matching. Fill in the blank with the number of the correct definition.
 

a. ___ Thought	1. Will, decision, character
b. ___ Feeling	2. Personal and social relations
c. ___ Choice	3. Images, concepts, judgments
d. ___ Body	4. Sensations, emotion
e. ___ Social Context	5. Factor that integrates all of the above to form one life
f. ___ Soul	6. Action and interaction with physical world
- 4 Using the diagram of the human self, describe how Christian spiritual formation happens.
- 5 What kind of life did Jesus come to bring us?

### Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.





## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Conversation

- 1 What does it mean to have the “law” written on your heart?
- 2 Have you ever obeyed God as a “white-knuckled requirement”? How does that type of obedience contrast with obeying God out of joyful desire?
- 3 Do you want to be like the person describe in 1 Corinthians 13 (the love chapter)? How can that be accomplished—without turning it into white-knuckled conformity to the behaviors Paul describes?

### Book: Chapter Two

- 1 How can Christian spiritual formation unite a divided heart?
- 2 Your heart is the CEO of your life. Where is your “company” heading?
- 3 Discuss how each of the six dimensions of a person would be different if he were fully transformed by the love and presence of God.
- 4 The example of running a Fortune 500 company was used to illustrate the component parts of a person. Use the nation of Israel during the period of the kings as an illustration for understanding these component parts. (Hint: The king is analogous to the heart/will/spirit. Hint #2: More explanation is given in the Bible Study that follows.)



## BIBLE STUDY

Let’s turn our attention to the Bible for a frame of reference. A brief Bible study is found in Appendix 2-B and may be used in class or as a “homework” activity.

## ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercise in class.

## ■ Leader's Insight

In this passage (1 Samuel 8:4-22) we observe the dialogue between Samuel the prophet and God concerning Israel's desire to have a king—to be like the other nations. It was God's pleasure to be king over Israel himself, working in conjunction with prophets like Samuel as CEOs. But he allows the people to choose a path of independence, as he had allowed in the Garden of Eden.

This passage was selected for two reasons. First, on page 42 of *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard begins a section titled "Israel and Us," which highlights parallels between the course of the nation of Israel and the course of a person's spiritual life. Second, it seemed interesting to expand on the notion of the heart as CEO by considering the parallel between Israel's desire for an earthly king (a ruler other than God) and a human being's tendency to put someone other than God on the throne of his or her life.

Initially, Israel's kings worked in close connection with God. But with time, the connection was broken, and Israel became a divided and conquered nation.

It is hoped that by participating in this Bible study, participants will benefit from Israel's history of having the wrong king (any ruler other than God) and consider the role played by the heart in any desire for autonomy and self-rule.

## ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to spend 10 to 15 minutes with the Bible Study between meeting times. Perhaps a person may want simply to slow-read the passage to the rhythm of deep, slow breathing while remaining in a posture of a listening student before God. Or another might be challenged to visualize the throne room of his heart and ask God for a clear picture of who is occupying the throne.

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## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

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### ■ Thoughts:

If a Christian is keeping Jesus' commandments to love God wholeheartedly and one's neighbor as oneself, consider what would be going on in each of the six components of his life.





■ **Emotions:**

Use a journal this week to write about your emotions during two different times: 1) the occasion you felt your inner life was most in harmony with God's love and will, and 2) the time when you felt most internally divided.

■ **Will:**

Dallas Willard believes that temptation involves *both* the thought of *and* the inclination to sin. When you arise each morning this week, slide to your knees before you stand on your feet, and ask God to bend your will away from any inclination to sin.

■ **Behavior:**

Fast one meal this week and use the time to pray that your actions will become increasingly less dominated by your physical cravings and more determined by the love of God.

■ **Social Interactions:**

Dallas Willard believes that our actions tell who we are. Think back over the past three days. What was your most memorable social interaction? What does it say about who you are?



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## SUMMARY

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Dallas Willard states that the central point of *Renovation of the Heart* is that spiritual transformation happens only as each essential dimension of the human being is transformed to Christlikeness under the direction of a regenerate will (heart, spirit) interacting with constant overtures of grace from God. This kind of transformation cannot happen as a result of white-knuckled obedience, or by putting pressure on the will (heart, spirit). Instead, we become like Jesus as we allow him to enter and gradually take over every aspect/dimension of us. We become like Jesus as we learn to enjoy and cooperate with the grace of God. Our heart/will/spirit plays a crucial role (the most central role) in the process of transformation. But acting apart from God, even this vital component of a human's life is impotent to produce change.

## MORE DALLAS



## Key Term Box

**Will**

- “Will” (also referenced by Dallas Willard as “heart” and “spirit”) refers to the power to initiate, to create, to bring about what did not exist before. (p. 29)

**Spirit**

- “Spirit” refers to the fundamental nature of that component (also referred to as “will” and “heart”) as distinct and independent from physical reality. (p. 29)

**Heart**

- “Heart” refers to the central position of that component (also referred to as “will” and “spirit”) in the human being. (p. 29)
- The human heart, will, or spirit is the executive center of a human life. The heart is where decisions and choices are made for the whole person. That is its function. (p. 29) The will/spirit/heart is the core of the human being. (p. 34)

**Thought**

- “Thought brings things before our minds in various ways (including perceptions and imagination) and enables us to consider them in various respects and trace out their interrelationships with one another.” (p. 32)

**Feeling**

- “Feeling inclines us toward or away from things that come before our minds in thought.” (p. 32)

**Body**

- “The body is the focal point of our presence in the physical and social world. In union with it we come into existence, and we become the person we shall forever be. It is our primary energy source or ‘strength’—our personalized ‘power pack.’” (p. 35)





## Social Context

- “The human self requires rootedness in others.” We live as we should only when we are in right relation to God and to other human beings—thus the two greatest commandments. (p. 36)

## Character

- “Relatively constant will” (p. 40)

## Spiritual Formation

- “*Spiritual formation in Christ is the process leading to that ideal end [where all of the essential parts of the human self are effectively organized around God as they are restored and sustained by him]; and its result is love of God with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and of the neighbor as oneself.*” (p. 31)

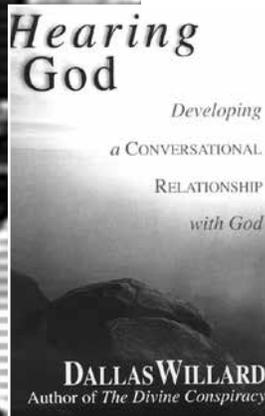
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## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

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### ■ Hearing God

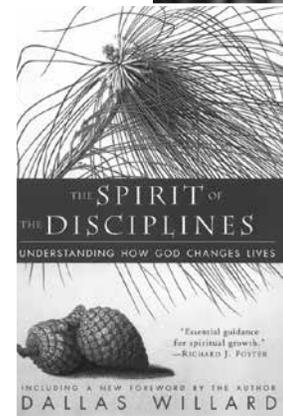
- “Thus ‘the sower sows the word’ of the kingdom (Mark 4:14). When this takes root in the heart and mind, a new life enters our personality and increasingly becomes *our* life as we learn to ‘be guided by the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:25) and ‘sow to the Spirit’ (Galatians 6:8).”(p. 150) [You may want to study the diagram of the person presented in this chapter as you read the above quote.]
- “The word of God—primarily the gospel of his kingdom and of the life and death of Jesus on our behalf—enters our mind and brings new life through faith. As we open our entire life to this new power and as those sent by God minister the word to us, the word moves into every part of our personality, just like the water and soap move through the shirt’s fibers. God’s word pushes out and replaces all that is false and opposed to God’s purposes in creating us and putting us in our unique place on earth.” (p. 152)
- “The basic idea here is that God calls us to a direct and fully self-conscious personal relationship with him (as priests) in which we share responsibly with him (as kings) in the exercise of his authority.” Exactly how do we experience it? We learn to recognize God’s presence, know the forms it takes. (p. 46)



- We are to become so immersed in God that we are indistinguishable from him. (p. 204)

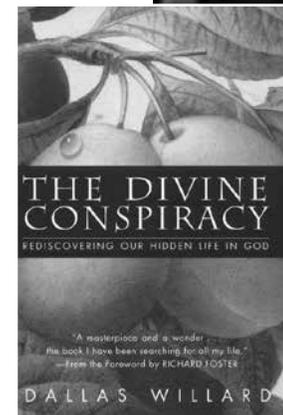
## ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- Social and political revolutions have shown no tendency to transform the heart. (Preface, viii)
- Christianity can succeed as a guide for current humanity only if it does two things: 1) “It must take the need for human transformation as seriously as do modern revolutionary movements.” 2) “It needs to clarify and exemplify realistic methods of human transformation. It must show how the ordinary individuals who make up the human race today can become, through the grace of Christ, a love-filled, effective, and powerful community.” (Preface, ix)
- The heart of the New Testament message is, “We *can* become like Christ in character and in power and thus realize our highest ideals of well-being and well-doing.” (Preface, ix)



## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- Bumper-sticker theology is quite a retreat from living a radically different kind of life now. Unfortunately, what the slogan [“Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven”] conveys is that forgiveness alone is what Christianity is all about, what is essential to it (p. 36). [Instead of the cultivation of a dynamic and personal relationship with God that leads to authentic transformation of character.]
- The problem with the “just-as-if-I’d-never-sinned” view of atonement is that “*justification* has taken the place of *regeneration*, or new life... For all the talk about the ‘new birth’ among conservative Christians, there is an almost total lack of understanding of what that new birth is in practical terms and of how it relates to forgiveness and imputed or transmitted righteousness.” (p. 42)
- “The very *unity of experiences* that constitute a human self cannot be located at any point in or around this body through which we live, not even in the brain.” (p. 75)
- “Being whole as your Father in the heavens is whole” (Matthew 5:45f). “In both cases the reference is to the character of divine love, which only those in the family of God actually possess. This is the golden thread that winds its way through the entire discussion of kingdom living by Jesus, continually correcting our vision and giving us hope.” (p. 212) [Whole, not perfect]





SESSION THREE:

# Radical Evil in the Ruined Soul



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Lost Keys

Have you ever lost your keys; I mean *really* lost them? I have. I woke up one morning, got showered, dressed, and coffeed-up. Sped-read a few verses of Scripture, said “bye” to my wife and daughters, and then went to the place where my billfold, watch, and ring of keys spend the night. No keys!

“Honey, have you seen my keys?” Sometimes my wife uses them to avoid having to excavate her purse and forgets to return them to their usual resting place.

“No, sure haven’t. Where did you have them last?”

Now, that’s the question, isn’t it? If I knew the answer to that one, my keys would not be lost. But I kept that observation to myself.

“I’m not sure. But when I find them, I’ll let you know.” (Well, I almost kept it to myself).

I should have just been glad she didn’t say, “They didn’t grow legs and walk away.”

Twenty minutes of feverish searching proved fruitless—save the rediscovery of 56 cents (sofa cushions) and a three-year-old *Wittenberg Door* (under the driver’s seat of my car).

Losing your car keys may be the number one trial to a person’s sanctification. Perhaps I should own that. I was as grumpy as a New York Mets fan all day.

I couldn’t start my car and had to be chauffeured around like a kindergartner.

I couldn't open my mailbox and had to endure a lecture from the postmaster concerning the importance of keeping up with one's keys. I also didn't get to find out if I had won the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes because he wouldn't hand me my mail.

I couldn't get into my office building and had to wait and whistle for almost 10 minutes before someone else showed up for work and let me in.

Fortunately, that evening, I needed to put on my coat to go out and feed our dog—he's not really our dog; he just started to eat with us and now refuses to go home. In the bottom of my coat pocket was what had become that day a precious ring of keys. I howled so loud the dog tried to harmonize.

As Dallas Willard reminds us in this chapter, when something is lost, it is *out of place*—it is not where it is supposed to be—and consequently useless.

For more than 12 hours, my keys were out of place and useless.

This chapter is about “radical evil in the ruined soul.” According to Dallas, a “ruined soul” is simply a “lost” (out of place and useless) soul.

Souls are supposed to be found in the presence of God, living in a loving, dependent relationship with their creator. But, unlike my car keys, souls can, in essence, grow legs and walk away. And when they do that—choose to live on their own terms instead of God's, in their own kingdom instead of the kingdom of heaven—they become lost.

For a lost soul to become “radically evil” means that it has named itself (usually by actions and not words) to be God in place of God (p. 55); that is—and again this goes beyond the capacity of an ordinary set of keys—it chooses to be lost and remain lost, preferring to live on its own (self-management) terms instead of God's terms (kingdom living).

In this chapter we will examine how lost souls can be found, and see why the greatest threat to the kingdom of God in my life is *my* kingdom.

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





*The Lord looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God. They have all gone astray [become lost], they are all alike, perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one.*

PSALM 14:2,3 (PAR).

## ■ Note to Leader

If you have found it useful to use the one-page outline sheet (3-C) in organizing your presentation, you will want to locate it now.

Perhaps you have begun to create object lessons and are now looking for your keys so you can use them in talking about an object you have lost while showing the item to the class.

We also assume you have discovered which aspects of these lessons the majority of your class prefer. While we assume the Video Vignettes and Bible Study will be used by most classes, our primary hope is that you will enjoy selecting from the menu of options provided to create a class tailor-made (by you) to fit the interests of the participants.

And if you've decided that it's best to take two weeks to cover a lesson—and do everything suggested—cool!

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: keys on a keyring, anything small that you've lost from time to time

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil

## SESSION THREE:

# Radical Evil in the Ruined Soul

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## INTRODUCTION



### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session three of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Radical Evil in the Ruined Soul.”

### ■ Prayer

*“Dear God, please increase our awareness of your presence and love for us. As we spend this time together, with one another and with you, quicken our hearts and create a desire within to do an inventory of the state of our souls. For the times we have been like Adam and Eve and have run from you, please forgive us and invite us home. If we have become comfortable in running our lives—instead of allowing you to be in control—convict us, Lord, hear our private confessions, and once again, be the Lord of our lives. Amen.”*

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## WARM-UP



### ■ Dancing with God

In Max Lucado’s book *He Chose the Nails*, he tells a story that I wouldn’t dare read in front of a group—I’d never get through it without crying. If you would like to try, you’ll find it at the end of chapter seven. Good luck.

I’ll try to share a crude paraphrase with you without ruining my computer.

When Madeline was a little girl, she loved to dance with her father; it made her feel special and loved.

But that was then. She’s not a little girl anymore. The men who watch her dance are as old as her father. She dances for them and takes their dollars.

One day at work, her cousin came by and gave Madeline a box full of letters sent from her father.

“These are coming in two or three a week,” her cousin com-





plained. “Give him your address.”

But that is something Madeline couldn’t do. Neither could she bear to open the envelopes. She knew they were filled with love. But what if he knew what she was doing? It would break his heart, and he wouldn’t want her to come home ever again.

Time went by, and the letters continued to be delivered by her cousin. Madeline never opened them; she just placed them tenderly in a box, arranged by postmark.

With numb emotions and thoughts of home shoved down deep inside, Madeline continued to work.

Summer turned into fall as the letters continued to pour in. Her cousin complained and told Madeline she should write him or go back home. But she refused. Her shame was too great.

Then one day, a few days before Christmas Eve, another letter arrived—same shape and color, but without a postmark—and it wasn’t delivered by her cousin. He had been there. At the club, in her dressing room.

She opened the envelope and removed the card. “I know where you are,” it read. “I know what you do. This doesn’t change the way I feel. What I’ve said in each letter is still true.”

But she didn’t know what he had said. She pulled the most recent letter and read it. And then a second and a third. Each letter—every one of them—had the same sentence. Each asked the same question. Madeline’s face was wet; the floor was a mess.

Within an hour she was headed home. She walked in as the Christmas Eve party was breaking up. The relatives were beginning to leave.

“Joe,” she heard her uncle say. “Someone is here to see you.”

Her dad stepped out from the kitchen and froze. Madeline was holding her backpack and his letter. There was a question in her eyes.

“The answer is yes,” she said to her father. “If you’re still asking, the answer is yes.”

“Oh, the invitation is good. It will always be good.”

And so the two danced again on Christmas Eve.

The letter fell to the floor, face up: “Will you come home and dance with your poppa again?”

## ■ Exercise

Madeline had become *lost* (misplaced), but she did not depreciate in value to her father. In fact, his thoughts were probably more consumed by her than when she was living in the same house with him. And by humbly accepting his invitation to be with

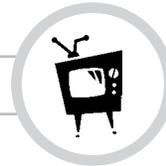
him again, she became *found*.

Take a few moments and consider the questions in Exercise 3-A.

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share her reaction to the story or the exercise?

## CONTENT



You are about to see two video vignettes. In the first segment Dallas will be giving a brief lecture that summarizes Chapter Three of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

### ■ Video Vignette

#### (Dallas' Lecture on Chapter Three: Radical Evil and the Ruined Soul)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the class to respond to the reflection questions which have been provided.

### ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- We must see the soul as lost and ruined—and each dimension (thoughts, feelings, will, behavior, and social relationships) as dysfunctional—before we can be motivated to seek Christian spiritual formation. (p. 45)
- Sin does not make a person worthless; choosing a path of sin makes a person “lost.” (p. 46)
- “Choice [between willing surrender to God or willful independence] is where sin dwells.” (p. 46)
- It is common for Christians to react to sin by covering it up instead of making a humble confession.
- “The intelligent person recognizes that his or her well-being lies in being in harmony with God and with what God is doing in the ‘kingdom.’” (p. 51)
- “Knowledge” of God means to be experientially involved with him. (p. 51)





- “The human body becomes the primary area of pleasure for the person who does not live honestly and interactively with God...” (p. 53)
  - For a heart to be “radically evil” means that it has made *me* God in place of God. (p. 55)
  - “The ultimately lost person is the person who cannot want God.” (p. 58)
  - “Spiritual formation is not something that may, or may not, be added to the gift of eternal life as an *option*. Rather, it is the path that the eternal kind of life ‘from above’ naturally takes.” (p. 59)

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Lecture

- 1 What is the basic problem with human beings?
- 2 Dallas says that in the Fall we find the form of all temptation. How does he describe this?
- 3 The path away from God, Dallas suggests, is always one of self-deification. He believes that as this process progresses, it always turns to sensuality—sex and violence. Why does he believe this is so?
- 4 What is the greatest threat to the kingdom of God in your life?
- 5 What does it mean to be “lost”?

## ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Conversation

- 1 What primary thing/condition motivates a person to seek the kingdom of God?
- 2 Call to mind a time when dissatisfaction in your own life motivated you to place your life in God's hands.
- 3 Name a couple of "addictions" that can keep a person numb to feeling personal dissatisfaction.
- 4 How did Larry Crabb relate the phrase "crying from the heart" to Dallas Willard's teaching on being "lost"?

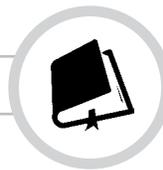
### Book: Chapter Three

- 1 Why does Christian formation always begin with seeing oneself as "lost and ruined"?
- 2 Where does Dallas Willard suggest that sin dwells?
- 3 What does it mean to have "knowledge of God"?
- 4 For people who do not live honestly and interactively with God, where does their primary area of pleasure reside? What are the implications for this?
- 5 What does it mean for a heart to be "radically evil"?

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## BIBLE STUDY

We will now turn our attention to the Bible for a frame of reference. A brief Bible study is found in Appendix 3-B and may be used in class or as a homework assignment.





## ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercise in class.

## ■ Leader's Insight

Images from the Garden of Eden come to mind when reading Dallas' poignant observation, "Choice is where sin dwells." (p. 46) "The slide into pervasive soul corruption," he further states, "begins with the heart (or will) deflecting the mind from God." (p. 51)

Human beings know—or at least have some understanding—that there is a God. Belief in his reality is never the real problem. The problem instead is the same one faced by Adam and Eve: to believe that God should have the place in the universe that he does, and that our wills should be submitted to his.

A seminary professor, Tom Province, had a unique way of expressing the fundamental human problem: "What is the most important question of human existence?" he would ask. "What determines how we live our lives in relation to God and one another? Basically," came his answer to his question, "it is this: Do I believe that God has my best interests at heart?"

Adam and Eve flunked Tom's test. They answered, "No, God does not know what is best for me." And the result was the fall of humankind.

But we are very fortunate. Each morning we awaken to the possibility of making the right choice. Each day brings several hundred opportunities to go back to Eden and do it right. Each day we can choose to eat from the right tree—staying connected to God and living by the rule of his kingdom—instead of choosing to be God ourselves.

## ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to spend 10 to 15 minutes slow-reading Romans 1:20-25 as a meditation that allows personal examination, and to realize there are no new temptations since Eden.

### Romans 1:20-25

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise,*

*they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

*Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.*

## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES



- **Thoughts** [Warning: This may be painful.] Find a quiet place for reflection. Consider that apart from God's presence and grace, your soul is lost and ruined. Think about how each of the dimensions of you—thoughts, emotions, will, behavior, and relationships—functions when God is not orchestrating your life. Then bring two questions before your mind: 1) "How were things going in my life during the times I was in control instead of God?" 2) "What are the ways I can make sure I am allowing God to be God—today?"
- **Emotions** If you have become aware of situations in your life in which you are "eating from the wrong tree" (willfulness instead of willing surrender), sit down, imagine God sitting by your side, and confess this sin to him. Pay attention to your emotions as you make the confession and listen for his response.
- **Will** Pray the following prayer: "*Lord, I am so prone to be like my great-grandparents, Adam and Eve, and forget that you have my best interests at heart. Please forgive me. Please restore the fellowship that we have enjoyed. Live your life through me. Amen.*"
- **Behavior** According to Dallas Willard, "The human body becomes the primary area of pleasure for the person who does not live honestly and interactively with God..." (p. 53) Examine your life. Are there areas where you have become too attached to physical pleasures—pornographic images in magazines or movies, eating solely for entertainment, etc.? Resolve to spend the next 24 hours





free from such potential addictions. Use every desire to return to bodily pleasure as an occasion to ask God for a fresh experience of abundant life in his spirit.

- **Social Interactions** Ask for forgiveness from any friend or family member whose life you have tried to manipulate or control.



## SUMMARY

Dallas Willard states that being ruthlessly honest about the state of our souls is foundational to the process of authentic transformation. Specifically, he says that we must see the soul as lost and ruined—and each dimension (thoughts, feelings, will, behavior, and social relationships) as dysfunctional—before we can be motivated to seek Christian spiritual formation. (p. 45)

But he also emphasizes that being “lost” does not make a person worthless. A lost person is out of place, on the wrong path, and, to a large extent, has made himself God instead of God. But God’s desire for the lost is that he or she follow the example of the prodigal son—be honest about the present state of affairs and return home. The outstretched arms of God will show that the lost one was always of supreme value.



## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

#### Lostness

- A ruined soul is a lost soul. “To be lost means to be *out of place*, to be omitted.” If something is lost, it is not where it is supposed to be—and consequently is useless. “The condition of lostness is not the same as the outcome to which it leads. We’re not lost because we are going to wind up in the wrong place. We are going to wind up in the wrong place because we are lost.” (p. 55)
- Lost souls are out of place. They are in their own kingdom instead of the kingdom of heaven. Lost persons are “the ones who mistake their own person for God.” (p. 56)

## Hell

- It is possible to have an orientation toward self that leads to becoming the kind of person for whom “away-from-God” is the only suitable place. [Hell] is a place this type of person would choose for himself—rather than to turn around and follow a path of humility and acceptance of God as God. “Whether or not God’s will is infinitely flexible, the human will is not. There are limits beyond which it cannot bend back, cannot turn or repent.” (p. 57)

## Radical Evil

- For a heart to be “radically evil” means that it has made *me* God in place of God. (p. 55)

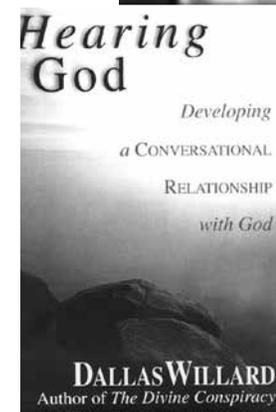
## Good despair/True brokenness

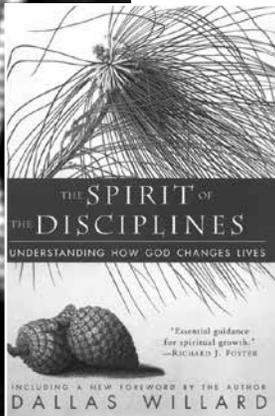
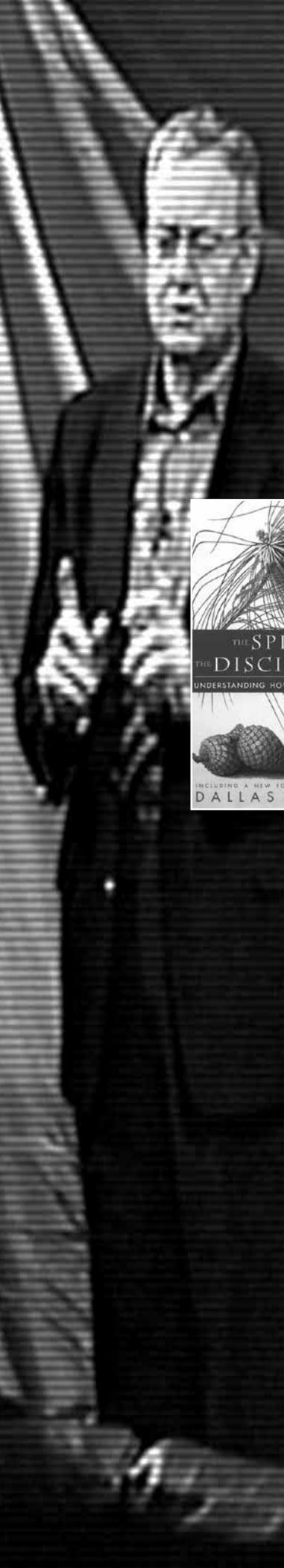
- “The ruined soul must be willing to hear of and recognize its own ruin before it can find how to enter a different path, the path of eternal life that naturally leads into spiritual formation in Christlikeness.” (p. 59)
- “It is common today to hear Christians talk of their ‘brokenness.’ But when you listen closely, you may discover that they are talking about their *wounds*, the things they have suffered, not about the evil that is in them.” (p. 60)

## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

### ■ Hearing God

- “On the other hand, the fact that only God can take away our aloneness by his presence explains why the ultimate suffering and punishment is separation from the presence of God.” (p. 44)
- Mother Teresa said that loneliness is the “leprosy of the modern world.” (p. 45)
- Where do all the lonely people come from? “There is a simple and correct answer to this question: the lonely people live apart from God. They live ‘without hope and without God in the world.’ (Ephesians 2:12, NIV). Their many experiences of alienation are rooted in their alienation from God.” (pp. 45,46)





- “Human beings were once alive to God. They were created to be responsive to and interactive with him. Adam and Eve live in conversational relationship with their Creator, daily renewed. When they mistrusted God and disobeyed him, that cut them off from the realm of Spirit.” They became as dead to the realm of the Spirit as a kitten is to arithmetic. (p. 148)
- Too often we treat God as a celestial aspirin to take away our pain, or as a cosmic butler to take away our messes. (p. 202)

### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

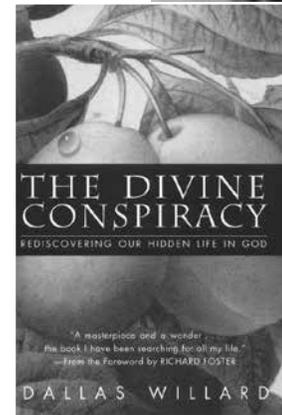
- “Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried.” (Quote from G. K. Chesterton, found on p. 1)
- The cost of non-discipleship: “To depart from righteousness is to choose a life of crushing burdens, failures, and disappointments, a life caught in the toils of endless problems that are never resolved.” (p. 2)
- “It is this pervasive distortion and disruption of human existence from the top down that the Bible refers to as sin (not sins)—the general posture of fallen humankind. Humans are not only wrong, they are also *wrung*, twisted out of proper shape and proportion.” (p. 63)
- Then...between spirit and flesh (divine and dust) “there was a constant warfare. Robbed of their highest unifying principle—their relation to God—humans were no longer beings with integrity or coherent wholeness.” They lost union with God. (p. 66)
- “The true effect of the Fall was to lead to trust in the flesh alone, to ‘not see fit to acknowledge God any longer’ (Romans 1:28)” ... and since we cannot count on God, we must take matters into our own hands. “This is what it is to be carnally minded. It is the carnal mind—not the flesh—that is at enmity with God and incapable of subjection to his law.” (p. 91)
- “We delude ourselves about the sustaining conditions of people’s evil deeds *because we wish to continue living as we now live and continue being the kinds of people we are.* We do not want to

change... We just want to escape the *consequences* of its being what it truly is and of our being who we truly are.” (p. 224, 225)

- “This is the illusion of our age, the Holy Grail of modernity, a pleasant dream in the sleep of secularism. The monstrous evils we deplore are in fact the strict causal consequences of the spirit and behavior of the ‘normal’ human beings following generally acceptable patterns of life.” (p. 234)

## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- In Matthew 6 we learn about “the two main things that will block or hinder a life constantly interactive with God and healthy growth in the kingdom. These are the desire to have the approval of others, especially for being devout, and the desire to secure ourselves by means of material wealth.” (p. 188)
- “In the first twelve verses of Matthew 7, he deals with the deadly way in which we try to ‘manage’ or control those closest to us by blaming and condemning them and by forcing upon them our ‘wonderful solutions’ for their problems. This too is a sure way of stepping outside *Torah Logos*, The Kingdom Among Us, and undertaking to manage our world on our own. Disaster awaits—greater or smaller, sooner or later.” (p. 216)





SESSION FOUR:

# Radical Goodness Restored to the Soul



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Christian's Goodness

Before we get down to business, I want to share my favorite portrait of radical goodness. The subject is a little boy named Christian. I met him while serving as a chaperone to a herd of teenagers. Here's what happened.

The mission trip to Honduras was going very well. And I had become quite fluent with my ten words of Spanish.

*Como se dice?* That's "How do you say?" for all you gringos. *Como se yarmulke?* "How is your yarmulke?" *Coca Dietetica* means, "I'm very thirsty but prefer even a diet Coke to stomach cramps." And, of course the most important Spanish word, *Baño*. It translates, "Oops, I should have stopped with one Coca Dietetica."

But then one day something happened that transcended all words.

It was a Sunday afternoon. Our mission group was going to perform a drama in a nearby barrio. I'm not exactly sure what "barrio" means, but from the surroundings, I'm guessing "slum."

We drove around a neighborhood where the streets had no names. They also had no pavement. We rattled along over large rocks and nature's potholes. A cloud of dust followed our van.

The "houses" were about the size of a small living room. Most were made of homemade brick or cinder block and had dirt floors. A few were piles of wood and tin. Children and flies flew in and out of the open doors in swarms.

The van stopped, and we piled out. A suitable stage for the drama had been found. It was a dead basketball court. Two former backboards stood at opposite ends of a dirty concrete slab. Goals were long gone. The backboards stared at each other with missing-tooth grins. Garbage outlined the court. Occasionally a plastic wrapper became a tumbleweed.

I looked down and noticed I had picked up a shadow. A little boy stood at my side, hands behind his back in a mirror image of my posture. He had closely cropped brown hair with a cowlick over his right temple. (Really, more of a calf lick). He had industrious eyes and was looking up as if to say, "How can I help?"

"Como se llama?" I said.

"Me llama Cristiano."

The little fellow's name was Christian.

He must have assumed we could talk. So he was off, a mile a minute. An auditory blur of Spanish.

At the end of each paragraph, I would use a large portion of my Spanish to say, "No comprendo."

He would smile, nod, and then run another paragraph past me.

"No comprendo. Sorry. Burros understand more Spanish than me."

Another smile and nod.

Cristiano stood by my side through the first performance of the drama. He put his arm around my waist. I put my hand on his shoulder.

"Jesucristo," I said, when the "Christ" figure appeared in the drama. "Su nombre, Cristiano. Cristo. Cristiano."

He smiled even more broadly.

The drama was over. Jehudy, a minister from Costa Rica traveling with us, had begun preaching to the crowd.

Cristiano tugged on my shirt. He said something I, of course, didn't understand. Embarrassed to say "No comprendo" for the twentieth time, I said, "Si."

Cristiano's eyes began to sparkle. A broad smile spread across his face. Then he took off like an Olympic sprinter, disappearing into the chaos of his poor neighborhood.

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer

### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion

### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions

### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together

### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions

### VI. SUMMARY

- Review

### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?



He was gone for several minutes. I had no idea what I had said yes to. Maybe he had asked if I would take his family to America. Maybe I had promised the hand of a daughter in marriage. One thing was certain. I surely had said yes to something big!

The drama troupe was performing again as Cristiano rounded the corner and raced down the side of the court. There was something in his hand. What was it? He stopped in front of me and held up a small carton of chocolate milk.

I pointed to my chest.

“Si,” he said, eyes still sparkling. He was giving me a special treat. His special treat. Perhaps his only special treat (there was no carton for himself).

What a burro I had been. I assumed Cristiano’s excitement was for something he wanted to receive. I assumed his poverty had made him needy and he stayed close to me because he wanted something material I could provide.

But his excitement was from the joy of giving. Pure Christian joy.

It would’ve been easy to cry. But I was afraid he would think I didn’t like chocolate milk. So instead I motioned for a translator to come over.

“Thank you for the milk,” I said. “Your gift has touched my heart.”

Then I took my watch off and put it on his wrist. “Your name is Cristiano. Every time you look to see the time, I want you to pray, ‘Jesucristo, help me to keep on being just like you until the next time I look at this watch.’”

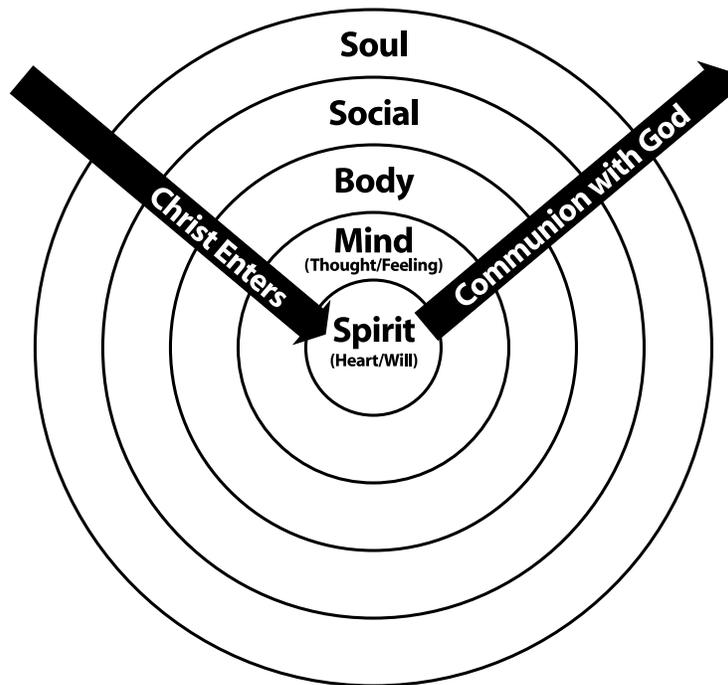
That seemed right to me. I knew that every time I saw a carton of milk, I would be reminded of how much I need the help of Jesus to be as good and giving as Cristiano.

### ■ Note to Leader

If you are using the one-page lesson outlines, you will want to locate that page (4-C) now. And if you are using these introductory stories as object lessons, you may want to locate a small carton of milk.

Perhaps you will empty the contents of the milk carton into a glass as you stand before the class, and then suggest that being open to God’s radical goodness requires that we (represented by the carton of milk) be emptied of all that is not God so we can be fully receptive to his presence entering into the center of ourselves. [This would also be a good time to refer to Willard’s diagram of the person and the arrow that points to the Word and Spirit of Christ entering into the depths of a person to begin the process of transformation.]

Following the object lesson you may continue to select from the menu of options provided in constructing a lesson tailored to the needs of your group.



## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: Small carton of milk

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil





SESSION FOUR:

# Radical Goodness Restored to the Soul



## INTRODUCTION

### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session four of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Radical Goodness Restored to the Soul.”

### ■ Prayer

*“Dear God, during this time we have together, please whisper to each person present. Convince us that the only real bargain in this life is to surrender ourselves completely to Jesus and his mission. Help us be able radically to abandon all that we love to him and for him. Amen.”*



## WARM-UP

### ■ Lessons From Pain

Pain is an amazing feedback system. It screams, “Hey, something is wrong here!”

Sometimes it’s very easy to understand exactly what pain wishes to tell. I recall attempting to do some roof repair. Not being even a weekend-warrior of home repair, I can make a klutz appear graceful. It wasn’t long before I had guided the business end of the hammer to the wrong nail—the thumbnail on my left hand.

For a long fraction of a second I stared at the thumb, waiting for the pain to arrive. And it did—in pulses and throbs. The influx of pain was a signal that something was wrong. “Wrong nail!” it exclaimed.

Sometimes it’s not so easy to understand what pain is trying to communicate. Several years ago I started getting almost-daily heart-burn. Overnight I realized how all of those antacid commercials were being paid for—as I became a heavy Tums user.

I recalled seeing my grandfather break out a five-gallon container of Tums after every meal and mused that, indeed, the apple doesn't roll very far from the tree.

But after a few years had passed and my pain had not, I finally agreed to talk with a physician. I was hoping he would be able to fix me up with a liquid Tums IV tree.

Instead, the acid doctor informed me that the pain was for a reason—it was trying to tell me something was wrong with my eating habits. Careful examination during the next four weeks of ingestion revealed the problems.

I had long since stopped exercising like the gym-rat I had been as a teenager, and was eating enough to feed two middle-aged men. And besides being a warning signal about overeating, the pain was trying to let me know I was consuming the wrong combination of foods—as in, “Cool it on the meat and bread during the same sitting.”

I listened to my doctor, and I listened to the pain. I let them both tell me what to eat. Within a week the heartburn stopped and has returned only when I ignore its advice. In a year's time—without really trying—I dropped the 30 pounds I had been wearing since I began the aerobic eating regimen. Cool.

Just as my thumb had told me what not to hit, my belly had been trying to tell me what not to eat. Pain is always purposeful communication.

And if we listen carefully enough, sometimes pain tells us something more—that we are breaking free from addictions and dependencies. An alcoholic who quits drinking Wild Turkey—cold turkey—may go through a time of intense pain and suffering known as delirium tremens (d.t.'s). In these instances pain is still a trusted counselor, but its message is different. “Hang in there,” it counsels. “Your habits of false attachment were strong and destructive. This will pass. But don't go down that path again, or it will hurt worse next time!”

In this chapter Dallas Willard refers to the pain of letting go of old attachments that will often show up during the process of Christian formation. Typically, our soul pain is attempting to communicate one of two messages. Either “Hey, you've become too attached to life in the world, and it's not good for you! It's time to think things through and change your habits,” or “You've become so attached to the world that you're addicted. Hang in until your spiritual d.t.'s have passed, and you'll be as good as new—no, better than new.”

Jesus' death on a wooden cross not only made our redemption possible, but it also was a model for our need to embrace a personal cross. As Dallas puts it (p. 68):

“The 'cross' we must take is laid upon all obsessive and partial desires, so that the broad reach of *agape* love can integrate for us a whole and eternal life with God and man. Jesus was not some harsh





ascetic who practiced or imposed pain for its own sake. He did not choose death because it was good in itself, but ‘for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame’ (Hebrews 12:2, PAR).”

Yes, pain is a warning that something is wrong—the stab of appropriate guilt when we knowingly commit a moral transgression. But when we have become accustomed to the wrong path, pain can be evidence that we are breaking free from old attachments and opening ourselves to a whole new way to live.

But the only healthy reason to endure this second type of soul pain (our own personal cross) is for the joy of a new and radically good life that awaits us—both now and later.

### ■ Exercise

Take a few moments to respond to Exercise 4-A.

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share his reactions to the illustration or the exercise?



## CONTENT

You are about to view two video vignettes. In the first segment Dallas will be giving a brief lecture that summarizes Chapter Four of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be the continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

### ■ Video Vignette

#### (Dallas’ Lecture on Chapter Four: Radical Goodness Restored to the Soul)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the class to respond to the reflection questions which have been provided.

### ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- “One of the most amazing things about the human being is that it is capable of restoration...a restoration that makes it somehow more magnificent because it has been ruined.” (p. 63)

- *“Christian spiritual formation rests on this indispensable foundation of death to self and cannot proceed except insofar as that foundation is being firmly laid and sustained.”* (p. 64)
- When Jesus says we must lose our lives in order to find life, he is referring to the negative or ruined life in which the person (and not God or others) is the ultimate point of reference. (p. 65)
- Those who enter into Christian spiritual formation must set aside the desire to secure, promote, and indulge one’s self while learning how to enjoy a loving relationship with God and others. (p. 66)
- Those who are unwilling to accept the cross of self-denial cannot become apprentices of Jesus. Acceptance of a personal cross—for the joy it makes possible—is foundational to Christian spiritual formation. (p. 66)
- One of the great dangers in the process of spiritual formation is to turn self-denial into a technique. If this happens, self-denial will come to be defined in terms of certain external practices and be reduced to legalism. (p. 67)
- *“The self-denial of Matthew 16:24 and elsewhere in the Gospels is always the surrender of a lesser, dying self for a greater eternal one—the person God intended in creating you.”* The pain associated with our personal cross is the pain of letting go of old, self-absorbed attachments to the world. (p. 68)
- *“Experience-based confidence in God’s loving care allows all six dimensions of the human self progressively to come into harmony with each other and enables us to be generous in every respect to those around us.”* (p. 70.)
- Being “dead to self” makes a person less sensitive to social slights and physical discomforts. (p. 72)
- *“To step with Jesus into the path of self-denial immediately breaks the iron-clad grip of sin over human personality and opens the way to a fuller and ever fuller restoration of radical goodness to the soul.”* (p. 75)

## ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Lecture

- 1 What is the cause of ruin in the human soul?





- 2 Why does self-obsession so often become focused in the areas of sensuality and violence?
- 3 Describe how Jesus shows the way to the “unruin” of the human soul.
- 4 Dallas refers to the following quote from John Calvin in both the video-lecture and the text, *Renovation of the Heart*:

“For as the surest source of destruction to men is to obey themselves, so the only haven of safety is to have no other will, no other wisdom, than to follow the Lord wherever he leads. Let this, then, be the first step, to abandon ourselves, and devote the whole energy of our mind to the service of God.”

Relate this quotation to the notion of the acceptance of a personal cross.

- 5 Dallas states that when Jesus refers to the imagery of a cross, he intends to communicate that when you become his apprentice, “life on your own is over.” New life in Christ becomes entirely for God. How does this relate to the way you will live your life tomorrow? How does this contrast to non-Christian living?

### ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Conversation

- 1 In the video-conversation the “radical goodness” referred to in Chapter Four is clearly shown to be the goodness of grace that makes it possible for Christ to live his life through the surrendered life of his apprentices. Discuss how grace means much more than “my sins are forgiven.”
- 2 Describe how the Christian disciplines are more than just “ten more things to do” and can become avenues to experiencing God’s grace and presence.

- 3 Dallas defines grace as “God’s action in your life to accomplish what you cannot accomplish on your own,” and goes on to add that “to grow in grace means to grow in the amount of God’s action in your life.” What is the believer’s part in applying this definition of grace in his or her life? (Please use practical and mundane terms.)
- 4 What does it mean to you when Larry talks about having your “sweet tooth” aroused for Christian living?

### Book: Chapter Four

- 1 Discuss how a “restored” human being can be considered more magnificent because of having been ruined.
- 2 What does it mean when you say with the apostle Paul, “I no longer live, but Christ lives and reigns in me”? (See Galatians 2:20.)
- 3 How do you see “self-denial” (advocated by Jesus) as being different from “self-rejection”? (p. 64)
- 4 How can you avoid turning self-denial into legalism?
- 5 Discuss how Jesus’ embracing the cross “for the joy set before him” (Hebrews 12:2) relates to your acceptance of a personal cross.
- 6 Contrast self-denial within the context of Christian spiritual formation to the Buddhist ideal of becoming free from desire. (Hint: See page 72. In self-denial desire is not overcome but refocused.)

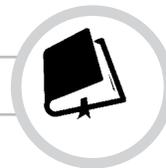
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## BIBLE STUDY

We will now turn our attention to the Bible for a frame of reference. A brief Bible study can be found in Appendix 4-B and may be used in class or as a “homework assignment.”

### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercise in class.





### ■ Leader's Insight

The restoration of radical goodness to the soul requires something quite radical—death to the desire to live life on one's own terms. Justification is possible only because of the Cross of Christ. Transformation, however, will require a second cross—a personal cross. This self-denial, as described in the Gospels, involves “the surrender of a lesser, dying self for a greater eternal one—the person God intended in creating you.” (*Renovation of the Heart*, p. 68)

Self-denial is a painful process, but it is not rightly entered into because of the pain. The pain of transformation is tolerable only because of the unspeakable joy of a radically new and good life in Christ.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to spend 10 to 15 minutes slow-reading Galatians 2:20-21 as a meditation that allows personal examination of what it means to accept the cross of Christ. Some may also find it helpful to consider certain “classic” passages of scripture—such as the Lord's Prayer—in light of being called to die with Christ (e.g., Jesus' words “Your kingdom come, Your will be done...” may be experienced at a deeper level.)

#### Galatians 2:20, 21 (NIV)

*<sup>20</sup>“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”*



## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

### ■ Thoughts:

Imagine yourself on the road to Golgotha—carrying a roughly hewn cross on your back. Invite Jesus to walk along beside you. Thank him for his sacrifices in picking up a cross and being willing to die for the world. But then ask him, “Is there anything I am still attached to in this world?” And ask for the courage to accept your own cross and a vision of the joy that is set before you.

- **Emotions:** Dallas states that one who is dead to self will be less aware of social slights and verbal innuendos. Let your emotions be a signal for you to your “deadness” or “aliveness” to slights and putdowns that may happen to you next week. Let every painful emotion (when following social discomfort) be an occasion to stop and pray for more attachment to God and less dependence on the reactions and opinions of others.
- **Will:** Following the example described by Dallas Willard, begin each day next week by committing it to the Lord’s care. Follow this time of focused surrender by slowly praying the Lord’s Prayer to the rhythm of your breathing, pausing for several minutes as you breathe in and out the words “Your kingdom come” (while slowly breathing in), “Your will be done” (as you slowly breathe out).
- **Behavior:** Ask God how you would act differently during the next 24 hours if your life was awash with radical goodness. Ask for very specific examples. Now, commit to cooperate with Jesus in allowing his goodness to flow through you in at least one specific way.
- **Social Interactions:** Before beginning your workday, bring to your mind each member of your family. While holding each person in your mind, ask God for an idea about how you can demonstrate Christ’s love to them before the day ends—but don’t let them know what you are up to; just allow Christ’s love to act through you.

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## SUMMARY

Radical goodness is grace in action—taking over and transforming all the components of the person. Becoming open to having the radical goodness of Christ’s presence requires that we follow Jesus down the path of self-denial, accepting the temporary pains of our personal cross for the joy of becoming like the one we love. While the central principle of the corruption of the soul is self-worship, the starting place for its renovation is self-denial.





## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

#### Self-denial

- “Self-denial” is a term John Calvin used to summarize the entire Christian life. The term should not be confused with self-rejection (or low self-esteem) or viewed as some prolonged act of determination. Self-denial, is, rather, “an overall, settled condition of life in the kingdom of God, better described as ‘death to self.’” (p. 64) *“Christian spiritual formation rests on this indispensable foundation of death to self and cannot proceed except insofar as that foundation is being firmly laid and sustained.”* (p. 64)
- “The self-denial of Matthew 16:24 and elsewhere in the Gospels is always the surrender of a lesser, dying self for a greater eternal one—the person God intended in creating you.” (p. 68)

#### Death to self (self-denial)

- Death to self (self-denial) is the process of losing our life—that ruined life about which most people complain so much anyway. Death to self means death to the will to live life apart from the presence, power, and direction of God. Death to self implies that we are no longer treating ourselves as God. (p. 65)
- “Being dead to self is the condition where the mere fact that I do not get what I want does not surprise or offend me and has no control over me.” (p. 71)
- Being dead to self does not mean that a person is without feeling or desire. “The issue is not just feeling and desire, but right feeling or desire, or being controlled by feeling and desire. Apprentices of Jesus will be deeply disturbed about many things and will passionately desire many things, but they will be largely indifferent to the fulfillment of their own desires as such.” (p. 72)

#### The Cross

- “The cross is an instrument of death, of ‘losing your life.’ ... Those who are not genuinely convinced that the only real bargain in life is surrendering ourselves to Jesus and his cause, abandoning all that we love to him and for him, *cannot* learn the other lessons



Jesus has to teach us. They cannot proceed to anything like total spiritual transformation.” (p. 66)

- “The ‘cross’ we must take is laid upon all obsessive and partial desires, so that the broad reach of *agape* love can integrate for us a whole and eternal life with God and man.” (p. 68)

### Radical Goodness

- “[*Radical goodness*] is the controlling principle of the renovated heart and the restored soul.” Death to a life apart from God with a simultaneous surrender to the indwelling presence of Christ allows for radical goodness to progressively subvert and replace the radical evil in the fallen human heart, mind, body, soul, and social relationships. (p. 74) Radical goodness is grace in action.

### Grace

- “In Scripture grace is God’s action in your life to accomplish what you cannot accomplish on your own. It is the action of unmerited favor. To grow in grace means to grow in the amount of ‘God action’ in your life.” (from video conversation.)

### “Unruining”

- The process of restoration in which “a basic shift (given regeneration and forgiveness) . . . can lead to the reordering of the six universal dimensions of the human self in subordination to God.” (p. 63)

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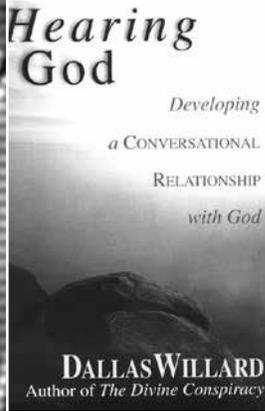
## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

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### ■ Hearing God

- “As for me, I never lived, I was half dead, I was a rotting tree, until I reached the place where I wholly, with utter honesty resolved and then re-resolved that I *would* find God’s will, and I *would* do that will though every fiber in me said no, and I *would* win the battle with my thoughts. It was as though some deep artesian well had been struck in my soul . . . You and I shall soon blow away from our bodies. Money, praise, poverty, opposition, these make no difference, for they will all alike be forgotten in a thousand years, but the spirit which comes to a mind set upon continuous surrender, this spirit is timeless.” (p. 71, Quote from Frank Laubach, found in *Letters by a Modern Mystic*.)

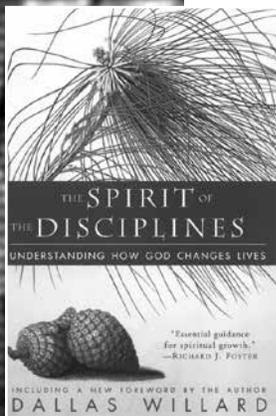




- “The thoughts and feelings in the mind and spirit of one who is surrendered to God should be treated as if God were walking through one’s personality with a candle, directing one’s attention to things one after the other.” (p. 102)
- *“It is through the action of the word of God upon us, throughout us and with us that we come to have the mind of Christ and thus to life fully in the kingdom of God.”* (p. 148)

### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

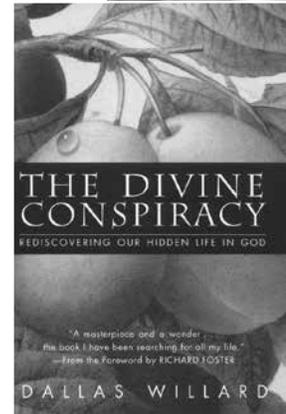
- While we are saved by grace, grace does not mean that “sufficient strength and insight will be automatically ‘infused’ into our being in the moment of need.” We made the team, but we still have to work. (p. 5)
- As Dr. Peck reminds us of Carl Jung’s diagnosis: “Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering.” (p. 7)
- We must do nothing less than a radical rethinking of the Christian conception of salvation. What does it mean to be saved? We have “restricted the Christian idea of salvation to *mere forgiveness of sins*. Yet is it is much more.” (p. 33)
- “The message of Jesus himself and of the early disciples was not just one of forgiveness of sins, but rather was one of newness of life—which of course involved forgiveness as well as his death for our sins. To be ‘saved’ was to be ‘delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of his dear Son,’ as Colossians 1:13 says. We who are saved are to have a different order of life from that of the unsaved. We are to live in a different ‘world.’” (pp. 36, 37)
- “A person is a ‘spiritual person’ to the degree that his or her life is correctly integrated into and dominated by God’s spiritual Kingdom.” (p. 67)
- *“The disciplines for the spiritual life, rightly understood, are time-tested activities consciously undertaken by us as new men or women to allow our spirit ever-increasing sway over our embodied selves.”* (p. 86)



- “The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christlike and so dwelling in his ‘faith and practice,’ systematically . . .rearranges his affairs to that end.” (p. 261)

## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- There is a big difference between trusting Jesus—a real, interacting person—and “trusting some arrangement for sin-remission set up through him. . . .” (p. 49)
- “The goodness of the kingdom heart, by contrast, is the positive love of God and of those around us that fills and crowds out the many forms of evil. From that goodness come deeds of respect and purity that characterize a sexuality as it was meant by God to be.” (p. 168)
- “Genuinely good people are those who, from the deepest levels of their understanding and motivation, are committed to promoting the good of everyone they deal with—including, of course, God and themselves. In this they have . . . gone beyond . . . the goodness of the Scribes and Pharisees—and are acting from their inward union of mind and heart with ‘the heavens.’” (p. 187)
- The first step is the (same) first step of Alcoholics Anonymous. (Be empty of self.) (p. 322)





SESSION FIVE:

# Spiritual Change: The Reliable Pattern



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

In this chapter, Dallas Willard makes a very bold statement. He even put it in italics. *“Any successful plan for spiritual formation, whether for the individual or group, will in fact be significantly similar to the Alcoholics Anonymous program.”* (p. 85) Wow! We had better begin by taking a closer look at what goes on during an AA meeting. Here’s what happened at the only one I’ve ever attended—and I’m not making this up.<sup>1</sup>

### ■ How Joey Got His Dad to Stop Drinking

The meeting was in a back room of a small Italian restaurant. I arrived and took the last seat.

A good friend had invited me to attend one of his AA meetings. He said, “You send so many of your clients to these things, you really ought to find out what happens there.”

A silver-haired gentleman began to call the meeting to order by tapping on his glass with a spoon.

“Hello,” he said. “My name is Bill, and I’m an alcoholic.”

“Hello, Bill,” the crowd responded.

Bill cleared his throat. He looked sad. “As you all know, George’s boy, Joey, passed away this week. Well, George has something to say to you all.”

George stood. A smile was on his face, but his eyes were red and puffy. The first words out of his mouth were shocking.

“I just want to thank God, in front of all of you friends, that He

1. This story first appeared in the *Issachar File*, April 1999, page 5.

saw fit to bless our family with a mentally retarded son. Joey taught me the most important lessons in life. It's because of him, I learned how to live."

He wasn't able to get many more words out. Started crying really hard. Two ladies got up and gave him bear hugs.

The three sat down and Bill stood again. He said a few nice things about Joey and asked if anyone wanted to say something to George. Everyone, except me, did.

Each began by giving his or her name and announcing "I'm an alcoholic." Each concluded with a warm story about how Joey had been an angel unaware.

The meeting ended. I wasn't in a hurry to get back to work. To my surprise George came over and shook my hand.

"I guess this all sounded pretty strange to you. But if you've got a second, I'd like to tell you the rest of the story."

We both sat back down. I would have listened for a week.

"When Joey came into this world 19 years ago," George began, "he was born with a problem. It wasn't his brain. It was worse than that. He had an alcoholic for a father.

"The doctor told us the next day Joey probably wouldn't ever get any smarter than a five-or-six-year-old.

"But the really big problem was me. I was a drunk. So right then and there, I decided to change what could be changed and not worry about the rest.

"It took a full year of being honest with myself and others, finding God, turning my life over to him, and being loved by a group of folks like you saw here today, but we did it.

"And for my Joey's first birthday, he got a brand new daddy for a present. He never suspected that it was him that did the giving. And he wasn't done, yet.

"Years passed. I came to realize I had fallen in love with my own healthy brain. I loved to show it off—display for people how smart I was. I loved to use my wit and reason to get compliments, win

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



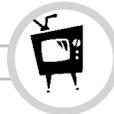
### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





acceptance, sell cars. But Joey could not care less.

“My boy would never be able to appreciate my brain. He’d never look up to me because of my cleverness. At first I got depressed about that, and then angry. How could I ever impress my boy with what I did best?

“It wasn’t long, though, that I began to see there *was* a way to impress the boy. I noticed he got real excited every time I took extra time to just be *with* him. It only took my being there to get his hands waving and his face beaming. That’s all he wanted. I couldn’t believe love like that.

“That was some present my Joey gave me, wasn’t it? He accepted me, just as I am. Being with me was all he wanted. Nothing to earn. Joey loved like God does.”

At that point George’s voice started breaking up. He excused himself, giving me a quick pat on the back as he stood to collect his things.

I sat there for a while longer. Joey had left another gift, and I wanted to unwrap it.

Joey’s love for George, and his dad’s love for him, had healed the pain George been trying to drown. Which was a good thing. Pain always learns how to swim. The support, accountability, and model for life-change of his AA group sealed the deal.

Yes, love is the only healthy cure for emotional anguish, the only thing that can cause real change. And while we don’t all have a Joey to love us, we all have Jesus.

“You know,” I said as George was passing through the doorway, “Jesus was too special to fit in with this world, too. But just like your boy, he did a lot of loving before leaving early.”

### ■ Note to Leader

If you have adopted the habit of sharing a physical object with the class at this point in the lesson, you may want to locate a copy of *The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous* (These can easily be obtained by typing in “AA 12 Steps” to any reliable search engine, or you can locate a modified version in Appendix 5-A of this lesson).

While the specific events in the story about Joey are a bit unusual, the backdrop (the setting and structure of an AA meeting) is not.

Foundational to the success of AA are principles that are also fundamental to the process of Christian formation. These are:

#### ■ Honesty

The humble admission of our situation. Being an alcoholic in the case of AA, or being a “control addict” in the case of Christian formation. This admission strikes at the heart of our corruption—self-worship.

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### ■ Surrender

Turning our lives over to God—becoming willing instead of willful—and asking for his help to become different people. This act is the foundation of restoration—self-denial.

### ■ Community

After the path of honesty and surrender is chosen, AA works because of the acceptance, nurture, and support of a loving community. Christian formation works because of the acceptance, nurture, and support of the community of the Trinity, and if one is fortunate, the community of a local church.

The AA model also serves as a functioning example of the VIM pattern that Dallas Willard describes in this chapter. VIM stands for the three components—vision, intention, means—Dallas presents as a reliable pattern for change.

### ■ Vision

For a person to work the steps of AA successfully, he must begin with a vision of how life can be different—a life of sobriety. In the example of our story, Joey's dad had extra motivation—a special son who needed a sober dad helped motivate him to see a future of sobriety. For the change program to work for him, he had to see himself as being free from his addiction.

The change program of Christian formation begins with a vision of life in the kingdom—where the will of the king and the will of the subjects are one.

### ■ Intention

The vision of a new way to live makes it possible for us to intend to live life in a radically different manner. Joey's dad intended to stop drinking. While it took him a year and the support of a loving community to make the intentions a reality, he did begin to live out his vision.

In the arena of Christian formation, we must intend to live in the kingdom of God by intending to obey the precise example and teachings of Jesus. (p. 87)

### ■ Means

The Twelve Steps of AA (against the backdrop of a community of support) become the means to the end of sobriety. Honesty (including confession), surrender, and community were the means of change for Joey's dad.





Openness to the power and presence of Christ, study of his life and teachings, inspiration from seekers and saints, and the practice of classic Christian disciplines are the means of Christian spiritual transformation.

The Alcoholics Anonymous program represents a reliable pattern for change that can be applied to the process of Christian transformation. Necessary to each are the foundation of honesty, surrender, and community and the structure of vision, intention, and means.

### ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: a copy of *The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous*, or a paper sign that reads: “AA Meeting Tonight”

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant’s Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil

## SESSION FIVE:

# Spiritual Change: The Reliable Pattern

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## INTRODUCTION

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### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session five of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Spiritual Change: The Reliable Pattern.”

### ■ Prayer

*“Dear God, thank you for the privilege of being together as a group. Grant us the grace to become a community. And please, Father, allow a vision for what life can be like in your kingdom to break forth as a guiding light that will lead each of us to real change. Amen.”*

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## WARM-UP

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### ■ Note to Leader

You may want to share the following story with the class as a lead-in to presenting the three false methods of transformation Dallas depicts in this chapter. Following this presentation, it would be good to discuss the “Before You Lead” illustration as a way of initiating dialogue about Dallas’s recommended change model—the VIM model as illustrated by the Alcoholics Anonymous program.

### ■ Buying God’s Love for a Quarter

I want you to picture something. Imagine that you are the parent of a four-year-old child—if you *are* the parent of a four-year-old child, this should be easy.

Your child notices, by observing you, that money is something pretty important—it can be used to pay bills, buy groceries, and, amazingly, exchanged for ice cream.

It dawns on your child that if she can earn some of this valuable stuff, she’ll be a better daughter and make you happy.

So your child gets up early one morning and toddles off to the local sewing plant and applies for a job. The manager smiles and says there isn’t much a four-year-old can do. But he tells her that if she will



walk around and pick up scraps of cloth and put them in scrap boxes, he'll give her a "big shiny" piece of money—twenty-five cents, for eight hours work in a hot sewing plant.

Your little girl is elated; she has a job and can contribute to the family. She works all day. At the end of the day, she walks home, dragging her tired little feet. She comes up to you, and with a sweat-and-dirt-streaked hand she holds out a quarter and says, "Here you are. I hope this will make you love me more."

You are, of course, in a state of shock. You have missed your daughter all day. You don't know what is happening. And you surely don't need the quarter. But your child has gone to a place beyond reason.

The next day she gets up before dawn—during the night she has decided that if one quarter is good, two are better. She walks back to the mill and asks the manager if she can start working two shifts. The manager quickly agrees.

For the next few weeks, she works sixteen-hour days at the sewing plant, picking up scraps of cloth and putting them in boxes. Each evening she drags herself home, face dirty and clothes wet from sweat, and says with a tired whisper, "Here's two more monies. I hope you love me for them. I'm really trying to be a good girl."

So what do you think about the imaginary story? I mean, once you get past the violation of child labor laws and the plant manger who probably employed Pinocchio.

If you are like me you, you desperately want to pick up your child, take her out in the back yard, set her in the middle of her playground, wipe the sweat from her face, and say, "Look around. This is all for you. I appreciate that you want to give us something, but we don't need your quarters. We have lots of quarters.

"But, honey, there is something you can do to make us happy—and only you can do it. You can come out here and play. You can throw your head back and laugh. You can spin in circles. Eat ice cream. You can invite your friends over to play with you. And you can trust that whenever you get hungry, there'll be more food for you inside. And if you really want to do something nice for us, you can say, 'Daddy, Mommy, would you play with me?' And we will."

This story is told to illustrate one of the three classic approaches to spiritual change and transformation—each is a false path that is presented by Dallas in Chapter Five.

### ■ Works/Righteousness

This first method could be called the "works/righteousness" or "buying God's love for a quarter" approach (see pp. 81, 82). It attempts

to solve the great “grace versus works” tug-of-war by pulling harder. Most succinctly, it is the belief that we can be good apart from God and are therefore capable of being saved the old-fashioned way—by earning it.

### ■ Surface Level Change

A second approach to transformation is similar. It could be called the “surface level change” approach, or, for those who have ever seen the feeding of pigs, the “shiny slop bucket approach.” It too is heavy on works and light on grace. But this approach stays focused on the surface; it’s the same mistake made by the Pharisees, striving for external conformity while keeping the heart separate and hidden from God.

This is an attempt to change behavior without inner transformation (see pp. 78, 79). In the imagery of our story, it could be pictured as a little girl who gets dressed in her Easter finest each day, takes a seat in the formal living room, hands folded in lap, staying away from both her playground and meaningful interactions with her parents. Her little heart festers with resentment while her mouth forms a picture-perfect smile.

### ■ "Miserable Sinner" Christianity

The third approach is one Dallas Willard calls “miserable sinner” Christianity (pp. 79, 80). Here grace is exaggerated—to the point of heresy—and works (even reasonable efforts) are rejected.

“Miserable sinner” Christianity is the false path of believing that actually becoming like Christ is impossible. Human nature, flesh, life, and the world are seen as rotten to the core, especially on the inside. Becoming less vile is a possibility reserved for the afterlife. At present, we simply thank God for forgiving and granting the grace to save—but not make new.

In the imagery of our story, the “miserable sinner” child occasionally plays outside and eats with gratitude the food that has been prepared; but she avoids playing with her parents for fear that her darkest secrets will be found out, and grace will be withdrawn like a rug yanked from beneath her feet.

Thankfully, there is a fourth alternative to spiritual change and transformation. It celebrates the unfathomable love of God while realizing that grace is not opposed to effort. Grace is opposed to earning.

In the imagery of our story, our little girl does not go to work in a sweatshop, nor does she engage in the subtle work of sitting all day in the parlor—as an expensive vase. The child also avoids hiding





from her parents for fear that if they *really* knew her, she would be disowned.

No. Instead she laughs, and plays, and twirls. She eats ice cream in the backyard and a little broccoli in the dining room. And she asks her parents to play with her, read to her, and snuggle in a hammock. Until one day she says, “I want to be just like you. Will you teach me how?”

And you say, “Yes. Thank you for asking.”

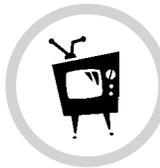
And in an environment bathed in love, she learns to be like the ones she loves.

### ■ Exercise

Take a few moments to respond to Exercise 5-A.

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share her reactions to the two illustrations or the exercise?



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## CONTENT

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You are about to view two video vignettes. In the first segment Dallas will be giving a brief lecture that summarizes Chapter Five of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

### ■ Video Vignette

#### (Dallas’ Lecture on Chapter Five: Spiritual Change: The Reliable Pattern)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the class to respond to the reflection questions which have been provided.

### ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- “Spiritual formation in Christ is the process by which one moves and is moved from self-worship to Christ-centered self-denial as a general condition of life in God’s present and eternal kingdom.”(p. 77)

- The first step in Christian formation is to believe it can actually happen—that it is possible to be like Christ in our thoughts, emotions, will, behavior and social interactions. (p. 77)
  - Real change—actually becoming like Christ—is very rare. (p. 78)
  - Three false approaches to real change are presented and critiqued:
    - Attempting to change one’s behavior without inner transformation.
    - Regarding the low level of spiritual living among professing Christians as only natural—“miserable sinner” Christianity—and then putting no effort into the process of transformation.
    - Believing that one is somehow good apart from God and therefore capable of being saved by effort and merit.
  - While everyone must be active in the process of her salvation and transformation to Christlikeness, the *initiative* in the process is always God’s. (p. 82)
  - Central to the process of authentic transformation—and the production of the fruit of Christ’s spirit—is the willingness to live in union with God. (p. 82)
  - The general pattern of transformation (be it learning a new language, becoming sober, or becoming like Christ) involves *vision*, *intention*, and *means*. (p. 85)
  - “Any successful plan for spiritual formation, whether for the individual or group, will in fact be significantly similar to the *Alcoholics Anonymous* program.” (p. 85)
  - Christian spiritual formation must start with a *vision* for life in God’s kingdom. (p. 86)
  - “The vision of life in the kingdom through reliance upon Jesus makes it possible for us to *intend* to live in the kingdom as he did”—i.e., intend to obey the precise example of his teaching. (p. 87)
  - “The vision and intention to obey Christ will naturally lead to seeking out and applying the means to that end...the means for spiritual transformation, for the replacing of the inner character of the ‘lost’ with the inner character of Jesus...” (p. 89)
  - “Means” implies (but is not limited to) the resources found in Scripture, the specific teachings and examples from the life of Jesus, the life stories of those who have experienced authentic transformation, the practice of Christian disciplines, and other resources or activities which help us either to identify the thoughts, feelings, habits of will, bodily inclination, and social relations that prevent us from being like Jesus, or to identify and develop new responses that are like those of Jesus.





## ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Lecture

- 1 How, according to Dallas, does all sin come in?
- 2 What does Dallas mean by “miserable sinner” Christianity?
- 3 What do the letters in “VIM” stand for; and how is this model for real change mirrored by the Alcoholics Anonymous program?
- 4 The term “indirection” is used to suggest that Christian transformation is designed to teach or focus not on external behavior but on the inner person. Give an example of how this principle might be applied in your life.
- 5 What does it mean to say, “The secret isn’t trying [hint: read “earning”]; it’s training.”

## ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

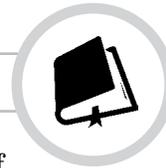
## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Conversation

- 1 Who in your life gave you a picture of spirituality rightly pursued or understood (who gave you some idea of what grace might look like)?
- 2 Identify some of the outrageous promises of God in Scripture. Do these promises help to give you a vision for your future?
- 3 How can you move from hype to greater honesty—in this group?
- 4 Dallas said, “Idolatry is trying to use God to make our life run well.” How does attempting to control God—or others—through presenting exaggerated pictures of our spiritual accomplishments keep us from working the steps (i.e., VIM model) of real change?
- 5 What did Dallas mean when he said, “Holding on to faith without testing it keeps you from seeing the kingdom of God”?

**Book: Chapter Five**

- 1 What is the first step in Christian formation? (See page 77.)
- 2 Three false approaches to Christian formation are discussed in this chapter (pages 78-82). Explain how each would derail the process of real change.
  - Attempting to change behavior without inner transformation.
  - “Miserable sinner” Christianity
  - Believing that one can be saved by merit. (“God’s love for a quarter.”)
- 3 What does it mean to say that grace is opposed to “earning,” not “effort”?
- 4 Explain the VIM model in terms of what it would take to learn to speak Russian.
- 5 What are the “means” available to you for becoming like Jesus?

**BIBLE STUDY**

Once again we will turn our attention to the Bible for a frame of reference. A brief Bible study can be found in Appendix 5-B and may be used in class or as a “homework assignment.”

**■ Group Exercise**

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercise in class.

**■ Leader’s Insight**

As we have discussed, when walking the path of spiritual change, it is easy for things to become unbalanced. Grace may be emphasized at the expense of effort, or works may be highlighted instead of God’s love. Also, it is common for some to focus on external conformity of behavior instead of inner transformation of heart. (See the “Buying God’s Love for a Quarter” story.)

In this passage from Colossians (3:1-17) we find wonderful equilibrium between grace—“You have been raised with Christ” (v. 1) and are “God’s chosen people” (v. 12)—and effort—“Set your hearts on things above” (v. 1); “Set your minds on things above” (v. 2); and “Clothe yourselves with compassion” (v. 12).

We also see Paul’s focus on the inner world. In verses 15 and 16 Paul emphasizes that real change begins on the inside—“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly....”





This classic passage provides a correction for the three common false paths of spiritual change and provides a glimpse into the vision of Christian formation through living *in* Christ.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to spend 10 to 15 minutes slow-reading Colossians 1:26, 27 as a meditation on the great mystery of how Christ-formation is possible. Just as “the kingdom of God” was central to the message of Jesus, Paul’s most repeated teaching was about the mystery of “Christ in you.”

#### Colossians 1:26, 27

<sup>26</sup> [God commissioned me to present] *the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.* <sup>27</sup> *To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of the mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*



## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

### ■ Thoughts:

Ponder the words of Jesus found in Luke 17:20-21 in light of Dallas Willard’s statement that the kingdom of God is the range of God’s effective will—it is where the rules of the king are the rules of the subjects. Then ask God to give you a vision for the kingdom of God within you.

<sup>20</sup> *Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation,<sup>21</sup> nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”*

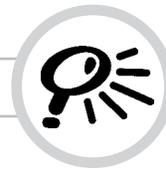
### ■ Emotions:

For the next week notice each time you are feeling particularly loving, joyful, or at peace. Then learn from these emotions. What was going on in your thoughts, will, behavior, or social interactions that preceded these emotions? Ask God to help you be the type of person who naturally experiences these positive emotions and who naturally thinks, wills, behaves, and interacts in ways that produce them.

- **Will:** When you wake up in the morning, before getting out of bed, take a long, slow, deep breath and say to yourself, “This day I intend to live in the kingdom of God as Jesus did. Help me, Lord Jesus.”
  
- **Behavior:** This can be tricky. It is more important to intend to become the type of person who naturally obeys Jesus (inner transformation) than it is to intend simply to obey (external conformity). Practice silence for 30 minutes today. During that time before God, offer your heart to him as a place where he can live. Let him know that he is free to make himself at home and to make any changes he desires.
  
- **Social Interactions:** (Only for the truly brave who have a wonderful friend.) Ask your spouse or best friend to share two things with you: 1) the ways in which your interactions with them mirror those of Jesus, 2) the ways in which they don’t. Then, don’t focus directly on what needs improvement. Ask your friend to pray with you that your heart will begin to change until Christ’s ways of interacting with people flow naturally out.

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## SUMMARY



It is rare to find a Christian who is actually like Christ. Dallas believes that this is because few Christians approach spiritual change with the same sense of urgency and intention that is often present when someone successfully works the steps of AA. “The problem,” Dallas says, “is that it [spiritual transformation] is not intended. People do not see it and its value and decide to carry through with it. They do not *decide* to do the things Jesus did and said.” (p. 91)

The VIM model was presented as a valid course for transformation. It will also help keep us off the false paths of “works/righteousness,” “external conformity,” and “miserable sinner” Christianity.





## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

#### Spiritual formation

- “Spiritual formation in Christ is the process by which one moves and is moved from self-worship to Christ-centered self-denial as a general condition of life in God’s present and eternal kingdom” (p. 77).

#### “Miserable Sinner” Christianity

- “This is the widely held view that the low level of spiritual living among professing Christians is to be regarded as ‘only natural,’ [and] only what is to be expected.” (p. 79) “Miserable sinner” Christianity contains the idea that no matter how far you go in your Christian walk, you really always remain the same. You can’t really change.

#### Depravity

- “‘Depravity’ does not, properly, refer to the inability to *act*, but to the unwillingness to act and clearly the inability to *earn*.” (p. 82)

#### Vision

- The ability to see what may not already exist. In the context of Christian spiritual formation, vision refers to seeing ourselves transformed and living in God’s kingdom—seeing ourselves joyfully conformed to the image of Christ.

#### Intention

- A resolve or determination to act in a certain way. In the context of this chapter, it is intending for the vision of being like Jesus to be realized.

#### Means

- The methods and resources for accomplishing something. The teachings of Christ found in Scripture, classic devotional writings, the practice of Christian disciplines, and invoking the power and presence of Jesus in our lives are means to authentic Christian transformation.

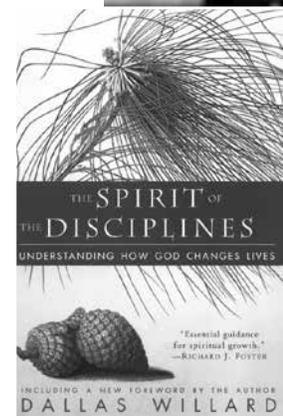
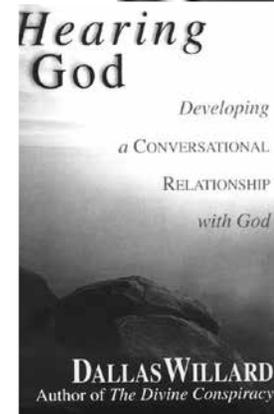
## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

## ■ Hearing God

- What is a good missions statement? *“I am living for one thing and one thing only—to be like Christ, to do his work and live among his people and serve them and him in this world. My life is to bless others in the name of God”* If we have not come to that place, then the question that normally arises is, “How do we hear the word of God?” (pp. 70, 71, italics added)
- “But in the progress of God’s redemptive work *communication* advances into *communion* and communion into *union*. When the progression is complete we can truly say, ‘It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2:20) and ‘For me, living is Christ’ (Phil 1:21).” (p. 155)
- “We must ultimately move *beyond* the question of hearing God and into a life greater than our own—that of the kingdom of God. Our concern for *discerning* God’s voice must be overwhelmed by and lost in our worship and adoration of him and in our delight with his creation and his provision for our whole life.” (p. 211)
- “We are required to ‘bet our life’ that the visible world, while real, is not reality itself.” (p. 219)

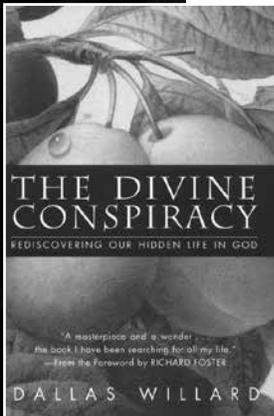
## ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- “My central claim is that we *can* become like Christ by doing one thing—by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in. . . .” (Preface, ix)
- “The Spirit of the Disciplines is nothing but the love of Jesus, with its resolute will to be like him whom we love.” (Preface, xii)
- For example, some people would like to pay their bills and put money in the bank, but they do not live the type of life to make this a reality. (p. 6)





- “Leo Tolstoy comments in *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, that ‘all men of the modern world exist in a continual and flagrant antagonism between their consciences and their way of life.’” (p. 12)
- “Full participation in the life of God’s Kingdom and in the vivid companionship of Christ comes to us only through appropriate exercise in the disciplines for life in the spirit.” (p. 26)
- “I believe men and women were designed by God, in the very constitution of their human personalities, to carry out his rule by meshing the relatively little power resident in their own bodies with the power inherent in the infinite Rule or Kingdom of God.” (p. 54)
- “People who think they are spiritually superior *because* they make a practice of a discipline such as fasting or silence or frugality are entirely missing the point.” The need to practice disciplines points to our weakness, not our strength. (p. 138)
- “A discipline for the spiritual life is, when the dust of history is blown away, nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom.” Since grace (*charis*) is gift (*charisma*), we see that “to grow in grace is to grow in what is given to us of God and by God.” (p. 156)



## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “The presence of Jesus upon earth, both before and after his death and resurrection, means that God’s rule is here now.” (p. 20)
- “So, C. S. Lewis writes, our faith is not a matter of our hearing what Christ said long ago and ‘trying to carry it out.’ Rather, ‘The real Son of God is at your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself. He is beginning, so to speak, to ‘inject’ His kind of life and thought, His *Zoe* [life], into you; beginning to turn the tin soldier into a live man. The part of you that does not like it is the part that is still tin.’” (p. 20)
- “God’s own ‘kingdom’ or ‘rule’ is the range of his effective will, where what he wants done is done.” (p. 25)
- “Jesus’ good news about the kingdom can be an effective guide for our lives only if we share his view of the world in which we live.

To his eyes this is a God-bathed and God-permeated world. It is a world filled with a glorious reality, where every component is within the range of God's direct knowledge and control...."

(p. 61)

- "To be born 'from above,' in the New Testament language, means to be interactively joined with a dynamic, unseen system of divine reality in the midst of which all of humanity moves about—whether it knows it or not. And that, of course, is 'the Kingdom Among Us.'" (p. 68)
- "Because we are spiritual beings...it is for our good, individually and collectively, to live our lives in interactive dependence upon God and under his kingdom rule. Every kind of life, from the cabbage to the water buffalo, lives from a certain world that is suited to it." [For us, it is the kingdom of God.] (p. 82)
- "Kingdom praying and its efficacy is entirely a matter of the innermost heart's being totally open and honest before God. It is a matter of what we are saying with our whole being, moving with resolute intent and clarity of mind into the flow of God's action." (p. 195)





SESSION SIX:

# Transforming the Mind, 1: Spiritual Formation and the Thought Life



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

As Dallas states in the “Interlude” between the two sections of *Renovation of the Heart*, “we have now worked our way through some difficult material...” (p. 93) Beginning with Chapter Six, we move to the practical arena of spiritual formation, with the intent of keeping our focus simple and targeted. In fact, “the simplicity of spiritual formation lies in its intention. Its aim is to bring every element of our being, working from the inside out, into harmony with the will of God and the kingdom of God.” (p. 93)

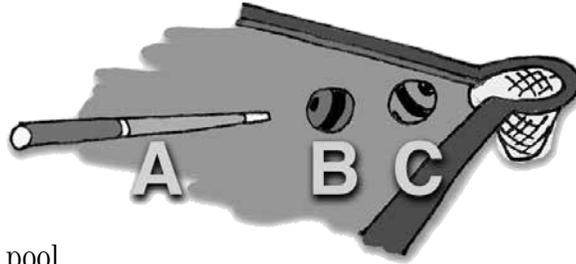
In the movie *City Slickers*, the veteran, leather-faced cowboy Curly (played by Jack Palance) says to Billy Crystal—a 40-something city slicker attempting to find a cure for his mid-life crisis on a cattle drive—“There’s just one thing. It’s important to find *your* one thing.”

Same thing with spiritual formation: there is just one thing—to will the will of God (and consequently find our place in his kingdom.) That’s what the rest of *Renovation of the Heart* is about: practical suggestions and exercises for our thoughts, emotions, wills, bodies, social relationships, and souls that will help us will the will of God; to find our place in the kingdom—our one thing.

You will notice that Chapters Six through Eleven are dedicated to the six components of a person—of you. First up in this section is the inner world of thought. It is presented first because of the crucial role thoughts play in the process of spiritual formation. As Dallas says, “As we first turned away from God in our thoughts, so it is in our thoughts that the first movements toward the renovation of the heart occur.” (p. 95)

Dallas also knows what the field of applied psychology has come to discover: the thought life of a person is foundational to all of his internal dimensions. Let's take a quick look at a pool table to better appreciate the role your thoughts play in your whole being.

### ■ Shooting Pool: It's as Simple as A-B-C



Take a look at the above illustration. Yep, it's a pool table. On the table is a pool cue (or stick) that is labeled "A." The pool cue is about to strike a ball (labeled "B") that will in turn strike a second ball ("C"), and if the rules of physics are properly applied, "C" will drop into the pocket of the table. A successful shot.

This pool diagram represents the role your thoughts play in other aspects of your life—particularly your emotions. The pool cue represents an event from your day—any event. Let's say you are at work, and your boss says, "I would like to see you later today." This brief contact with your boss is an "A," which stands for "Activating event."

"B" in this scenario represents your "immediate **B**elief"—that is, the first thought or thoughts that pass through your mind. If your thought is, *Oh, no! I'm going to be fired*, you will probably have a pretty bad day, with emotions (that's the "C," "emotional **C**onsequence") of anxiety and dread.

But on the other hand, if your first thoughts are, *This is wonderful; I'm finally going to get that promotion!* then your emotions will be drastically different. Excited anticipation.

It is important to note that the pool cue (Activating event) did not change. In both cases it was an ambiguous encounter with your boss, who said, "I want to see you

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



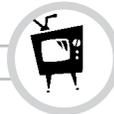
### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



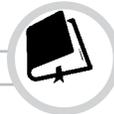
### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





later today.” What changed? The thoughts that played in your head like CDs in a juke box. The radically different thoughts produced radically different emotions.

Let’s look at one more “A-B-C” example. Imagine you are driving in your car. A light you were hoping to catch while still green turns red. That’s “A,” the “**A**ctivating event.” The “emotional **C**onsequence” (“C”) of the red light will not be caused by the light, but by the thoughts (“B”) that flash before your mind. If you think, *Oh great! I bet I catch every one now; I’ll be late for my hair appointment and will probably miss it*, that type of “B” will cause some pretty unpleasant “C.”

But if the light changes (“A”) and you think (“B”), *This is great! I needed a sixty-second vacation. I’ll take three or four deep, slow breaths and relax*, well, your “C” will be very different: gratitude for the mini-vacation.

There are a couple of good news items in this “A-B-C” model. First of all, no one can make you feeling anything. Your feelings will always be the result of the thoughts in your head, not the actions of others. Even if someone slaps you on the face, you are free to think (“B”), *What a wonderful opportunity to be like Jesus and turn the other cheek*. And if you do so sincerely, your emotions (“C”) will not be angry.

The second good news item is this. By changing our thoughts (and it is quite possible to do so), we can change more than our emotions; we participate in the process of authentic spiritual transformation. To a large extent our thoughts are under our control. We can set out to change them, and the results can be not only different emotional consequences, but also changes in our will, behavior, and social interactions. And that’s what this chapter is about.

### ■ Note to Leader

I’m sure you are way ahead of me by now. You’ve already located the lesson outline (6-C) and have begun to consider which elements from this lesson will work best with your group. And if you have gotten into the object lesson notion, you already know where you can pick up a pool cue and a couple of pool balls.

The purpose of this object lesson is to underscore the words of Dallas when he says, “You can’t evoke thoughts by feeling a certain way, but you can evoke and to some degree control feelings by directing your thoughts” (p. 96), and to suggest that changing our thoughts may also affect the other components of our personhood as well.

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## ■ Materials

For this session the leader will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- Renovation Videotape
- Possible objects: a pool ball or other pool equipment

For this session the participant will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil





SESSION SIX:

# Transforming the Mind, 1: Spiritual Formation and the Thought Life



## INTRODUCTION

### Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session six of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Transforming the Mind, 1: Spiritual Formation and the Thought Life.”

### Prayer

*“Dear God, as we spend this time together, let us be aware of your presence, let us experience your presence. And teach us, Father, how to take on the mind of your son, Jesus. Teach us about the simplicity of willing your will, seeking your kingdom. And motivate us to make the transforming of our minds our highest priority. Amen.”*



## WARM-UP

### Let's Get Practical

Dallas believes that the “ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon.” (p. 95) And what we choose to play on the screen of our internal cinema will perform a pivotal role in determining our emotions, will, behavior, social interactions—in short, our spiritual formation.

In this chapter we discover that the realm of thought involves four main factors: ideas, images, information, and our ability to think. (See pages 96 through 105 of the *Renovation* text and the “Key Terms” section of this RESOURCE GUIDE.) In a striking way, the greatest battleground in the universe is located between our ears. And the stakes are high.

If the “thief and robber” can corrupt our thoughts, his job becomes easy. As Dallas states, “This is the basic idea back of all temptation: God is presented as depriving us by his commands of what is good, so we think we must take matters into our own hands and act contrary to what he has said.” (p. 100)

What preceded the Fall was the corruption of an idea about God. What precedes each of our “falls” is an erroneous belief that God does not have our best interests at heart—and that we must then act independently of his plans to ensure our own good.

But the problem is not limited to ideas. We may also be robbed because of holding distorted images of God. The comedian Curt Cloninger performs a poignant skit, *God Views*, that is part of this curriculum series. Inspired by J. B. Phillips’ classic little book, *Your God Is Too Small*, Curt portrays six common but false views of God—as cosmic sheriff, waiter, shop foreman, permissive party planner, senile grandfather, and 97-pound weakling confined to a small box. These images are funny, and they are not. To hold such heretical views of God—even in the remote corners of the mind—may cause a person to move away from him, instead of inviting his indwelling presence.

Fortunately, Curt concludes the performance by retelling the story of the Prodigal Son. He leaves us with the image of God made bright by the famous parable of Jesus. He repaints the enduring picture of God as the Prodigal’s father, a mind-blowing portrait of forgiveness and love.

Ideas, images, the information we store on our mental hard drive, and the automatic thoughts that pop into our heads (see the “Before You Start” illustration) are profoundly important in determining our spiritual transformation. Fortunately, God has provided wonderful methods for renewing, reprogramming our minds. The two classics are *meditation* (on the Word and presence of God) and *worship* (thinking of God as he is.)

With this chapter—and for the remainder of the RESOURCE GUIDE—we will begin to take a more practical focus. Our aim is to provide you with activities and exercises to help you reshape the components of you, your entire person. Exercise 6-A provides five steps that are foundational to Christian prayer and mediation. You will also find them foundational to our other suggestions for transforming the mind.

## ■ Exercise

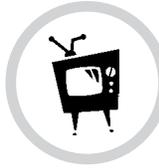
Take a few moments to participate in the prayer exercise found in Appendix 6-A. It is suggested that you 1) familiarize yourself with the 5 P’s of prayer; 2) read or summarize them for the group as they enter a time of quiet before God; and 3) read the “Breath Communication With God” exercise that follows.





## ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share his experiences during this exercise?



## CONTENT

We will now view the two video vignettes. In the first segment Dallas Willard will provide a summary of Chapter Six of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

## ■ Video Vignette

### (Dallas' Lecture on Chapter Six: Transforming the Mind, 1: Spiritual Transformation and the Thought Life)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the class to respond to the reflection questions which have been provided.

## ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- “As we first turned away from God in our thoughts, so it is in our thoughts that the first movements toward the renovation of the heart occur.” (p. 95)
- The realm of thought involves four main factors—ideas, images, information, and our ability to think. (p. 96)
- “Christian spiritual formation is inescapably a matter of recognizing *in ourselves* the idea system (or systems) of evil that governs the present age and the respective culture (or various cultures) that constitute life *away from God*.” (p. 98)  
Transformation is to a large extent a matter of replacing in ourselves those idea systems of evil which say, “God cannot be trusted to have our best interests at heart.”
- Ideas and images are “the primary focus of Satan’s efforts to defeat God’s purposes with and for humankind.” Satan hit Adam and Eve with an idea—God cannot be trusted; you must be God—not a stick. (p. 100)
- The idea back of all temptation is this: “God is presented as depriving us by his commands of what is good, so we think we must take matters into our own hands and act contrary to what he said.” (p. 100)

- “Self-rejection,” Nouwen contends, “is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the ‘Beloved.’ Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence.” (p. 101)
- “The process of spiritual formation in Christ is one of progressively replacing destructive images and ideas—[such as God is depriving me, or I am not his Beloved]—with images and ideas that fill the mind of Jesus himself.” (p. 101) In spiritual formation we exchange our mind for the mind of Christ.
- It is the implantation of the word and Spirit of Christ deep within that makes it possible for the transformation of our thought life and inner world. (p. 102)
- *“The prospering of God’s cause on earth depends upon his people’s thinking well.”* (p. 105)
- “Bluntly, to serve God well we must think straight; and crooked thinking, unintentional or not, always favors evil.” (p. 106)
- “To take the ‘information’ of the Scripture into a mind thinking straight under the direction and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, by contrast, is to place our feet solidly on the high road of spiritual formation under God.” (p. 106)
- The Lord’s Prayer begins with “Hallowed be Thy name” because worshipping—exalting God in our minds—is the most important thing we can do. (p. 107)
- “The effect of standing before God by welcoming him before us will, by contrast [to hiding from him in our shame], be the transformation of our entire life.” (p. 109)
- There are four special dangers in our thought life: pride, simple ignorance of fact, allowing desires to guide thinking, and allowing destructive images into our minds. (pp. 110 & 111)
- Thinking is also foundational to spiritual formation because it relates most easily to the “vision” component of the “VIM” model for change. (p. 112)
- “The most obvious thing we can do [to correct our ideas, images, information, and thinking] is to draw certain key portions of Scripture into our minds and make them a part of the permanent fixtures of our thought.” (p. 113)
- “The transformation of our thought life by taking on the mind of Christ—his ideas, images, information, and patterns of thinking—opens the way to deliverance of every dimension of the human self from the oppressive powers of darkness.” (p. 116)

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?





## Reflection Questions

### Video: Lecture

- 1 Dallas reminds us that when we learn from Christ, we are not just learning what he did (i.e., “What would Jesus do?”) and said. We are learning to be like him. Why is this such a crucial distinction?
- 2 What does it mean in practical terms (i.e., How I will act differently tomorrow because of this truth?) to switch from a life that is self-centered to one that is God-centered?
- 3 Why does Dallas begin this model of Christian spiritual formation by focusing on changing thoughts—instead of, let’s say, “will”?
- 4 What does Dallas say is the “foundation of the universe”? What are the implications of this for your life?
- 5 Explain what is meant by the statement, “Our first freedom is where we will put our mind.”

### ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Conversation

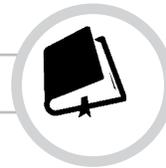
- 1 Larry asks the question, “How do you put on the mind of Christ?” How would you answer this question?
- 2 Does it help you to think of the Kingdom of God in terms of available energy, instead of as a remote city? How so?
- 3 Close your eyes, take a deep, slow breath, and say, “My Father (God) is as close as the air I’m breathing.” Repeat that several times. Does saying that help your image of God seem less stale?
- 4 What is a practical way you can avoid “finishing sentences” for God?

- 5 When John said, “God’s primary purpose is not to get you all the way through Scripture, but to get Scripture all the way through you,” what do you suppose he meant?

### Book: Chapter Six

- 1 What are the four factors that make up your realm of thought? Give an example of each.
- 2 How does Satan use ideas and images to defeat God’s purpose in a person’s life?
- 3 What is it that Dallas believes is the idea back of all temptation?
- 4 Do you agree with Henri Nouwen when he says that “self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life”? Why or why not?
- 5 Name as many ways as you can think of that the word and Spirit of God may be implanted within you. Which three of these ways will you do tomorrow?
- 6 What is your definition for worship? How can worship be part of the process of authentic Christian spiritual formation?
- 7 To what part of the VIM model does thinking most easily relate?

## BIBLE STUDY



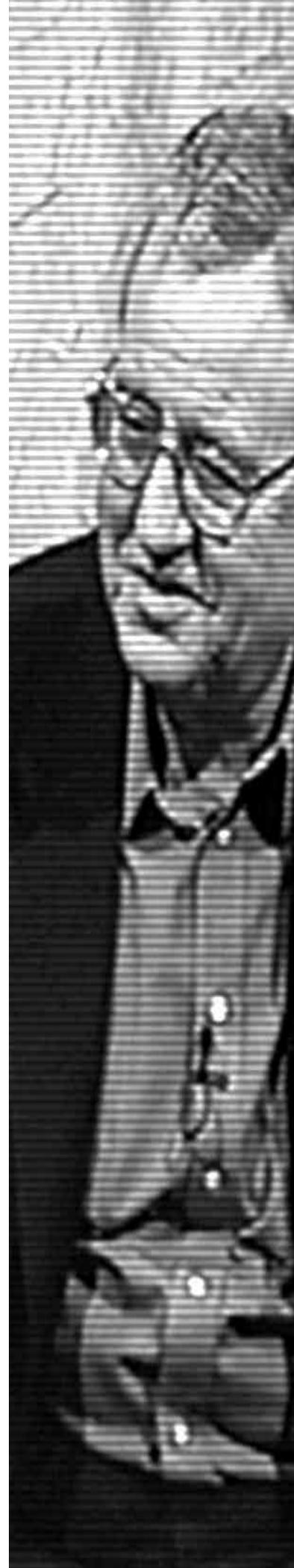
Once again we will turn our attention to the Bible to help us better appreciate and apply the primary themes of this chapter. A brief Bible study can be found in Appendix 6-B and may be used in class or as a “homework assignment.”

### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study in class.

### ■ Leader’s Insight

This passage (Philippians 2:1-11) contains what is known as the “Hymn of Christ” (Philippians 2:5-11). It was an important prayer and meditation of the early church—a repeated reminder of the foundational charge of Christian spiritual formation for the believer to take on the





mind of Christ. These words are of great importance. They echo our own need to embrace the personal cross of self-denial. Why? Because we must be empty of self if we are to be filled with the transforming presence of Christ. Emptying and filling: these are the waves of Christian spiritual formation.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to use the “Five P’s” exercise found in Appendix 6-A as a foundational exercise before meditating on a portion of the Bible study passage (We recommend Philippians 2:5-7). That is, allow several minutes to practice the “Five P’s” before slowly considering Paul’s words that became the “Hymn of Christ.” You may want to take just one verse at a time—or even just a few words at a time—considering a few of the words as you breathe in and the remainder as you breathe out.

For example, you would read through Philippians 2:5-7 until you have memorized the words. Then, after making sure that you are in a quiet and comfortable position, allow your eyes to close, and think of nothing but your deep, slow breathing.

Once your breathing has become slow and rhythmic, consider the words of this passage a few at a time. As you breathe in, say (to yourself) the words, “My attitude should be the same...” And as you breathe out, say “...as that of Christ Jesus.”

That is, you are praying Scripture. A few words as you breathe in and a few as you breathe out. Stay with that one verse for several breaths/repetitions before you continue on to the next verse.

Then, as you breathe in, say to yourself, “Who being in very nature God...” And as you breathe out, “...did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.” Stay with that for several breaths—or perhaps several minutes if you desire.

Using the same method for breathing Scripture, continue with the remaining words of Philippians 2:5-7. After having spent 10 to 20 minutes with that passage, ask God if there is anything he would like for you to understand—anything for your profit—in these verses of Scripture. Then invite him to plant those verses and his insight deep in your inner person.



## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

### ■ Thoughts:

As Dallas reminds us, “To bring the mind to dwell intelligently upon God as he is presented in his Word will have the effect of causing us to love

God passionately, and this love will in turn bring us to think of God steadily. Thus he will always be before our minds.” (p. 106)

Use the “Five P’s” Exercise (See Appendix 6-A) and the method found in the “Scripture Meditation” section of this lesson to meditate slowly on the following passages of Scripture.

- Psalm 23
- Ten Commandments
- Lord’s Prayer
- Beatitudes (from Sermon on the Mount)
- Romans 8
- Colossians 3
- Philippians 2-4

We recommend spending at least one week (twenty minutes each morning) on each of these passages—and not attempting to tackle more than a few verses during one time of meditation.

#### ■ Emotions:

Place an empty chair next to you (perhaps facing you) in an ideal location for conversing with a friend. Then, again use the “Five P’s” Exercise (See Appendix 6-A) as a way to prepare for this exercise. After you have quieted yourself, do the following:

*Imagine that Jesus is sitting in the chair. Slowly study him with the five senses of your imagination. Then continue to view him as you initiate a conversation. At some point ask him how he feels about you.*

#### ■ Will:

If you viewed Dallas’ video lecture, recall what he had to say about the missionary Frank Laubach. Also, read the quote from one of Laubach’s books found in the “Where Else Did He Say That?” section of this chapter (under *Hearing God*).

Frank Laubach came up with the notion of a “game with minutes.” For him it was a concrete way to bring Christ before his mind—his goal for





this was to think about Jesus at least one time each minute of the day.

If you have a watch that can be set to “beep” on the hour, set it to do so. Then, every time you hear the alarm, bring your favorite image of Jesus before your mind and ask him to complete the process of transforming all dimensions of you.

■ **Behavior:**

When you are in conversation with someone—spouse, children, friends or coworkers—imagine that Jesus is standing beside you. Continue in the conversation as if Christ were with you.

■ **Social Interactions:**

After doing the above exercise several times, imagine that the person you are talking to is Jesus. Notice any changes in your interactions with this person.



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## SUMMARY

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Adam and Eve fell because of the implantation of a false idea about God. Through the millennia that followed, it is our thoughts—ideas, images, information, and thinking—that are foundational in determining whether we move toward or away from God. Consequently, Christian spiritual formation is a process of identifying and replacing destructive thoughts of God with accurate ideas and images. Ultimately, this becomes the process of exchanging our mind for that of Jesus—a process made possible by the implantation of the word and Spirit of Christ within.

## MORE DALLAS



## Key Term Box

## Thoughts

- “By ‘thoughts’ we mean *all of the ways in which we are conscious of things*. That includes our memories, perceptions, and beliefs...” The realm of thought involves four main factors—ideas, images, information, and our ability to think. The two most powerful ones are ideas and images. (p. 96)

## Ideas

- “Ideas are very general models of or assumptions about reality.” They are patterns of interpretation. Examples of ideas are freedom, education, happiness, family, “the American Dream,” and “Christian.” (pp. 96, 97)

## Images

- “Images are always concrete and specific, as opposed to the abstractness of ideas, and are heavily laden with feeling.” (p. 99) The cross and communion cup are powerful Christian images.

## Information

- According to Webster, information is the communication or reception of knowledge or intelligence, or knowledge obtained from investigation, study, or instruction. The most important information to be obtained is knowledge of God. (p. 103)

## Thinking

- Thinking is “the activity of searching out what *must* be true, or *cannot* be true, in the light of given facts or assumptions. It extends the information we have and enables us to see the ‘larger picture’—to see it clearly and to see it wholly.” (p. 104)

## Worship

- Worship is the single most powerful force in completing and sustaining restoration in the whole person. “*Worship is at once the overall character of the renovated thought life and the only safe place for a human being to stand.*” (p. 107) Worship could be defined as “astonished reverence.”





## Christian Disciplines

- Activities that “*are* in our power and that enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort.” (p. 113)

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## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

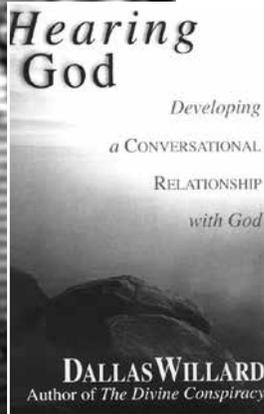
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### ■ Hearing God

- Lily Tomlin quote: “Why is it that when we speak to God we are said to be praying but when God speaks to us we are said to be schizophrenic?” (p. 19)
- Frank Laubach quote in *Letters by a Modern Mystic*, (p. 14), found on page 71 of *Hearing God*:

“As for me, I never lived, I was half dead, I was a rotting tree, until I reached the place where I wholly, with utter honesty, resolved and then re-resolved that I *would* find God’s will, and I *would* do that will though every fiber in me said no, and I *would* win the battle with my thoughts. It was as though some deep artesian well had been struck in my soul. . . You and I shall soon blow away from our bodies. Money, praise, poverty, opposition, these make no difference, for they will all alike be forgotten in a thousand years, but this spirit which comes to a mind set upon continuous surrender, this spirit is timeless.”

- The universe is beginning “to look more like a great thought [the mind of God, will of God] than like a great machine.” (p. 76)
- We must expand our minds to see the universe as a place where much more is going on than just physical and mechanical relationships. (p. 122)
- The practical advice of James Dobson is the best I have heard. He says, “I get down on my knees and say, ‘Lord, I need to know what you want me to do, and I am listening. Please speak to me through my friends, books, magazines I pick up and read, and through circumstances.’” (p. 199)
- From Fredrick B. Meyer (*The Secret of Guidance*, p. 43) another helpful suggestion (quoted on p. 199):



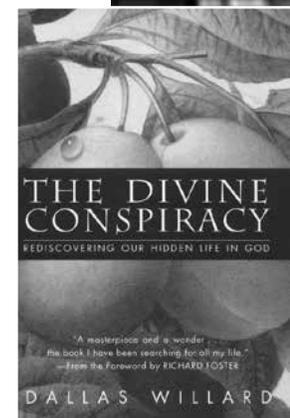
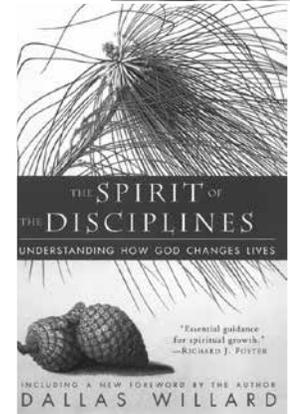
“Be still each day for a short time, sitting before God in meditation, and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the truth of Christ’s indwelling. Ask God to be pleased to make known to you what is the riches of the glory of this mystery (1 Colossians 1:27).”

### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- “The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order.” (p. 68)
- “The single most striking thing about the Kingdom of God Jesus invites us to enter is that in it there can be utter confidence in God’s care and provision.” (p. 236)

### ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “Until our thoughts of God have found every visible thing and event glorious with his presence, the word of Jesus has not yet fully seized us.” (p. 62)
- “So the question . . . is simply *how* to bring God adequately before the mind and spirit of the disciple. This is to be done in such a way that love for and delight in God will be elicited and established as the pervasive orientation of the whole self.” (p. 324)
- “The key, then, to loving God is to *see Jesus*, to hold him before the mind with as much fullness and clarity as possible.” (p. 334)
- Key passages of Scripture for meditation on God: Psalm 23, the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, Romans 8, Colossians 3, and Philippians 2-4. (p. 362)





SESSION SEVEN:

# Transforming the Mind, 2: Spiritual Formation and Our Feelings



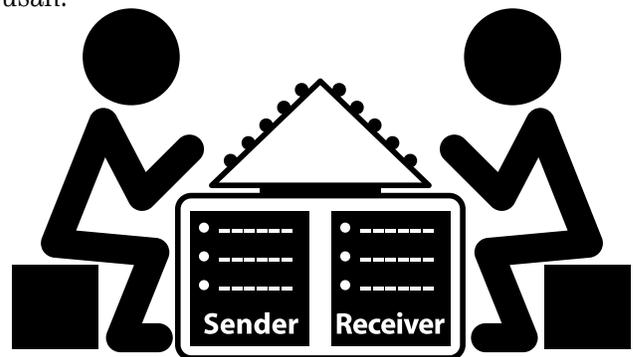
## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Feelings: Significant, But Only Signals

Have you ever taken a communications training class? My wife and I have. Several years ago we signed on for an experience with marriage communication training—besides both being in the counseling field, we needed it.

The teacher for this particular experience took a very structured approach. Here's how it worked.

My wife (Regina) and I sat facing each other. Between us was a table, and on the table sat a homemade contraption that could be rotated like a Lazy Susan.



On one side of the device the word “Sender” was written. This side was to face whoever was sending a message—the one doing the talking. Also on the sending side was a panel of lights. One column had green ones, the other red.

The sender would start talking, and if he was sending correctly, the trainer would make a green light come on next to the description of

what had just happened. You would get a green light for stuff like “being clear and concise,” “avoiding words that might suggest blame,” and “shutting up so the other person could respond.” Green was for “good.”

But if the sender made a communication faux pas, a red light would flash next to a description of how you had been a bad message sender. I would get red lights for stuff like “failing to state the topic of communication,” “using more blaming words than a politician,” “talked faster than those disclaimers on radio commercials,” or things to that effect. Red was the signal for “real bad.”

The receiver of the communication had her own panel of lights to deal with. There were green ones for “appearing to be interested,” “making good eye contact,” and “repeating back a portion of what was said”—to prove she was actually listening. Red lights would appear if she dozed off, started to count ceiling tiles, or shouted, “When is it *ever* going to be my turn to be the sender?”

For a while we really got into the “signals.” In fact, the trainer sent us home with one of those wrist counters—like golfers sometimes use to keep track of their scores—so we could have more signals. Every time one of us showed the other affection, we were to press a button so we would have a running total of the number of hugs, kisses, and compliments we had dished out during the week.

One day I forgot about the wrist counters. I came home from a bad day. Regina met me at the door. She was smiling. I felt better. I walked in, and she gave me a big hug and said, “I love you.” The sun broke forth. I felt loved.

But then I heard two sounds I will never forget. *Click. Click.* Signals that she had recorded the evidences of her affection. The sun went back behind the clouds. Not only was the signal something less than love; in this case, it was a distraction.

Okay, so how is this relevant to feelings?

The flashing lights—green for good, red for bad—and clicks on a wrist counter corre-

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer

### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion

### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions

### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together

### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions

### VI. SUMMARY

- Review

### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





spond to our feelings. *Feelings are signals*—indicators—of other things that are going on, things more important than the signals.

The descriptions next to the red or green lights (or the acts of compassion, in the case of the wrist counter) are analogous to the “conditions,” as Dallas puts it, that precede and may even cause our feelings. The actual conditions—whether in this communication course or in life—are always more important than the signals.

But the condition itself is not the *most* important thing. The condition (even if it’s a hug) doesn’t go to the heart of the matter. What is most important is to become the type of person—loving, caring, and other-focused—who naturally communicates with love and respect, and greets with a hug.

This is Dallas’ main point about our feelings. They are important, yes, but only signals that suggest underlying conditions (the events, thoughts, behaviors, social interactions, etc., that caused us to feel anger or love, anxiety or peace).

And it is pointless to attempt to master feelings head on. That would be as silly as my trying to make the green lights come on by concentrating on the light bulb, pressing my fingers against my forehead, and willing it to burn brightly. Even if I could do it, nothing meaningful would be accomplished.

But the signals (lights/feelings) should not be shortchanged. They do provide important information about conditions. And I can work to change the conditions—in the context of our first example, to develop better communication skills.

As Dallas puts it, “When we confuse the condition with the accompanying feeling—peace, for example, with the feeling of peacefulness—we very likely will try to manage the *feelings* and disregard or deny the reality of the *conditions*.” (p. 123)

And, once again, even the conditions should not be my ultimate focus. The highest desire is to be the type of person who is so filled with the loving presence of Jesus that it would be impossible to do anything other than respond in love. And that makes all the green lights burn like floodlights and wrist counters make more noise than a herd of crickets.

### ■ Note to Leader

You know the drill. It’s time to find the outline sheet (7-C) and start picking and choosing from the resources in the RESOURCE GUIDE to sculpt a lesson to the interests of your group.

While you may not be able to locate one of those lazy Susan contraptions, a flashlight and some green and red construction paper should serve the purpose. The purpose of this object lesson is to underscore the

point that feelings are simply signals of underlying conditions. Feelings provide helpful information. But in the work of our Christian formation, it is better to focus on trying to change conditions (instead of trying to change feelings—which is impossible). And the best way to change the conditions is through the process of taking on the mind of Christ.

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: a lazy Susan, flashlight, green and red construction paper

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil





## SESSION SEVEN:

# Transforming the Mind, 2: Spiritual Formation and Our Feelings



## INTRODUCTION

### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session seven of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Transforming the Mind, 2: Spiritual Formation and Our Feelings.”

### ■ Prayer

*“Dear God, we come together to enjoy this time with you and with one another. We thank you that you have gifted us with emotions. Teach us how to accept them, learn from them, and appreciate them as a blessing. But, Father, help us to avoid the trap of believing that our emotions should be of primary importance. Keep us from pursuing emotional pleasures (or escaping emotional pain) instead of pursuing you. Amen.”*



## WARM-UP

There are three key points Dallas Willard makes in this chapter:

- 1 Feelings are important signals of other factors and conditions in one’s life. (Note: You may want to use the object lesson found in the “Before You Start” section of this lesson to help make this point.)
- 2 We can do several things to help us experience the feelings associated with the life of Christ. (These are summarized in the “Central Truths” section of this chapter and also emphasized—with practical suggestions—throughout this lesson.)

- ③ Negative feelings (such as anger, depression, and anxiety) may call attention to the fact that we have not obtained full harmony with God; positive feelings (such as love, joy, and peace) may become homing devices that keep us moving God-ward. The following illustration is provided to highlight this third point.

### ■ Compassion Deficits

When I was sixteen and just beginning to enjoy the freedom of driving a car, my dad gave me some advice he thought was humorous. I know he thought that because he was smiling when he said, “Remember, Gary, it’s okay to drive a car without gas, but don’t ever drive one without oil.”

The humor, of course, is that it is impossible to drive a car without gas—so no harm can be done. It is, however, possible to drive one without oil—at least for a little while, until all manner of repairs become necessary.

It’s the same way with you and me. It’s okay for us to run our lives for a while without food (fuel). We might even make it for days or weeks without harm being done. But we should never attempt to drive through life without compassion. Harm will always be done. Repairs will always be necessary. Love is the essential lubricant that keeps our inner worlds running smoothly. Since God is love—this isn’t just a bumper sticker; it’s in the Bible (See 1 John 4:16)—we should assume that love is the oil that keeps our internal parts (including thoughts, emotions, and behavior) running without friction.

We can see this from the beginning—back in Eden. We were designed to live in a garden of delight. We were made to function in an environment in which we enjoyed the presence and love of God and the presence and love of others. We were meant to live submerged in an environment of love.

Claire Cloninger captured this notion in a song she titled “Homesick for Eden.” The first verse and chorus are printed below.

#### **HOMESICK FOR EDEN**

*A garden so green  
Where water ran clean  
And the animals roamed without names.*

*Love was a girl  
Who walked through the world  
Where passion was pure as a flame.*





*In the back of our minds is a time before time  
And a sad, irreversible fact,  
We can't seem to think why we left there  
And we can't seem to find our way back.*

*Chorus:*

*All of us are homesick for Eden.  
We yearn to return  
To a land we've never known.*

*Deep is the need to go back to the garden,  
A burning so strong for a place we belong  
A place that we know is home.*

As a psychologist I became very aware of the role compassion and acceptance played in producing emotions—both the painful and the pleasant. In years of practice I never met a person who suffered from the “big three” negative emotions—anger, depression, anxiety—who could not quickly take me to times and events in his or her life where compassion was in short supply.

One of the best models to explain depression is the loss model. Depression is the natural emotional response to loss. If you're stopped for speeding and lose \$100 to the officer, it would be natural for you to be a bit depressed. Lose a \$700 camera filled with 36 irreplaceable memories from vacation, and you will feel some depression. Lose a loved one, and the pain of depression may seem almost unbearable. And any loss of feeling loved and accepted by significant people in your life will cause some level of depression.

The best model to explain anger is the frustration/aggression model. Anger is the emotional response to a blocked goal or having one's will thwarted. Don't believe me. Find an angelic two-year-old with curls and a cherubic smile. Give her a Tootsie Roll—grape with a chocolate center. Allow her a few licks and then snatch it away. You'll see anger coming from that little angel. Anger is the natural response to a frustrated goal. And since we were designed to live in an environment of love, the frustration of the goal we each have to be loved will produce anger.

The third of the “big three” is anxiety. Whereas, as Dallas says, “peace is the rest of will that results from assurance about ‘how things will turn out’” (p. 134), anxiety is the hypervigilance of will that results from the conviction that says, “If it's to be, it's up to me.” Anxiety results from the belief that the universe is not friendly, and I alone have my best

interests at heart. At any time my life could be turned upside down by forces that are not benevolent.

Anger, depression, and anxiety are often important “signals” that I’m experiencing a compassion deficit. I’m not enjoying life according to its design—to live in love with God and other people.

Interestingly enough, the first three of the fruit of the Spirit are the polar opposites of the “big three” reasons people visit a counselor. Love instead of anger. Joy instead of depression. Peace instead of anxiety.

What’s the point?

Emotional pain often signals the cause: compassion deficits. Conversely, the fruit of the Spirit often signal that we are closer to the cure: compassion found—in the new Eden, the kingdom of God. While emotions are only signals, they are important signals concerning where we are on the journey back home to full awareness of the loving presence of God.

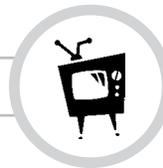
### ■ Exercise

Take a few moments and consider the questions in Exercise 7-A.

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share her experiences during this exercise?

## CONTENT



We will now view the two video vignettes. In the first segment Dallas Willard will provide a summary of Chapter Seven of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this mini-lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

### ■ Video Vignette (Dallas’ Lecture on Chapter Seven: Transforming the Mind, 2: Spiritual Transformation and Our Emotions)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the group to respond to the reflection questions which have been provided.

### ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- Feelings cannot be mastered head on. No one can succeed in mastering feelings as an act of “willpower.” (See p. 118.)





- There are several things we can do to avoid being mastered by our feelings:
  - It is a major step simply to *desire* to have different feelings, feelings that lead us toward God instead of away—to desire not to have the desires we now have. (p. 119)
  - Pray for a new vision of oneself (as in the VIM model for change) as a person who is free from intense vanity or the desire for wealth or sexual indulgence. (p. 119)
  - Realize that denial and repression are not the answer. (p. 122)
  - Put oneself in the position to take in the Word and presence of God (through reading and meditating on Scripture and practicing other Christian disciplines that make us more aware of the indwelling presence of God).
  - Realize that the conditions (including our thoughts, behaviors, and social interactions) that produce feelings can be changed, and work to change what can be changed. (See page 123.)
- “Healthy feelings, properly ordered among themselves, are essential to a good life. So if we are to be formed in Christlikeness, we must take good care of our feelings and not just let them ‘happen.’” (p. 121)
- “Addiction is a feeling phenomenon. The addict is one who, in one way or another, has given in to feeling of one kind or another and has placed it in a position of ultimate value in his or her life.” (p. 125)
- A particular problem with “modernity” (Key Terms section) is the overemphasis on making decisions based on how one feels.
- “Generally speaking, feelings and emotions are fostered and sustained by ideas and images, though social or bodily conditions also factor in” (p. 127). Consequently, it is important to manage these conditions as part of our Christian formation.
- The feelings associated with love, joy, and peace are what should come to dominate the life of a Christian. (p. 128)
- “Faith in Christ and the initial hope it inspires lead us to *stand* in the grace (the action) of God, and standing there leads, in turn, to a life full of love.” (p. 130)
- In the four movements of love, we are (1) loved by God, who is love, and in turn (2) we love him, and (3) through him love others, who in turn (4) love us through him. (p. 132)
- “And so, practically speaking, the renovation of the heart in the dimension of feeling is a matter of opening ourselves to and carefully cultivating love, joy, and peace: first by receiving them from God and from those already living in him, and then as we grow,

extending love, joy, and peace to others and everything around us in attitude, prayer, and action.” (pp. 136, 137)

- “Feelings have a crucial role in life, but they must not be taken as a *basis* of action or character change.” (p. 138)

## ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Lecture

- 1 What do you understand Dallas to mean when he says, “Feelings are like a little dog or like children, always right up in your face, always making their demands and letting their presence be felt”?
- 2 Dallas says, “Feelings are good servants but horrible masters.” Can you think of a time in your life when your feelings were good servants, or horrible masters?
- 3 If you can’t tackle your feelings head on, how can you deal with them in your journey of Christian formation?
- 4 What does it mean to say that a person’s identity is not found in her feelings, but in her character?
- 5 Dallas believes that we should want love, joy, and peace to dominate our entire beings. What are some practical ways to help this happen in your life?

## ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Conversation

- 1 Have you ever been so overcome by a passage of Scripture that it changed your life? If “yes,” then fill in some of the “W’s”: Where? When? and Why (that particular passage)?





- 2 Have you ever been convicted (as Larry describes) by a passage of Scripture? If “yes,” you know the drill: Where? When? and Why?
- 3 What are some things you can do to begin each day with more of a sense of being in “union” with God?

### Book: Chapter Seven

- 1 What do you believe Dallas means when he says addiction is a “feeling phenomenon”? And does the first of the “twelve steps” (discussed in session five; see Appendix 5-A) help break the cycle of being governed by one’s feelings?
- 2 What are your best resources for managing your feelings?
- 3 How do faith and hope relate to changing your feelings?
- 4 What have your experiences been with the four movements of love?
- 5 If feelings are not the basis for action or character change in your life, what is? And why?



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## BIBLE STUDY

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We will again turn our attention to the Bible to help us better appreciate and apply the primary themes of this chapter. A brief Bible study can be found in Appendix 7-B and may be used in class or as a “homework assignment.”

### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study in class.

### ■ Leader’s Insight

Dallas Willard comments on this passage (Romans 5:1-5) on pages 129 and 130 of *Renovation of the Heart*. He considers it to be important for at least three reasons. First, it outlines “an instructive and inspiring progression from an *initial* faith in God through Christ, with an accompanying *initial* hope, to a subsequent higher-level hope that ‘does

not disappoint.” (p. 129) Our hope grows as our relationship with Christ grows.

Second (see verses 3 and 4), the role of unpleasant emotions is underlined in the development of character. Trials and tribulations may be used to “prove God’s power and faithfulness in love to me, and to trust him in all things becomes my settled character.” (p. 130)

Finally, as character becomes more like that of Christ, faith and hope progress until we are willing to allow the love of God to pour into our entire inner person. By exercising deeper levels of faith and hope, we can allow the presence of God to pervade our whole life, bathing all our inner parts (thoughts, emotions, will, behavioral and social inclinations) with divine love.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

In Lesson Six, we introduced the “Five P’s” of prayer (See Appendix 6-A). And for the “Scripture Meditation” section of that lesson, we suggested a way to breathe Scripture, that is, allowing several minutes to practice the “Five P’s” before slowly considering the words of a brief passage of Scripture.

After a passage is committed to memory, breathing Scripture means that you say a portion of the passage (only a few words) as you breathe in, and another portion as you breathe out. You may stay with those words for several breaths before continuing to work your way through the verse or verses. And as you slowly consider the words, you are adopting of attitude of waiting before Jesus to see if he wishes to increase your understanding of the words.

It is recommended that you apply this same method of meditating on Scripture to the two verses that Dallas Willard used to introduce this chapter. Please set aside 10 to 20 minutes two times during the coming week and devote one of those sessions to each of the following verses.

*For the kingdom of God in not eating and drinking, but  
righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

–Romans 14:17

*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified  
the flesh with its passions and desires.*

–Galatians 5:24, PAR.

## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

- **Thoughts:** When you awake each morning this next week, lie in bed a few extra moments (that’s not the hard part) and pray for a new vision of yourself





(as in the VIM model for change) as a person who is free from pride (“intense vanity”), or the desire for wealth or sexual indulgence.

■ **Emotions:**

Our emotions can be great teachers. In the words of Dallas Willard, “Generally speaking, feelings and emotions are fostered and sustained by ideas and images, though social or bodily conditions also factor in.” (p. 127) Consequently, it is important to manage these conditions as part of our Christian formation. Resolve to learn from your emotions. At the end of each day this week, reflect on your waking hours and identify the most painful and the most pleasant emotion you experienced. Then ask God to reveal the key idea or image associated with the emotion. Pray that God will whisper to you about whether a particular image is false and should be dismissed, or true and needs to be strengthened. Ask him to do the work in your mind that needs to be accomplished.

■ **Will:**

It is a major step simply to desire to have different feelings, feelings that lead us toward God instead of away. Say to your heavenly Father, at least once each day this week, “I desire not to have many of the emotions and desires I now have.”

■ **Behavior:**

Read Psalm 23 out loud. If doing so helped you to feel closer to God, read another psalm.

■ **Social Interactions:**

Be a participant in the German “spouse kissing” experiment described in the video conversation. Kiss your spouse each morning before beginning the workday. If you are already in the habit of doing this, then kiss your spouse twice.



## SUMMARY

While feelings cannot be mastered head on and should never be taken as a basis for action or character change, they play a crucial role in transformation. Feelings are signals from which we should learn. They have much to offer concerning where we are in the process of learning to enjoy God’s love and presence. We should also monitor our

feelings because they can so easily become triggers for sinful action.

Feelings are also God's gifts to be enjoyed. Love, joy, and peace (both emotions and conditions) are more desired by human beings than mansions, sex, and chocolate. Yet they are gifts from our Father: the air, water, and food of his kingdom. A person becoming renovated into Christlikeness will have feelings dominated by love, joy, and peace, along with the foundational conditions of faith and hope.

## MORE DALLAS



### Key Term Box

#### Feeling

- “Feeling’ encompasses a *range* of things that are ‘felt’: specifically, sensations, desires, and emotions.” (p. 120)

#### Sensation

- A mental process (involving one or more of the five senses) due to immediate physical stimulation.

#### Desire

- To have a longing or hope. Desire implies a strong intention or aim.

#### Emotions

- The affective aspect of a person that typically involves primary input from the physical (physiological) aspect of the person, and secondary input from thought (interpretation) of the trigger event.

#### Mood

- A pervasive and sustained emotion that, in the extreme, colors the person's perception of the world. Initial feelings of depression can turn into a depressed mood.

#### Modernity

- The present time—and immediate past. In the context of this chapter it refers to a climate in which there is an overemphasis on feelings in making decisions.

#### Self-control

- “The steady capacity to direct yourself to accomplish what you have chosen or decided to do and be, even though you ‘don't feel like it.’” (See p. 127.) In the context of this chapter it refers to





the need to manage what we can control (conditions that produce feelings).

### Love/Joy/Peace

- The three fundamental dimensions of the fruit of the Spirit. Although often referred to as feelings, “love, joy, and peace are *not* mere feelings but conditions of the whole person that are accompanied by characteristic positive feelings.” (p. 128)

### Love

- “It is the *will* to good or ‘bene-volence.’ We love something or someone when we promote its good for its own sake” (p. 130). Wishing the thing (object of love) well is what distinguishes love from lust.

### Joy

- “Joy is a pervasive *sense*—not just a thought—of well-being: of overall and ultimate well-being.” (p. 132)

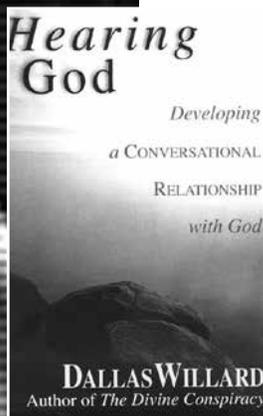
### Peace

- “Peace is the rest of will that results from assurance about ‘how things will turn out.’ It is always a form of active engagement with good, plus assurance that things will turn out well.” (p. 134)

## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

### ■ Hearing God

- “The thoughts and feelings [the context here being reoccurring thoughts and feelings] in the mind and spirit of one who is surrendered to God should be treated as if God were walking through one’s personality with a candle, directing one’s attention to things one after the other. As we become used to the idea that God is friendly and helpful, that he desires to straighten, inform and correct us for our good as well as to comfort and encourage, and that he really does love us, then we can begin to pray heartily with the psalmist, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts’ (Ps 139:23).” (p. 102)
- “In the progress of God’s redemptive work *communication* advances into *communion* and communion into *union*. When the progression is complete we can truly say, ‘It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me’ (Galatians 2:20) and ‘For me, living is Christ.’ (Phil 1:21).” (p. 155).

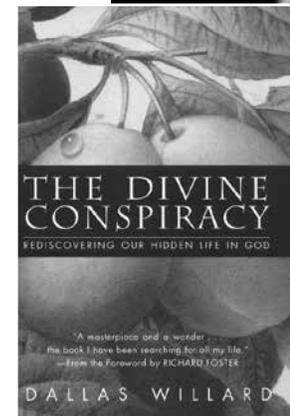
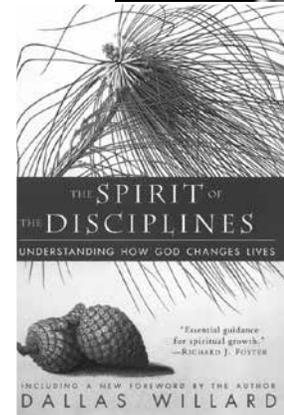


## ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- When Adam and Eve (living in Eden, which means “delight” or “enjoyment”) ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they “died.” They did not cease to be living beings, but they nevertheless died. “They ceased to relate to and function in harmony with that spiritual reality that is at the foundation of all things and of whose glory the universe is an expression. They were dead to God.” (p. 66) [This offer of “delight” and “enjoyment” is again found in Jesus’ offer of “abundant” life and in the “emotions” (conditions) of the fruit of the Spirit, and requires a return to living connected/in union with God.]
- “Think about it [our present ‘feel good’ society]. Isn’t the most generally applied standard of success for a religious service whether or not people feel good in it and after it?... Our communities and our churches are thickly populated with people who are neurotic or paralyzed by their devotion and willing bondage to how they feel. Drug dependence and addiction is epidemic because of the cultural imperative to ‘feel good.’” (pp. 99, 100)

## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “One of the most outstanding features of Jesus’ personality was precisely an abundance of joy. This he left as an inheritance to his students, ‘that their joy might be full’ (John 15:11). And they did not say, ‘Pass the aspirin,’ for he was well known to those around him as a happy man.” (p. 64)
- “With this magnificent God positioned among us, Jesus brings the assurance that our universe is a *perfectly safe place for us to be*. The very heart of his message, as well as of his personality and actions, is found in such well-known words as these in Matthew 6, ‘My advice would be not to worry about what is going to happen to you: about what you will have to eat or drink...’” (p. 66)
- Anger alerts me to an obstruction of my will. (p. 148)
- “Anger and contempt are the twin scourges of the earth. Mingled with greed and sexual lust...these bitter emotions form the poisonous brew in which human existence stands suspended. Few people ever get free of them in this life, and for most of us even old age does not bring relief. Once you see those emotions for what they are, the constant stream of human disasters that history and life bring before us can also be seen for what *they* are: the natural outcome of human choice, of people choosing to be angry and contemptuous.” (p. 150)





SESSION EIGHT:

# Transforming the Will (Heart or Spirit) and Character

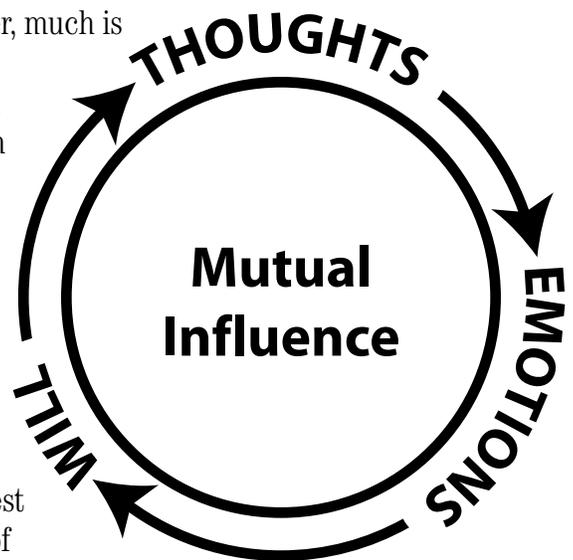


## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Lilies of the Field—The Movie

To understand the role of the will (heart or spirit) in authentic transformation is very important. So important that Dallas Willard devoted two chapters to this vital component of you (chapters 2 and 8 of *Renovation of the Heart*).

In the present chapter, much is made of the “back and forth” impact that the thoughts and emotions of the mind have on the will, and in turn, that the will has on thoughts and emotions. Your will is dependent on your mind, but your mind is also dependent on your will—your choices.



Perhaps one of the best ways to envision this drama of mutual influence is to examine another drama. Let’s take some time to consider the classic movie, *Lilies of the Field*, starring Sidney Poitier. We’ll zoom in for a really close look. But before we do, you may need a key to appreciate the analogy we are suggesting. Here it is.

Consider Sidney Poitier’s character, Homer Smith, to be representative of the “will”—your will. The nuns he encounters are to be viewed as “thoughts,” and Juan, the café owner, will represent “emotion.” Yeah, it’s a little weird, but it may help to understand what Dallas means by the “back and forth” impact of “will” (heart or spirit) and “mind” (thoughts and emotions). Here we go.

## ■ Movie Synopsis.

*Lilies of the Field* was released four decades ago, in 1963. It stars Sidney Poitier as Homer Smith, an ex-GI, and a man without a home. The movie opens with Homer driving his car through the Arizona desert. An African-American spiritual, “Amen,” plays in the background.

As fate would have it, Homer’s car overheats in front of a mission that is run by five nuns from Germany. Their English is weak, and their accents are strong. The mother superior is a stern drill sergeant of a woman, Mother Maria.

When Homer has finished filling his radiator with water from their well, Maria walks up and announces, “God is good. He has sent me a big, strong man.” (She is planning to have a chapel built on the grounds of the mission and hoping that Homer will supply the labor.)

Homer announces, “He [God] didn’t say anything to me about that, and I’ve got places to go.” He gets back in his car and drives away. But while the nuns are still framed by his rearview mirror, he stops the car and examines his wallet. Since it’s a bit thin, he turns around and announces that he will give them a day’s work for a day’s pay.

Maria has him begin by repairing their roof. He does so with great relish. After he has finished the job, he says that he must be going, and asks for his money.

Maria plants the first of many transforming “thoughts” in his mind. “You weren’t put on earth to hurry, Smith. I will ring the bell when it is time for your supper.”

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





After the six eat a meager meal together, Homer provides a humorous English lesson in which he inserts some Southern and black dialect into their sentences. But before all go to sleep, we see the first major conflict between the mind (specifically, thought) and the will (specifically, Homer's desires.)

"You will build our chapel, Smith."

"No!" he asserts.

"*Ja!*" she responds.

As a compromise, he agrees to give them one more day's work—clearing up the site where the chapel will be built. But he makes it clear that he expects pay and that he will be leaving afterward.

The next night, after supper, Homer uses the Bible to communicate with Maria. "Look up Luke 13:7. You read in German, and I'll read in English." The verses states, "...A laborer is worthy of his hire."

He emphasizes the word "hire" and indicates he wants his pay now.

But Maria counters with a verse that seems to suggest he should stay and help, and then she moves in for the kill. She has him read Matthew 6:28, 29 in English. His voice trails off toward the end of the reading:

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." ["Thought" uses "the Word" to help transform the "will."]

With this, Homer rips up the bill and agrees to stay and help build the chapel.

The following Sunday morning, Homer drives the nuns to Mass. It is conducted by Father Murphy—a priest without a home parish. The vagabond cleric drives a 400-mile circuit, holding services out of the back of his dilapidated station wagon. Homer, who has not had a filling meal in days, goes into a café, meets the owner, Juan, and orders half the menu.

While Juan is something of an agnostic, he has a big heart that includes care for the nuns. He tells Homer that Homer has not been paid because the sisters have no money, and reminds him of what they have gone through to make the 8,000-mile trip to Arizona. Now, "emotion" begins to join forces with "thought" in shaping Homer's will.

The next day Homer gets a job driving heavy equipment two days a week so he can use the money to buy groceries for the nuns and to help with building the chapel. Slowly, we see, will is being transformed by thought and emotion.

Before long, however, a conflict arises between Homer and Maria. In part, it is because she (thought) is a bit too out of touch with emotion, and has refused to acknowledge Homer's contributions or even to say, "Thank you."

There has also been a crisis concerning supplies for the chapel. Maria has assured Homer that God will provide the bricks—she is short on neither hope nor faith. But when the day comes that the bricks were to arrive, there are no bricks. She takes the tack of pushing Homer even harder to do other types of work until they arrive. It's a push too hard. Homer packs up and leaves. But before he does, he refers to Maria as "Hitler" and says, "You push too hard. You'll have to get yourself another boy."

The nuns are embarrassed. They had already proclaimed to the people in the community who attend the station wagon Mass that God had sent Homer to build their chapel.

After three weeks, agonizing for both himself and the nuns, Homer returns. He is rededicated to the effort.

People from the community respond with enthusiasm. They show up and ask Homer how they can help. But he turns them down. He announces that he will be building the chapel by himself, a "one-man cathedral." And he places signs all around the work site. "Keep out." "Don't touch." Maria (thought) cannot reason with Homer. It's up to emotion to do the job.

Juan shows up at the work site and talks with Homer. Homer reluctantly allows Juan and others to help, but he loses his own energy for the project. He sits and watches. At some point he explains to Maria, revealing a common problem of the "will," "I wanted to build it myself. I would do it slowly and carefully. All of my life I wanted to really build something special."

And in this scene we see how a fatal flaw must be overcome if the will is to be in harmony with thought, emotion, behavior, social relationships, and soul. The will must overcome its desire for credit and recognition. [As Dallas points out, there are many "surrenders" on the path to transformation.]

Maria tries to help but is a bit too blunt. She says, "You are not building this chapel, Smith. God is building the chapel. And you sit here feeling sorry for yourself because you are not him." Ouch. But an accurate assessment of a non-renovated will.

Neither Juan (emotion) nor Maria (thought) can get Homer back on the job. And without a CEO (a "boss") the chapel construction falls into disarray. When the will sits down on the job, the work suffers.

Eventually Homer is persuaded by the chaos he observes at the work site that his role is crucial, even if he cannot do all the work himself. "Every job needs a boss that knows what he's doing," Juan observes. Soon Homer is directing the entire community in building the chapel. The work and relationships thrive.

Soon, the chapel is built, and it is a glorious reflection of everyone who has helped. A chandelier (from an old man and his wife), stained glass windows, a beautiful wooden doorway, religious statues, and works of art have poured in from the community.





Homer does take the task of building a bell tower for himself alone. And when he has poured the concrete around the foot of a wooden cross at the top, with no one looking, he writes his name in the wet cement. While the will (Homer) has learned the value of thought, emotion, social interactions, and behavior, it is impossible to renounce at least some recognition of its own direction and creativity. And perhaps the foot of the cross is the best location for “will” to place its name.

Two scenes conclude the movie.

Father Murphy—you remember the parish-less priest—is escorted into the completed chapel. He is in a state of tearful disbelief. For so long he has dreamed of a real chapel—a place other than the back of his station wagon to hold Mass. He walks to the front of the chapel and gives it a pleased inspection. Perhaps, from the perspective of our studies, it would be appropriate to see him as representing the Word and Spirit of Christ in the center of the church, which is now the center of the community.

And in the last scene, Homer is again gathered around the dining table with the five nuns. He leads them in a final English lesson. “I built the chapel,” he says with a smile as they repeat the phrase. “You built the chapel,” the nuns repeat. And he adds, “We built the chapel.” And with a smile that has become less rare as she (thought) has been shaped by Homer (will), Mother Maria adds, while pointing up, “He built the chapel.”

Homer returns the smile. And there you have it. This is what can happen when thought and emotion shape will, and will in return shapes mind, humbles itself, and functions as “boss.” The chapel (a place for communion with God) gets built; Word and Spirit are at its center; and the community of component parts has come to function as one.

Appropriately, the movie ends with the word “Amen” instead of “The End.” “Amen,” which means “so say we all.” Yes, in the end, all the parts (thought, emotion, will, action, and social relationships) are in harmony, singing the same tune.

While I’m not sure if this analysis is what Ralph Nelson had in mind when he put William E. Barrett’s book on film, it certainly illustrates Dallas’ notion of mutual impact among our component parts—particularly mind on will, and will on mind.

### ■ Note to Leader

If you have found it useful to use the one-page outline sheet (8-C) in organizing your presentation, you will want to locate it now. And if you are using the object lessons presented in the “Before You

Start” section, you may want to rent a copy of *Lilies of the Field* from your favorite video store. You may even want to show a scene or two to your group.

We also assume that you have discovered which aspects of these lessons the majority of your class prefers. While we like to think that the Video-vignettes and Bible Study will be used by most classes, our primary purpose is to provide you with a potpourri of resources for you to select from in creating a class tailor-made (by you) to fit the interests of the participants.

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: picture of a church, brick or stone (used in building)

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant’s Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil





SESSION EIGHT:

# Transforming the Will (Heart or Spirit) and Character



## INTRODUCTION

### Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session eight of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Transforming the Will (Heart or Spirit) and Character.”

### Prayer

*“Father, thank you for making things simple for us. Because of the words of your Son, we know that above all else we are to seek your kingdom—and our place in it. We also know that our supreme desire should be to stay in love with you and to share that love with others. And through the teachings of this lesson, help us come to know a third teaching—also very simple: we are to pray that our will would be conformed to your will. Help us now, each one of us, to learn how to will your will, because learning to will your will is the only way to have a pure heart. Amen.”*



## WARM-UP

### Continuous Surrender

Have you stopped to wonder why Dallas wanted the image of a white flag—synonymous with surrender—on the cover of *Renovation of the Heart*? I believe the answer is found on page 150. There he states,

In the progression toward complete identification of our will with God’s there are distinctions to be noted. First there is *surrender*. When we surrender our will to God we consent to his supremacy

in all things. Perhaps we do so grudgingly. We recognize his supremacy intellectually, and we concede to it in practice—though we still may not like it, and parts of us may still resist it.

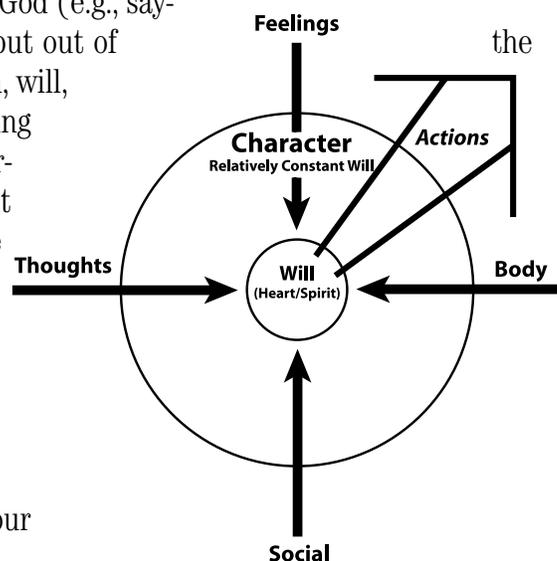
The progression to authentic Christian spiritual transformation begins when our will raises a white flag of surrender. Authentic renovation *begins* with surrender. To be sure, parts of us—including the will, even as it attempts to fly the white flag of surrender—will resist. Much of our inner territory must still be conquered and reconquered before our change is complete.

It is very tempting, after raising the white flag once or twice, to go back to being in charge. I’ve often joked about crossing my fingers while singing “He is Lord.” Perhaps this conflicted desire is what inspired Andrew Murray to muse, “We find the Christian life so difficult because we seek for God’s blessing while we live in our own will. We should be glad to live the Christian life according to our own liking.” (from *Absolute Surrender*, quoted on p. 150) But this is what separates Dallas’ notion of heart renovation from others. He is stubbornly honest and passionate about the drama of internal surrender that must continue if we are to take on the mind of Christ.

So what about you? Do you want to be a saint—one who has become genuinely transformed? Have you ever wondered what separates saints from the run-of-the-mill-Christians-on-the-pew? It’s simple, really. The saint is just a Christian who has resolved and then re-resolved to will the will of God. A saint is someone who has raised white flags of surrender until his arms ache, and there are no more battles to lose.

To use the “character” diagram from Chapter Two, the actions of the saint (including saint you) do not come from a will in white-knuckled surrender to God (e.g., saying “yes” but wanting “no”), but out of whole person (mind, emotion, will, body, social interactions) acting under the direction of the person and power of God. A saint has learned to love to will the will of God.

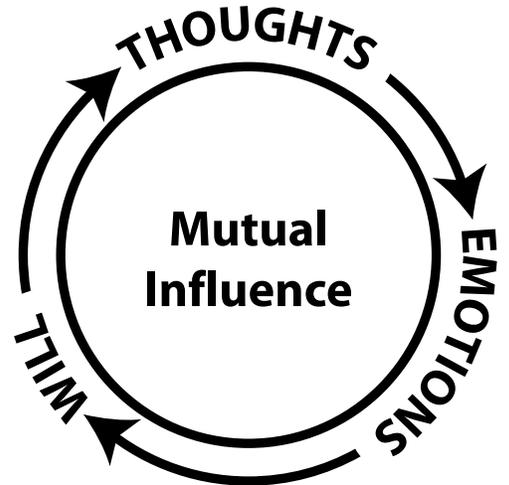
The pathway to this level of maturity involves lots of white flags, and the knowledge that each of our component parts are important and have the power to influence our other parts.





### ■ Note to leader.

This would be a good time for the class to study the diagram of the “circle of mutual influence” while you share the *Lilies of the Field* object lesson. The purpose is to show the process of mutual influence and to underscore the fact that the most important thing that can happen in spiritual formation is to raise and continue to raise the while flag of surrender.



### ■ Discussion

Ask the group if they would like to discuss the *Lilies of the Field* analogy as it may relate to the drama of internal surrender to the will of God. Where would they place their will in the drama? What are the most compelling arguments their thoughts and emotions have used in motivating them to will the will of God?

### ■ Exercise

To be more specific about all the flag raising, Dallas presents a four-step process that is involved in the complete identification with the will of God. These steps are presented in Exercise 8-A. Have the class take a few moments and complete this exercise.

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share his reaction to this exercise?

### ■ Note to Leader

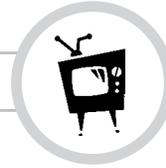
To summarize, we have attempted to underscore two points from Chapter Eight:

- 1 All our component parts play a role in influencing one another. While we know that a person renovated in Christlikeness has thoughts centered on God, has emotions reflective of the fruit of the Spirit, and desires to will the Father’s will, this happens only by mutual influence among the parts of the self. Thought shapes

the will, for example, and the will in turn helps to shape thoughts.

- 2 Total surrender, according to Dallas Willard, will follow a multi-step process similar to what is presented in Exercise 8-A.

## CONTENT



We will now view the two video vignettes. In the first segment, Dallas Willard will provide a summary of Chapter Eight of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

### ■ Video Vignette (Dallas' lecture on Chapter Eight: Transforming the Will [Heart or Spirit] and Character)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the group to respond to the reflection questions that have been provided.

### ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- To become renovated in Christlikeness means that one's thought life becomes centered on God, and the emotions are dominated by the feelings and conditions associated with the fruit of the Spirit—but this cannot happen in full unless there are massive changes in the other components of the person (especially the will). (p. 141)
- There is a kind of “back and forth” between the mind (thoughts and emotions) and the will. The mind influences the will, and the will in turn influences the mind.
- “Will alone cannot carry us to change. But will *implemented through changing my thoughts and feelings* can result in my becoming a different kind of person. . . .” (p. 143)
- “The human mind and will must be transformed through interaction with thoughts and feelings deriving from the Word and the Spirit.” (p. 143)
- “*Single-minded and joyous devotion to God and his will, to what God wants for us—and to service to him and to others because of him—is what the will transformed into Christlikeness looks like.*” (p. 143)





- “Instead of being simple and transparent through a constant and coherent devotion to God, the usual human will is a place of chaotic duplicity and confusion if not darkness, because it is the playing field of pride and fear and lack of confidence in God, shrouded in layer upon layer of destructive habits.” (pp. 143, 144)
- God does not *make* us do the right things because he values our “freely chosen character.” (p. 145)
- In making the wrong choices (fundamentally this is always the choice of self-deification), the human will becomes “splintered, corrupted, and eventually turned against itself.” (p. 145)
- Unfortunately, the existentialist thinkers of the last two centuries have come to describe our splintered state as natural and good. (p. 146)
- “The constant character of the will apart from God is *duplicity*—or, more accurately, fragmentation and multiplicity.” (p. 147)
- “The heart (will, spirit) is precisely what God observes and addresses in human beings. He cares little or nothing for outward show.” The heart is, above all, who we really are. (p. 148)
- To worship God “in spirit and in truth” means “people who have free-hearted and wholehearted admiration, respect, and commitment to God as the highest being of all.” (p. 149)
- There are four steps or distinctions in the progression toward complete identification of our will with God’s:
  - We are willing to be made willing. “Andrew Murray comments that ‘we find the Christian life so difficult because we seek for God’s blessing while we live in our own will. . . .’” (p. 150) With this first step, we at least realize what we are doing and desire to be made willing.
  - By God’s grace and wisdom we are moved to deeper levels of surrender—ultimately to full abandonment. (p. 150)
  - “Beyond abandonment is *contentment* with the will of God. At this point in the progression toward complete identification with the will of God, gratitude and joy are the steady tone of our life.” (p. 151)
  - “Beyond contentment lies intelligent, energetic *participation* in accomplishing God’s will in our world.” No longer spectators, we learn to reign—exercise dominion—as part of God’s original design in Eden. (pp. 151, 152)
- Perhaps the ultimate in living a surrendered life is to come to the point, in the words of Kierkegaard, where we “will one thing”—to will the will of God. This, according to Kierkegaard, is “purity of heart.” (p. 153)
- Temptation to sin has more to do with our desires than our behaviors. (p. 154)

- “A major service of spiritual disciplines—such as solitude (being alone with God for long periods of time), fasting (learning freedom from food and how God directly nourishes us), worship (adoration of God, as discussed in chapter 6), and service (doing good for others with no thought of ourselves)—is to cause the duplicity and malice that is buried in our will and character to surface and be dealt with.” (p. 155)
- To lose our will in God’s will is not to have no will of our own. “It is for the first time to have a will that is fully functional, not at war with itself, and capable of directing all of the parts of the self in harmony with one another under the direction of God.” (p. 156)

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Lecture

- 1 Just for practice, how do you distinguish among the will, heart, and spirit? [Hint: It’s been a while since session two, so the definitions are repeated in the “Key Term” section, pp. 177, 178.]
- 2 The will in its condition apart from God is primarily captivated by and focused upon what? How does this result in a “splintered” will?
- 3 What does Dallas mean when he says, “Freedom *from* is very different from freedom *to*?” And how does this concept relate to authentic transformation and the indwelling presence of Christ?
- 4 What are some “consents” you give to God? What are some “non-consents” you would like for him to remove?
- 5 What does it mean to say that “a thief is not someone who steals, but someone who would steal if given the opportunity”? How does this statement relate to the heart?
- 6 What do you believe would happen to your desires if you became engulfed in the will of God?





## ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Conversation

- 1 Dallas asks Larry and John if it is possible to become intentional about change. John's answer was, perhaps, somewhat unexpected. How would you summarize John's response?
- 2 John quotes a line from *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, "Authentic transformation really is possible if we are willing to do one thing, and that is to rearrange our life around the things that Jesus practiced in order to receive light and power from the Father." Two questions:
  - Does this statement give you a sense of hope for real change in your own life?
  - If you were going to rearrange your life, what would be the first two things you would do differently?
- 3 What is your honest answer to the question, "Do I really want God and his kingdom more than anything else?"
- 4 If your answer was "no," thank God for your honesty. If your answer was "yes," then invite God to join you on a quest to find your place in his kingdom.

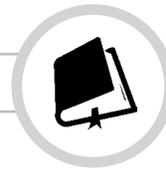
### Book: Chapter Eight

- 1 In the process of authentic transformation, the mind (thoughts and feelings) play a crucial role in shaping the will. But the will, in turn, is needed to focus our thoughts and feelings. How has this cyclical process worked in your life?
- 2 What is the ultimate transforming agent for all the components (thoughts, feelings, will, behavior, and social interactions) of you? [Hint (doubt you need it): see page 143 of *Renovation* text.]
- 3 What does the will transformed into Christlikeness look like? (See page 143.)

- 4 Dallas says that the constant character of the will apart from God is d \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5 Why doesn't God just make us do the right things?
- 6 Of the five components of you (six, counting the soul), which above all is who you really are? Why?
- 7 Dallas describes four steps in the progression toward complete identification of our will with God's will. Please describe each. [Hint: see pages 150 and following, or cheat and look in the "Central Truth" section of your *Participant's Guide*.]

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## BIBLE STUDY



We will now turn our attention to the Bible. A brief Bible study is found in Appendix 8-B and may be used in class or as a "homework assignment."

### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercise in class.

### ■ Leader's Insight

Way back in Genesis, things got off to a bad start in a garden. Adam and Eve chose to be like God instead of living in willing surrender to God. Their choice cost them the delight of Paradise.

At the end of his earthly ministry—at least, the ministry performed while wearing flesh—Jesus goes back to a garden (Gethsemane) to set right what went wrong in one. He faces the same temptation as Adam and Eve. He can choose to have his own will done instead of that of his Father. He can choose to eat from the wrong tree. But he does not. Three times he articulates the struggle: "If it be your will, [do what I want done and] take this cup away from me." Three times he chooses willing surrender: "But your will and not mine be done."

Jesus overcame duplicity (of will), deceit (eating from the wrong tree), and darkness (the power of Satan) in the Garden. He went back to a garden and showed us how it was supposed to be done.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to spend 10 to 15 minutes slow-reading Romans 7 as a meditation that allows personal examina-





tion, and to realize that the solution to this duplicity of desire and action is found in the person of Jesus and his example of surrender demonstrated in Gethsemane.



## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

### Thoughts:

Write the following two verses on index cards and put them in your pocket. Each describes what a will or heart looks like that has been transformed into Christlikeness. Read each verse several times during the day as a prayer for what you want your will to look like.

*“He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”* (John 8:29, NAS)

*“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”* (Galatians 2:20, NAS)

### Emotions:

Continue to pay attention to any time you feel particularly loving, joyful, or peaceful. Then whisper to your will that there is more where that came from, if it continues to function as a CEO sold out to the mission and purpose of God in your life.

### Will:

Practice the discipline of solitude (being alone with God for a period of time) for at least half a day this week. Read and reread Matthew 26:36-44. Ask God to reveal to you any areas of your life for which you are unwilling to pray Jesus' prayer in the garden. Then pray for the grace of abandonment to God's will.

### Behavior:

Practice the discipline of service (doing what is good for others with no thought of yourself) at least once this week.

### Social Interactions:

Pick a day of the week (a Saturday may work best) and practice surrender of the will by

allowing your spouse (if married; best friend if not) to plan the events of the day. Be aware of (and fan the flames of) any emotion of gratitude or joy as you go through the day.

## SUMMARY

To have a fully functioning will means that we have lost it (surrendered it along with our thoughts, emotions, behavior, social interactions, and souls) to God for the sake of His kingdom. It is then that our life (with the will as CEO) can be found. This process of losing and finding the will happens 1) by God's grace and power; 2) through the mutual influence of our component parts on one another; 3) as we embrace deeper and deeper levels of surrender; and 4) through the practice of disciplines of the spirit.

When a will transformed into the image of Christlikeness is the CEO of our life, we are able to go to the garden of choice and pick willing surrender instead of willful independence.

## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

#### Character

- “Our character is that internal, overall structure of the self that is revealed by our long-run patterns of behavior and from which our actions more or less automatically arise.” (p. 142) Character can be changed. Character change is what spiritual formation in Christlikeness is all about.

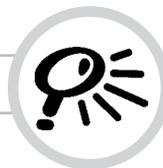
#### Dignity

- The centrality of will to personhood makes it precious and gives us *dignity*—worth, honor and esteem.

#### Choice

- The *exercise* of the will and spirit. The fundamental choices are the same as the two that confronted Adam and Eve—to live connected and in harmony with God (eating from the Tree of Life) or to choose to try to be God (eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.)

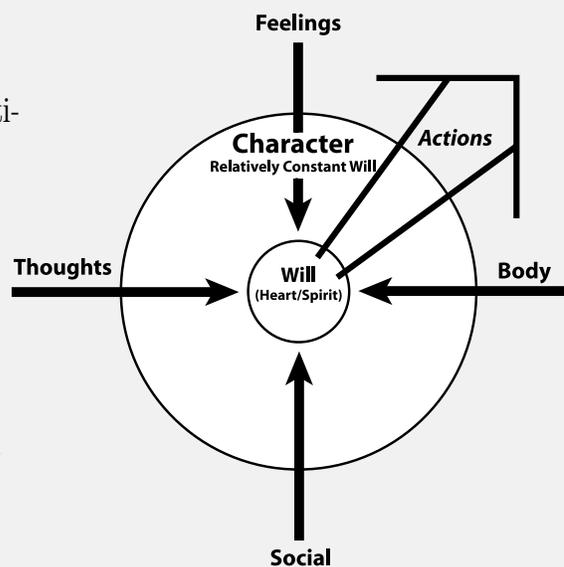
And as a reminder from Lesson Two...





### Will

- “Will” [also identified by Dallas Willard with “heart” and “spirit”] refers to the “power to initiate, to create, to bring about what did not exist before.” (p. 29)



### Spirit

- “Spirit” refers to the fundamental nature of that component [also referred to as “will” and “heart”] as “distinct and independent from physical reality.” (p. 29)

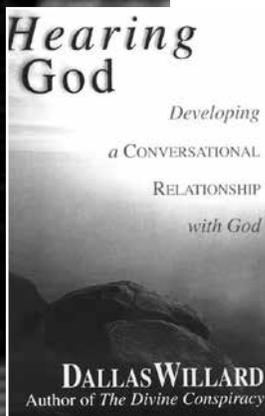
### Heart

- “Heart” refers to the central position of that component [also referred to as “will” and “spirit”] in the human being. (p. 29)
- The human heart, will, or spirit is the executive center of a human life. The heart is where decisions and choices are made for the whole person. That is its function. (p. 29) The will/spirit/heart is the core of human being. (p. 34)

## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

### ■ Hearing God

- “When our children, John and Becky, were small, they were often completely in my will as they played happily in the back yard, though I had no preference that they should do the particular things they were doing there or even that they should be in the back yard instead of in their rooms or having a snack in the kitchen. Generally speaking we are in God’s will whenever we are leading the kind of life he wants for us. And that leaves a lot of room for initiative on our part, which is essential: our individual initiatives are central to his will for us.” (p. 11)



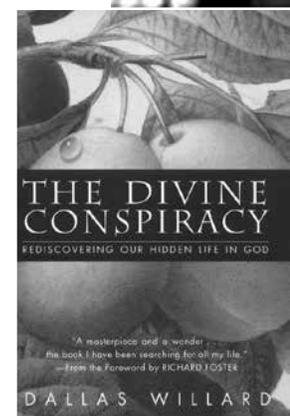
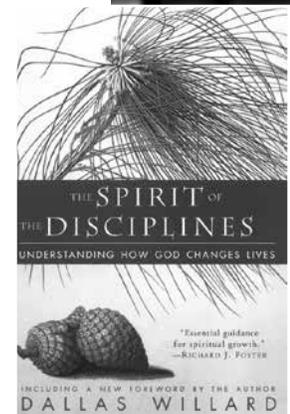
- “Leaving its social agenda aside, the message of *The Stepford Wives* is obvious and important. . . . In close personal relationships conformity to another’s wishes is not desirable, be it ever so perfect, if it is mindless or purchased at the expense of freedom and the destruction of personality. This is a point that must be grasped firmly as we come to think about God’s relationship with his human creation and about what his love for us means.” (p. 31)
- “. . . I must say something about being in the *perfect* will of God. If our lives conform to the general counsels of God for his people as given to us in the written Word as a whole, then we are perfectly within God’s general as well as moral will. If, in addition, we have received and obeyed a specific word of God to us concerning a particular matter, then we are *perfectly* in God’s *specific* will for us, relevant to that matter.” (p. 206)

### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- We are “*dust and divinity*. . . . We alone, among living beings, can stand in opposition to God—in order that we may also choose to stand *with* God. If it were not for this ability, we could not fill our part in God’s plan, because we would just be puppets.” (pp. 52, 53)
- Spirit is “*unembodied personal power*.” (p. 64)
- “He, therefore, is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God; who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the Name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to His glory.” (p. 214, quoting William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*)

### ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “One thing that may mislead us about the meaning of ‘at hand’ in Jesus’ basic message is the fact that *other* ‘kingdoms’ are still present on earth along with the kingdom of the heavens. They too are ‘at hand.’ That is the human condition. Persons other than God, such as you or I, are still allowed on earth to have a ‘say’ that is contrary to his will. A kingdom of darkness is here, certainly, and the kingdoms of many individuals who are still ‘trying to run their own show.’ (p. 29)





- “The will, or heart, is the executive center of the self. Thus the center point of the spiritual in humans as well as in God is self-determination, also called freedom and creativity.” (p. 80)
- “The heart, or will, simply *is* spirit in human beings. It is the human spirit, and the only thing in us that God will accept as the basis of our relationship to him. It is the spiritual plane of our natural existence, the place of truth before God, from where alone our whole lives can become eternal.” (p. 81)
- “Remember that our heart is our will, or our spirit: the center of our being from which our life flows. It is what gives orientation to everything we do. A heart rightly directed therefore brings health and wholeness to the entire personality.” (p. 206)



SESSION NINE:

# Transforming the Body



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Note to Leader

The following illustration is provided to help clarify the role of both the body and spiritual disciplines in the process of spiritual formation.

### ■ Tennis, Anyone?

It was a colorful day in May. The sky was bright blue, the tennis courts olive green, and John McEnroe's hair was wiry red.

I was sitting in the stands watching the final match of the NCAA tennis tournament in Athens, Georgia. McEnroe, a freshman playing for Stanford, was giving tennis lessons to his opponent.

And what an amazing display it was. I still remember it vividly. John's serves were so fast they were barely visible—and almost always to his opponent's backhand. His forehand shots were powerful and deep; and his backhand—so often the weaker stroke—was equally offensive.

Later that day, John lifted the championship trophy above his head and became my tennis idol.

It was only logical, I assumed, that I should be able to play like John. After all, at that time we were exactly the same size—don't like to brag, but I think I've got him by a few pounds now. We each had wiry, reddish hair (but preferred the more descriptive "strawberry blond"), wore homemade headbands, and played on our colleges' tennis teams.

Admittedly, my college was a bit smaller, and would let anyone on the team who could swing a racket without smashing his own face,

but that's beside the point. We were tennis players. And I set out to play just like my hero.

But I quickly noticed some problems. Even though I *wanted* to play like John, my first serve would not cooperate—although fast, it sometimes sailed over both the net and the fence. My second serve was so slow a sloth on Quaaludes could return it. My forehand was erratic, and my backhand was nothing more than a defensive weapon—well, that's not exactly true: some opponents found it to be a source of amusement.

For quite a while I wondered what was wrong. Why couldn't I play tennis just like someone of my same build and temperament?

With time—and reading about the practice habits of my idol—the truth dawned on me. John McEnroe was totally devoted to being the best tennis player in the world. His days were consumed by practice sessions designed to hone his skills, calculated to make him the kind of player who would instinctively do the right thing, make the right shot, without even thinking about what he was doing.

I, on the other hand, was an every-other-weekend warrior, who longed to be able to imitate the highlight reel of McEnroe without actually becoming a disciplined athlete—like him.

Years later, while reading an article by Dallas Willard, a second light bulb switched on over my head. I had also been trying to imitate the highlight reel of another hero, Jesus, without imitating his overall lifestyle. I wanted to be like Jesus but live like me.

But here it is: if I want to play tennis like John McEnroe, then I must train my body to imitate his overall lifestyle—not his championship matches. I must be willing to become a disciplined athlete, practicing serves, strokes, and volleys until their mechanics have become instinctive and I perform without thought.

And, if I want to play *earth-life* like Jesus Christ, then I must imitate *his* overall lifestyle—not just the miracles and brave con-

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer

### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion

### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions

### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together

### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions

### VI. SUMMARY

- Review

### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?



frontations. I must be willing to become a disciplined apprentice, practicing solitude, conversation (with God) and obedience until being with Jesus and being like Jesus have become instinctive, and I perform without thought. All of this directly involves my body.

In the paraphrased words of Dallas Willard, spiritual disciplines are things that I can do by direct effort (silence, solitude, prayer, study, fasting) that make it possible to do the things I could never do by my direct effort (being like Jesus in every component of myself).

We will see in this chapter that Christian spiritual disciplines are activities of mind and especially body that are purposefully undertaken to bring our total being into cooperation with the divine order—to help us become like the one we idolize (See also *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 68)

Whether the new skills we desire are in the arena of tennis or Christ-formation—disciplines are important and our bodies the primary vehicle for learning how to respond without thinking.

Oh, and one last thing. There is a distinct advantage for those who want to live like Christ instead of play tennis like McEnroe. Christ will actually step into your flesh (incarnate you) and show you how to play—from the inside out.

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: tennis racket or other sports equipment, or anything that requires practice such as a musical instrument, etc.

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil

## SESSION NINE:

# Transforming the Body

## INTRODUCTION



### Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session nine of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Transforming the Body.”

### Prayer

*“Father, we are grateful for the miraculous gift of our bodies. A body is a skin-covered cosmos. It is a power pack of energy, a source of transportation and enjoyment. These bodies you gave are the first spheres of dominion that you trust us to manage. But Father, we are bent away from you, so easily deceived in how we use our bodies. Please grant us the wisdom to present our bodies back to you as living sacrifices, instruments for your service and tabernacles for your presence. Amen.”*

## WARM-UP



I want to talk with you about video ping pong (table tennis) and your body, but I believe that subject will make more sense if we summarize the most important points from this chapter on transforming the body. Here they are:

### Your body is not a bad thing.

It is, in fact, an amazing gift from God, created by him and declared good (Genesis 1:31). While it is common to believe that this benediction has been reversed by the Fall, that belief is not true. Those who would argue that the body is a bad thing often cite scriptural admonitions against the “flesh.” And while the term “flesh” is sometimes used to refer to the physical body (Romans 2:28), “flesh” has a much broader meaning. In this chapter Dallas Willard makes the case that it is better to understand “flesh” as referring to the tendency of bent humanity to rely on merely natural forces accessible in and through the body, as opposed to the presence and power of divine life from above. It is, therefore, not the body that is bad, but the tendency of fallen humanity to rely on natural forces as opposed to the power and presence of the indwelling Christ. (See Garden of Eden—where humanity decided to play God instead of allowing God to be God.)





### ■ Your body is a good thing.

God made your body for good. It is your personal power pack (a source of energy and power) and your primary place of dominion and responsibility. In learning to manage this kingdom, you will develop skills and come to wisdom that will help you in managing later dominions to be placed under your charge.

### ■ Your body is forever.

The doctrines of the Incarnation (the in-flesh-ment of Christ 2,000 years ago, and his present in-flesh-ment in you) and the Resurrection remind us of the high value that God places on the body and the fact that it lasts forever.

So, you've got this not-bad-but-good-body that lasts forever. But there's still a problem; it's a software problem. According to Dallas, "When our heart (will, spirit) comes to new life in God, the old 'programs' are still running contrary to our new heart, and for the most part they are running *in* our body and its parts or members. 'Sin dwells within me ...' (Romans 7:12-18, PAR). 'Sinful passions' are still 'at work in our bodily parts' (Romans 7:5, PAR), even though they no longer can, in the long run, 'bring forth death.'" (p. 166)

This "programming" notion brings us to our discussion of video ping-pong.

### ■ Video Ping-Pong Versus Virtual Reality

Do you remember the first video game you ever played? I do. It was more than two decades ago, Christmas morning. I was spending a few days at my in-laws' house, and their youngest son had gotten a video game that could be played through a television monitor. (We didn't say "monitor" at that time; we said "TV set.")

The game was video ping-pong (table tennis). It was as distant from today's video games as a paper airplane is from the space shuttle. But, at least at that time, it was fun.

There were only three images on the black screen. Each player controlled a small rectangle of light (your paddle). A smaller square of light was the ball. It bounced back and forth within the four walls of the TV monitor, making hollow, bonking sounds whenever it struck something. But if it got past your "paddle" before you could send it the other way, your opponent scored a point. Hit one that he could not lay a "paddle" on, and "you the man!" (Although we didn't say, "I'm the man!" back then. We said things like "gotcha" and "My chia pet has better reflexes than that.")

By today's standards that game was amazingly simple. I've seen video tennis matches that are difficult to distinguish from Wimbledon. Today's video software programs are as distant from the original versions as, well, the new programs God has in mind for your body are from the old sinful programs.

To paraphrase the words of Dallas, when you give your heart to Jesus, he wants to upgrade all your software (especially what is going on with your body) and replace it with his new programs. And until we cooperate with this upgrade, we are stuck in Romans 7, wanting to do what we do not, and doing what we don't want to do.

Our good-and-not-bad bodies that last forever must be reprogrammed with God's latest and greatest programs—the mind of Christ alive and acting through our bodies. And we have helpful allies in this process: Christ himself and the spiritual disciplines—practices that reprogram both body and mind.

### ■ Note to Leader

You may want to share with your group the illustration (playing tennis like John McEnroe) found in the “Before You Lead” section of this lesson to help appreciate the role of the body and spiritual disciplines in reprogramming your “computer.”

The summary of this introduction is as follows: The body needs to be reprogrammed with the power, presence, and mind of Christ. Christian spiritual disciplines can be helpful means for assisting in the reprogramming process.

### ■ Exercise

Take a few moments to respond to Exercise 9-A

### ■ Discussion

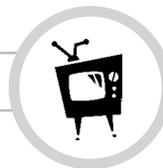
Is anyone willing to share her reactions to the illustration or the exercise?

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## CONTENT

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We will now view the two video vignettes. In the first segment, Dallas Willard will provide a summary of Chapter Nine of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas, Larry Crabb and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter are also provided.





## ■ Video Vignette (Dallas' lecture on Chapter Nine: Transforming the Body)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter, found below, and ask the class to respond to the reflection questions that have been provided.

## ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- While the body is good and a gift from God, it is common for inclinations to wrongdoing literally to inhabit its parts. These must be eliminated, and the body must come to serve the individual as a primary ally in Christlikeness. (p. 159)
- Human ruin (as was presented in Chapter 3) “comes from placing oneself at the center of one’s universe, in the place of God.” When this happens, it inevitably leads to worship of the body and to a life dominated by sensuality. The body then becomes our primary instrument of gratification. (See p. 160.)
- “My body is the original and primary place of *my dominion* and my responsibility. It is only through it that I have a world in which to live.” (p. 161).
- In developing my dominion I will experience realities that do not yield to my will—often these are the “kingdoms” (dominions) of others. The frustration of not being able to get others to conform to my will begins to give rise to destructive emotions such as anger (the emotion of a frustrated goal), fear, envy, and resentment. (See p. 162.)
- For Christians, the body is not just a physical system; it is inhabited by the real presence of Christ. (See p. 163.)
- When Paul says that we should “kill off” our “members which are upon the earth” (Colossians 3:5), is he referring to parts of our bodies? No. “Members which are upon the earth” means “those parts of a life lived *entirely in terms of the natural powers of the embodied self.*” It is the parts of our life (more so than a physical location) that are prone to disobedience. (See p. 163.)
- “The outcome of spiritual formation is . . . the transformation of the inner reality of the self in such a way that the deeds and words of Jesus become a natural [bodily] expression of who we are.” (See p. 165.)
- “When our heart (will, spirit) comes to new life in God, the old [software] ‘programs’ are still running contrary to our new heart, and for the most part they are running *in* our body and its parts or members.” (p. 166) The spirit has become willing, but the flesh remains weak.

- The presence of Christ within becomes the new software that helps runs our person.
- Unless a person is actively cooperating with grace through surrender to the indwelling presence of Christ, his body is probably running his life. (See p. 168.)
- The body is betrayed in its own nature when it becomes central to human life, a focal point. The body is created for spiritual life in the kingdom and to be honored, even glorified, in that context. (See p. 169.)
- God is buying the body of a Christian back from evil through the death of his Son. “It is therefore God’s to do with as he pleases, and he pleases that our body should be a ‘showplace of God’s greatness.’” (See p. 170 and 1 Corinthians 6:20.)
- The only rational thing for a Christian to do is to present her body as a “living sacrifice” to God. (See p. 170 and Romans 12:1, 2.)
- If the soul’s relationship to God (conversation, communion, and union) is disrupted, there will most likely be physical results—a “distracted body.” (See p. 171.)
- Dallas Willard recommends four steps for the spiritual formation of our body. Each of these steps will be presented as a practical exercise under the “Transforming Exercise” section on pp. 196-198 of this guide.
  - Releasing our body to God
  - No longer idolizing the body
  - No longer misusing the body
  - Properly honoring and caring for the body
- When we can confidently and joyfully keep the Sabbath (rest, do no work for a period of time), it is “because God is so exalted in our minds and bodies that we can trust him with our life and our world and take our hands off of them.” (p. 175)

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions?

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Lecture

- 1 What does it mean to say, “Christianity is an incarnational religion”?
- 2 What does it mean to say, “The extension of our kingdom is a bodily thing”?
- 3 Dallas observes that the hill to be climbed when we begin to transform the body is that our bodies are ready to do what is wrong. What are some ways you can reprogram your body to be ready to do what is right?





- 4 Do you believe that your character is primarily located in your body? What does that statement mean to you?
- 5 What are two ways in which you can present your body to God as a “living sacrifice” next week? Will you do it?

### ■ Video Vignette (Conversation/Curt Clonginger Skit)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

Following the “Soul Talk” conversation, Curt Clonginger performs a brief skit that is included to stimulate conversation concerning the body and its role in spiritual formation. Specifically, this presentation is provided to underscore that it is impossible to control the body by sheer willpower. The body is to be presented a living sacrifice, not controlled or managed.

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Conversation

- 1 Have you ever wished that you could manage your face better? What was the situation that needed better face management?
- 2 One way to manage the face involves muscle control—from the neck up. What is the best way you can think of for managing your face? How would you explain the technique to a child?
- 3 How can practicing Christian disciplines shape your character?
- 4 Larry Crabb described an activity that resulted in a change in the way he was thinking and feeling. Has something like that ever happened to you? Tell someone else in the group about your experience.
- 5 If wrapping your body in a brown wrapper is not an effective way to control the body, what do you believe will be more effective in bringing about a transformation in this area?

#### Book: Chapter Nine

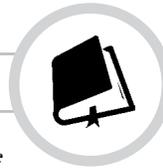
- 1 Do you truly believe that your body is not a bad thing? How is your body a precious gift from God?
- 2 After considering this chapter, how do you understand that the term “flesh” is used in Scripture apart from being a reference to the physical body?
- 3 What does the incarnation of Christ mean to you, personally?

- 4 In what way is becoming transformed into the image of Christ comparable to changing the software being used in a computer?
- 5 After studying this chapter, what is your definition of a Christian discipline?
- 6 How does your definition of a Christian discipline relate to your body?
- 7 Part of what it means to take care of your body is to adopt an exercise program for holiness. What are some exercises of holiness you can do this week?

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## BIBLE STUDY

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Once again we will turn our attention to the Bible for a frame of reference. A brief Bible study can be found in Appendix 9-B and may be used in class or as a “homework assignment.”

### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercise in class.

### ■ Leader's Insight

Arguably, the seventh chapter of Romans is in the hall of fame for difficulty of interpretation. Is Paul confessing that “sinful passions” are still at work in *his* bodily parts? Paul, the apostle and author of much of the New Testament? Does he find himself doing things he hates? What's the deal here?

Whether Paul's wrestling match is confined to his past or spills over into his present will be left to the commentators. What is clear in this passage is that, in the words of Dallas Willard, “when [the] heart (will, spirit) comes to new life in God, the old ‘programs’ are still running contrary to our new heart, and for the most part they are running *in* our body and its parts or members.” (p. 166) And while the programs still running in our body can no longer bring forth death, they do indicate that the spirit becomes strong and willing before the body arrives at the same place.

Thank God that Jesus, through his life, death, resurrection, and incarnation of the believer, can reprogram the body, making it strong and compliant. The Christian spiritual disciplines become important as training exercises that put us in awareness of the presence of Christ and the benefit of internal surrender, until our bodies do what needs to be done, without thought.





## ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to spend 10 to 15 minutes slow-reading (breathing) as a meditation each of the following verses of Scripture. While meditating on these verses, ask God for practical insights that relate to how one's body can be reprogrammed for God.

### 2 Corinthians 4:10 (NIV)

*"We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body."*

### Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

### Phil. 1:20, 21 (NIV)

*"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

### Col. 3:5 (NIV)

*"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry."*



## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES

In order to stay consistent with the order of the practical steps Dallas presents (see pages 172 – 174), we have rearranged the ordering of the components that have been presented in this section. (Just wanted you to know that it wasn't an oversight.)

### ■ Behavior:

Find a quiet time of the day. This may mean getting up 30 minutes before anyone else in your house, or staying up 30 minutes later than the last to turn in. Quiet your soul and body with some slow, deep breathing. Meditatively pray

some Scripture (such as Galatians 2:20) that helps you focus on your body and the need to present it to God as a living sacrifice.

Now, lie on the floor (face down or face up), and make a formal surrender of your body to God. As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply, imagine each of the major parts of your body (such as your brain, heart, and hands), and offer each to God for His service. Ask him to be in charge of all parts of your body and to fill them with the life and power of his Son, Jesus.

Use all of the 30 minutes you set aside—even more if possible—for this exercise. You may even want to return to it as often as you need to, until you are convinced that your body has become a living sacrifice to God.

■ **Will:**

No longer idolize your body. Upon waking in the morning, take a few extra minutes to lie in bed (this is not the hard part). As an act of your will, say inside your head something to this effect:

*“My body is no longer an object of ultimate concern. Whatever will happen to my body—sickness, aging, death, health, or long life—is not my primary concern. God is in charge of all issues that relate to my body. I will be a good steward of my body, but it will not be my idol or point of ultimate concern.”*

■ **Thoughts:**

After repeating the above for several mornings, substitute the following morning confession that concerns your desire no longer to misuse your body. Say something like this:

*“With and through the power of Christ who lives within, I will no longer use my body as a source of sensual gratification (outside of a healthy marital relationship) or as a means to dominate or control others.”*

■ **Emotions:**

The above three exercises are meant to help maintain your body’s place as a servant of your process of Christian spiritual formation. But your





approach to reprogramming or training your body for life in the kingdom is not an ascetic practice that views the body as bad, or as an enemy of spiritual growth. It is also important to nurture feelings of care and honor for your body as God's gift to you.

In the sense that your body is owned and inhabited by God, it is fair to say that it is holy. Allow these emotions of care, honor, and awe to inspire you to take care of the physical needs of your body. Develop a sensible pattern for eating healthy foods (and avoiding body poisons such as sugar, fried foods, and white flour), and for getting sensible exercise and plenty of rest. Even temples need systematic upkeep.

- **Social Interactions:** Our body is our primary source of dominion and power. It is our kingdom. When our kingdom bumps into the kingdom of another in such a way that our will crosses that of another, frustration and even anger can result. Pick an important person in your life. Write three ways that you can serve her in some way. Put the card in your pocket, and when you are around that person, use the card as a reminder of your intent to serve her (but don't let her catch you looking at the card), and then do so—at least in some small way. This may help form a strategic alliance between what could have been warring kingdoms.



## SUMMARY

The body is a not-bad-but-good gift from God that (in some form) lasts forever. It is your personal power pack and first dominion—kingdom with a small “k.” Scriptural admonitions against the “flesh” are, in general, more targeted to the notion of putting our trust in “natural power” from below, as opposed to divine power from above. Following conversion, however, the body is still programmed to exist apart from God and may remain “weak” even after the spirit has become strong. Christian spiritual disciplines can be a helpful means of reprogramming the body to do the right thing—the Christlike thing—without thought.

## MORE DALLAS



## Key Term Box

## Spiritual Transformation

- By way of reminder, spiritual transformation refers to “the process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it takes on the character of the inner being of Jesus himself. The result is that the ‘outer’ life [such as behavior, automatic responses and social relationships] of the individual becomes a natural expression of the inner reality of Jesus and his teachings... But for this to happen *our body* must increasingly be poised to do what is good and refrain from what is evil.” (See p. 159.)

## Body

- “The body is the focal point of our presence in the physical and social world. In union with it we come into existence, and we become the person we shall forever be. It is our primary energy source or ‘strength’—our personalized ‘power pack.’” (p. 35) The body is also “the original and primary place of *my dominion* and my responsibility.” (p. 161)

## Character

- “Most of what is called ‘character’ (good *or* bad) in normal human life consists in what our bodies are or are not ‘at the ready’ to do in the specific situations where we find ourselves.” (p. 162)  
Character is reflected in the things we do *before* we have a chance to think about it.

## Incarnation

- Literally, “in-flesh-ment.” That “Christ is come in the flesh” is more than an essential fact about Jesus. “He came in the flesh, a real human body, in order that he might bring redemption and deliverance to our bodies. Our body is... an essential part of who we are, and no redemption that omits it is full redemption.” (pp. 162, 163)

## Flesh

- While “flesh” can refer to the physical body (see Rom. 2:28), it can also refer to sin in general as a work of the sinful nature (see Rom





8:13; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:8). It is often appropriate (and more accurate) to view the “flesh” as the “natural forces...accessible to the individual in and through the body without any specific divine intervention from above.” (p. 164) That is, living life on our own terms and under our own power.

### Body Hatred

- “This misguided and terribly harmful attitude toward the body correctly sees the power of sin that really is in the actual body and its parts. But it mistakenly assumes that the evil *is* the body and its parts...” (p. 168) It confuses the body’s readiness to sin with sin itself and is a choice to hate the body, instead of lovingly reprogramming it.

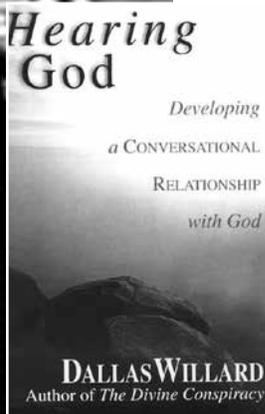
### Spiritual disciplines

- Activities we can do by direct effort that make it possible to do things we could never do by direct effort.

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## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

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### ■ Hearing God

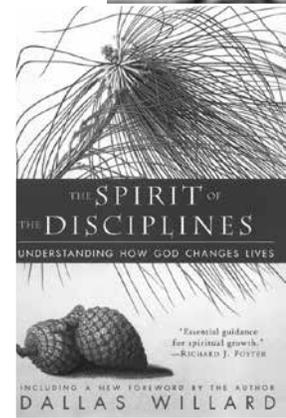
- “A biblical Christian is not just someone who holds certain beliefs *about* the Bible. He or she also is someone who *leads the kind of life demonstrated in the Bible*: a life of personal, intelligent interaction with God. Anything less than this makes a mockery of the priesthood of the believer.” (p. 104)
- “Most of what we think we see as the struggle *of* faith is really the struggle to act *as if* we had faith when in fact we do not.” (p. 118)

### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- “And in this truth lies the secret of the easy yoke: the secret involves living as he lived in the entirety of his life—adopting his overall life-style. Following ‘in his steps’ cannot be equated with behaving as he did when he was ‘on the spot.’ To live as Christ lived is to live as he did all his life.” (p. 5)
- For humans the body is the focal point of life. “It is precisely this appropriate recognition of the body and of its implications for the-

ology that is missing in currently dominant views of Christian salvation or deliverance.” (p. 29)

- We must come to terms with what it means for God to dwell within. (p. 31)
- “The body’s sad condition is a sure indication that it does not now exist in its true element. We would not judge the possibilities of automobiles merely by a survey of those we find in the junk yard, or the possibilities of plant life by considering only plants that have been starved of necessary nutrients.” (p. 42)
- “The human body was made to be the vehicle of human personality ruling the earth for God and through his power. Withdrawn from that function by loss of its connection with God, the body is caught in the inevitable state of corruption in which we find it now.” (p. 42)
- The body is “*our primary area of power, freedom, and—therefore—responsibility.*” (p. 53)
- “The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order.” (p. 68)
- “The lower nature, when it occupies its proper place in the hierarchy of the universe, is not in itself evil, for it belongs to the divine world. It is only when it usurps the place of something higher that it becomes untrue to itself and an evil...” (p. 87, quoting Nicolas Berdyaev in *Freedom and the Spirit*)
- When we are told to “put off” the flesh, this cannot be the body. This would be suicide. It is an inclination, or bentness, we are to put off. (p. 90)
- “The human body is the primary field of independent power and freedom given by God to people. Put simply—no body, no power. People have a body for one reason—that we might have at our disposal the resources that would allow us to be persons in fellowship and cooperation with a personal God.” (p. 92)
- Our bodies are to be transformed by actions. In other words, “grace alone does not ensure we’ll undertake the proper actions toward that life. We do have a part in our body’s transformation.” Our bodies (selves) are “plastic.” (p. 92) They can be formed in



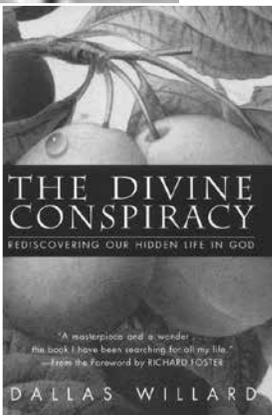


various ways. “*Plasticity* . . . means the possession of a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once. . . .” (p. 92, quoting William James in *The Principles of Psychology*)

- “What then is the specific role of the spiritual disciplines? Their role rests upon the nature of the embodied human self—they are to *mold* and *shape* it. And our part in redemption is, through specific and appropriate activities to ‘yield’ the plastic substance of which we are made to the ways of that new life which is imparted to us by the ‘quickeningspirit.’” (p. 92)
- If Jesus (our leader) practiced spiritual disciplines, how can we imagine that we can get by and not practice these disciplines? (p. 126)

### ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “When we receive God’s gift of life by relying on Christ, we find that God comes to act with us as we rely on him in our actions. That explains why Jesus said that the least in the kingdom of the heavens are greater than John the Baptist—not. . . in themselves, but as a greater power works along with them.” (p. 20)
- “Interestingly, ‘growing up’ is largely a matter of learning to hide our spirit behind our face. . . .” (p. 76)
- “Now, roughly speaking, God *relates to space as we do to our body*. He occupies it and overflows it but cannot be localized in it.” (p. 76)
- “When Mickey Mantle was dying of diseases brought on by a life of heavy drinking, he said that he would have taken better care of himself had he only known how long he was going to live. He gives us a profound lesson. How should we ‘take care of ourselves’ when we are never to cease? Jesus shows his apprentices how to live in the light of the fact that they will *never* stop living. This is what his students are learning from him.” (p. 86)
- “[A primary objective of a curriculum of Christlikeness] is to remove our automatic responses against the kingdom of God, to free the apprentices of domination, of ‘enslavement’ (John 8:34; Rom. 6:6), to their old habitual patterns of thought, feeling, and action. These are the ‘automatic’ patterns of response that were



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ground into the embodied social self during its long life outside The Kingdom Among Us. They make up ‘the sin that is in my members’ which, as Paul so brilliantly understood, brings it about that ‘wishing to do the good is mine, but the doing of it is not’ (Rom. 7:18).” (p. 322)

- “But exactly what are these ‘spiritual disciplines’? What is it about a practice that makes it a spiritual discipline? Well, they are, first of all, *disciplines*. A discipline is any activity within our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort.” (p. 353)





SESSION TEN:

# Transforming Our Social Dimension



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Lessons From a Snake

Have you ever encountered a snake—so close you could see the black in its eyes? I have, several times, and all these memories are filed away under “least favorite.”

Just a couple of weeks ago I was wading in the river—looks more like a creek now—that runs behind our house, inspecting the effects of the four-year drought that has sat down on our part of the country.

I had just stepped into a deeper area and was feeling for the bottom, and feeling a little vulnerable, when I looked up and saw a snake swimming through the water, heading my way. (What a menacing sight—as out of place as a flying wolf.) Fortunately, it was still about 20 yards away—unfortunately, it wasn’t about 20 light-years away.

Instantly, my physiology changed. My heart began to beat faster, my breathing became shallow, and my muscles tensed for action. My brain was working overtime too. I couldn’t think of one “nice snake” that goes for a swim.

I backed out of the hole in the river, heels first, shouted something threatening at the snake, like “Remember Eden!” and found my way to the bank and out of the water.

I don’t like snakes—especially if I’m on their home court.

Fortunately, while God is knitting a person together in the womb, he builds into the fabric a mechanism to help him when he encounters snakes and other threats. It’s called the “fight or flight response” of the

sympathetic nervous system, the part of our nervous system that is “sympathetic” to having the threat removed—either by (a) fighting it or (b) fleeing from it. I chose “b.”

When that mechanism gets activated—be it by a snake, tiger, or letter from the IRS—several things happen to the body: increased heart rate; rapid, shallow breathing; dilation of the pupils (for better vision); flow of blood from the extremities (you don’t need it where you might get cut or bit) to the large muscles (you do need it in parts that need to run or fight); etc. This is exactly the opposite of what happens when you are relaxed, loving, or laughing. That’s when the parasympathetic nervous system is up and humming.

God made you in such a way that you when you experience danger, you instantly become primed for action.

But your emergency response is supposed to be the exception, not the rule. You are primarily designed to live with your other (parasympathetic) nervous system activated. You are made to be part of a community of love—to savor and stay, not fight or flee.

Marriages, family interactions, and relationships with parents and friends are supposed to mirror the Trinity, a community of love. Guess what nervous system is turned on when you are enjoying the emotions associated with the presence of God’s Spirit in your life?

But these relationships are not always marked by love. Sometimes fear and threat are present. And the deepest fear and most pronounced threat is that the love you give will not be returned.

When fear or threat show their slimy heads in what is supposed to be a garden of love, we often react in the same way we would if encountering a snake. We fall into the temptation to attack (fight) or withdraw (flee).

In this chapter Dallas Willard describes both the ideal of Christian community and the reality of our most common destructive responses (when fear is more present than love)—attack and withdrawal. As you study these materials, it will be helpful to

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer

### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion

### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions

### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together

### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions

### VI. SUMMARY

- Review

### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?



keep before your mind to what extent your relationships are colored by attack (fight) and withdrawal (flight), and what you can do to get rid of these responses that are more appropriate for encountering lions than loved ones.

### ■ Note to Leader

You know the drill. It's time to locate Appendix 10-C and organize your thoughts around what is most helpful for communicating with your class—be it story, discussion of the video presentations, Bible Study, reflections on the suggested exercises, or some combination of the above. If you are using object lessons, we're picturing you telling the above story while showing the class a (hopefully rubber) snake.

### ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: a rubber snake or any other scary-looking toy animal (a teddy bear may be appropriate with a story about bears)

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil

## SESSION TEN:

# Transforming Our Social Dimension

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## INTRODUCTION



### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session ten of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Transforming Our Social Dimension.”

### ■ Prayer

*“Father, your son, Jesus, once prayed that you would make his disciples one, just as the two of you are one. Please grant this prayer for this group and especially for our marriages and families. Let us become one with one another as we become one with you. Let the community of love that is the Trinity be our model for social relationships. Grant love and humble service, and take away fear and pride. Amen.”*

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## WARM-UP



“God is love!” It almost seems too trite to say. And perhaps it has become easier for you to whisper that declaration than it is to give it the shout it deserves. Maybe this is because those three words have appeared on the bumper sticker of one car too many in which the occupants were wearing angry faces instead of heavenly glows.

But to know deeply that God *is* love and exists as a loving community of three is to understand what the end product of Christian formation will look like. And it is to know that the process of becoming like Jesus is profoundly social.

As we have previously discussed, you were designed for a habitat of love. “The natural condition of life for human beings is one of reciprocal rootedness in others.” (See page 179 of the *Renovation* text.) Yes, by the intent of our creator, we are made to receive and give love perpetually. It is our highest goal.

But there is a limitation. We can live in love only to the extent that we are grounded in the community of love that is the Trinity. As with our foreparents, it is easy to be tricked into believing it is in our best interests to be independent of God, on our own. But when we move away from God’s care and compassion, we find ourselves pressed





down—to the point of being crushed—by the weight of divine responsibility. Too busy for love. Too tired for community. Too stubborn to go back home.

Away from the community of the Trinity, in a state of compassion deprivation, we become wounded and afraid. And, according to Dallas Willard, this woundedness can become a Petri dish for the two basic forms of evil in human relationships—assault and withdrawal.

### ■ Note to leader

Consider reading the opening story about encountering a snake to underscore how assault and withdrawal may relate to the “fight or flight” response and become a destructive part of our responses to others.

It is in our families that the most devastating effects of assault and withdrawal can be observed. Eventually, assault on a spouse, child, or friend produces calloused hearts and the readiness to fight back. Eventually, the withdrawal from those in our closest communities will be mirrored and produce a chasm too wide to cross.

We were designed for loving community. But apart from connectedness to the love of the Trinity, we will end up living alone, in the shackles of our own assault and withdrawal.

Fortunately, this chapter goes beyond diagnosis. It is an invitation to return home and reconnect with the love of the Trinity and to become an aqueduct for that love to flow back to what may have become the parched wastelands of our earthly communities.

The final section of this chapter (p. 194-197) is worth reading and rereading. In it Dallas provides a four-step plan for the spiritual reformation of our social dimension: 1) Receiving a new vision for wholeness; 2) Abandoning the defensiveness that keeps us distant; 3) Embracing the genuine love of God and allowing it to flow through us to others; and 4) Trusting God for our defense and security.

When it comes to encountering lovelessness, there are alternative responses to fighting or fleeing. We can *find* the love of Christ and *forgive* those who have hurt us. That is the hope and the plan of this chapter.

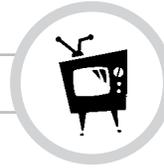
### ■ Exercise

Take a few moments to complete the exercise found in Appendix 10-A. It's a self-assessment of your social dimension using qualities suggested by the apostle Paul in Romans 12. An honest and open look at where we are with these traits should let us know where we are concerning the need to work the four-step plan that is presented above.

## ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share his experiences with this exercise?

## CONTENT



We will now view the two video vignettes. In the first segment, Dallas Willard provides a summary of Chapter Ten of *Renovation of the Heart*. A conversation among Dallas, Larry Crabb and John Ortberg follows. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

## ■ Video Vignette (Dallas' lecture on Chapter Ten: Transforming Our Social Dimension)

To view the transcript of Dallas' lecture on Chapter Ten, please see *The Script*, which is included on the CD-ROM in your resource packet.

## ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- “The natural condition of life for human beings is one of reciprocal rootedness in others.” (p. 179) We were designed to live in love with God and one another. To feel secure we need to know that we are loved, that important others in our life are *for* us.
- Ultimately, every human attempt at giving and receiving love will fail if it is not grounded in the love of the Trinity—our model of a community of love. (p. 180)
- The parent/child relationship is both the most perfect illustration of a circle of sufficiency in human life, and the place where the deepest wounds occur—when compassion deficits (lovelessness) become present. (p. 180)
- When lovelessness is present, we become wounded. Woundedness can give rise to the two basic forms of evil in relations to others—assault and withdrawal. (p. 181)
- “Spiritual formation... is always profoundly social.” (p. 182)  
“Failure to love others as Jesus loves us chokes off the flow of the eternal kind of life that our whole human system cries out for... ‘He who does not love abides in death’ (1 John 3:14).” (p. 183)
- The Trinity is the perfect example (and model) of a community of shared love. (p. 184)
- The flow of Christ's loving presence is to penetrate the heart of the believer and then flow out to others. In this presence is the power to “connect” and the power to heal the wounds of lovelessness. (p. 186)





- “In order for us to do our part in the process of spiritual formation of social relations, we must deeply *identify and understand what is wrong in our relations with others* (whether that wrong is coming from us or toward us) and how it can be changed.” (p. 187) We must understand and change our own tendencies toward assault and withdrawal.
- It is especially in our families that we must identify the elements of assault and withdrawal. (p. 189) Our slogan must become “There’s No Excuse for Assault or Withdrawal in the Home.” (p. 190)
- “The spiritual malformation of children” is the inevitable result of being raised in a home of assault or withdrawal. (p. 192)
- It takes three to get married. The third is God. (p. 194)
- There are four main elements in spiritual formation of our social dimension:
  - Receive God’s vision of our wholeness in him.
  - Abandon all defensiveness.
  - Embrace the genuine love of God and be a conduit for its flow.
  - Trust God for our defense and security.

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Lecture

- 1 How does Jesus’ admonition to his apprentices to “love one another as I have loved you” go beyond loving your neighbor as yourself?
- 2 What does Dallas mean by the phrase “circle of sufficiency”? Reflect on times in your life during which you felt that you were a member of such a community (maybe just a community of two) of love. What were your emotions during these times?
- 3 It is suggested in the lecture that “circles of sufficiency” are *not* designed to work on their own—they need to be taken into God’s kingdom and empowered by his love. How can you make this practical in your family?
- 4 How is the Trinity a model for our relationships with one another?

- 5 What are the two patterns of behavior Dallas describes as being forms of “lovelessness”? How do you get off one of these paths once you’ve taken it for a few steps?
- 6 Take a moment right now to repent of any patterns of attack or withdrawal in your relationships, and then claim the relationships in your family and workplace for God.

### ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Conversation

- 1 Think of the two (or more) people in your life whose relationship is very important to you. What are two (or more) ways you can stir them to love and good deeds? (See Hebrews 10:24.)
- 2 If it’s true about emotions being contagious, with which emotion are you infecting those around you? If it is not one of the emotions associated with the first three fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace), ask God for insight and healing.
- 3 Ask God to give you a mental picture of a relationship in which you may need to do the equivalent of a foot washing. Then ask him for the courage and power to give humble service (and perhaps forgiveness—but without putting it into words) to that person.
- 4 Can you think of an alternative to either walking on or breaking egg shells?

#### Book: Chapter Ten

- 1 What are some of the implications of “being designed” to be part of a community of love?
- 2 How does one go about becoming “grounded in the love of the Trinity”?
- 3 What is likely to happen when lovelessness is present?





- 4 Do you agree with Dallas' statement that spiritual formation is always profoundly social? Why?
- 5 Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and do a fearless inventory of what is right and wrong in your relationships with others. Before you open your eyes, ask God to use you as an instrument of healing in those relationships. But wait a minute; first be open to the healing touch of his hand on your soul's wounds.




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## BIBLE STUDY

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### ■ Group Exercise

Once again we will turn our attention to the Bible to help us better appreciate and apply the primary themes of this chapter. A brief Bible study can be found in Appendix 10-B and may be used in class or as a “homework assignment.”

### ■ Leader's Insight

Even though we humans were designed to belong to communities of love (our marriages, families, church groups, etc.) that are attached to another community of love (the Trinity), we commonly fall short of this goal. Fear can lead to disobedience, and disobedience can produce distance from God and others. The ideal of a garden of compassion often becomes a desert of lovelessness. And lovelessness can yield responses (to others and God) of attack (fighting) and withdrawal (fleeing).

In this passage Jesus demonstrated a third alternative. It is a process that begins with emptying oneself of pride and the feeling that one has the right to either attack or withdraw. And it continues to include being *filled* with the love of God, *forgiving* those who have (or will) hurt us, and allowing God's love to *flow* once again from the depths of our soul. When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, he also demonstrated this third alternative for responding to those in our social communities. Not *fight* or *flight*, but *filled*, *forgiving*, and *flowing*.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to use the “Five P's” exercise found back in Appendix 6-A as a foundational exercise before meditating on the following two passages of Scripture. (We recommend only one passage per sitting and suggest that you allow ten to twenty minutes for the time of mediation.)

Remind them that they will want to allow several minutes to practice the “Five P’s” before slowly considering these verses. It is also important to take just a few words at a time, slowly breathing them in and out while sitting before God, open to his wisdom and insight for what the verse may mean for one’s life.

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* (John 13:34, 35, NIV)

*“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”* (Hebrews 10:24, NIV)

## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES



- **Thoughts:** Find a quiet time during the day to sit with God. Present your mind to him as a blank canvas. Ask him to paint a new vision for wholeness and security in him.
- **Emotions:** Pick a day to lay aside all defensiveness in your social relationships. Notice whenever you find yourself feeling threatened in a social relationship—and notice any desire to defend, control, attack, or withdraw. But let the emotion of feeling threatened be a warning light to change your normal course of action, and offer the person understanding, freedom and forgiveness—instead of what may have been a more natural response.
- **Will:** Now get even more specific. Consider the people who are in your “circle of sufficiency.” Then hold each person before your mind’s eye—one at a time—and ask God to reveal to you which one would best describe that relationship in its present form: “attack,” “withdrawal,” or “compassion.” If the word brought to your mind was not “compassion,” ask God to flood you with his love to the extent that you will have the power and willingness to “lay down your life” for another (see 1 John 3:16).





■ **Behavior:**

Pick a person with whom you are experiencing relationship difficulty. Ask God to give you an idea for how you may be a servant to this person—then do it.

■ **Social Interactions:**

Tell God that you trust him for your defense and security.



## SUMMARY

In this chapter Dallas Willard presented what our social relationships are to be like if we are to be transformed into Christlikeness. “Attack” and “withdrawal,” the most common responses to lovelessness, become less automatic as we learn to lay aside defensiveness, experience God’s love for us, and forgive those who may have wounded our souls. Spiritual formation in Christ requires reconciliation to God and others and the reestablishment of communities of love connected to *the* loving community of the Trinity.



## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

#### Circle of sufficiency

- To be “connected” (reciprocally absorbed) with another person—or with God—to the extent that the need for love, nurture, compassion, and support is being met. It is, for the moment, to be in Eden again, to know that “everything is okay.”

#### The Trinity

- “God is in himself a sweet society of love, with a first, second, and third person to complete a social matrix where not only is there love and being loved, but also *shared* love for another, the third person.” (p. 184)

#### Assault and Withdrawal

- The two basic responses to woundedness in a relationship. They are two sides of the same coin—hurting (and attempting to control) someone with whom we are experiencing a conflict of the will.

- “We assault others when we act against what is good for them. . . .” The more explicit forms of assault are covered in the last six of the Ten Commandments. (p. 182)
- Withdrawal is distancing oneself from another, which is in essence communicating that the other’s well-being is not important. (p. 182)

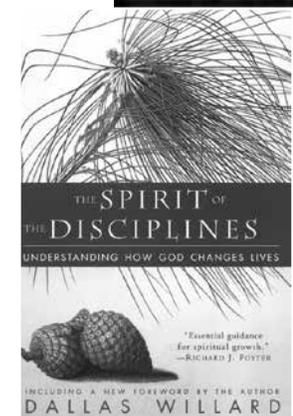
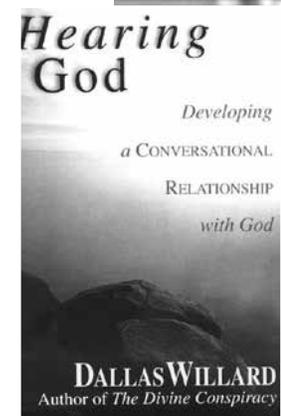
## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

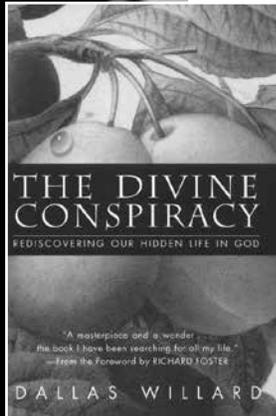
### ■ Hearing God

- “God has created us for intimate friendship with himself—both now and forever.” (p. 10, see also Exodus 29:43-46, 33:11; Psalm 23; Isaiah 41:8; John 15:14; and Hebrews 13:5-6)
- “So our union with God—his presence with us, in which our aloneness is banished and the meaning and full purpose of human existence is realized—*consists chiefly in a conversational relationship with God while we are each consistently and deeply engaged as his friend and colaborer in the affairs of the kingdom of the heavens. . . .* [The process of] having a personal relationship with God becomes a concrete and commonsense reality rather than a nervous whistling in the spiritual dark.” (p. 56)
- “A biblical Christian is not just someone who holds certain beliefs *about* the Bible. He or she is also someone who *leads the kind of life demonstrated in the Bible*: a life of personal, intelligent interaction with God. Anything less than this makes a mockery of the priesthood of the believer.” (p. 104)

### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- Then . . . between spirit and flesh (divine and dust) “there was a constant warfare. Robbed of their highest unifying principle—their relationship to God—humans were no longer beings with integrity or coherent wholeness.” They lost union with God. (p. 66)
- “[James S.] Stewart’s remarkable book on Paul, *A Man in Christ*, makes it clear that the heart of Paul and his message lies in one area—in the continuous appropriation of the ‘real presence’ of Christ himself within the experiential life of the believer.” (p. 96)





## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “God’s desire for us is that we should live in him [emphasis added]. He sends among us the Way to himself. That shows what, in his heart of hearts, God is really like—indeed, what *reality* is really like. In its deepest nature and meaning our universe is a community of boundless and totally competent love [emphasis added]. (p. 11)
- “*We are meant to exercise our ‘rule’ only in union with God, as he acts with us [emphasis added]. He intended to be our constant companion or coworker in the creative enterprise of life on earth. That is what his love for us means in practical terms.*” (p. 22)
- “Within the spiritual community there is never, nor in any way, any immediate relationship of one to another, whereas human community expresses a profound, elemental, human desire for community, for immediate contact with other human souls, just as in the flesh there is the urge for physical merger with other flesh.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, quoted on p. 215)



SESSION ELEVEN:

# Transforming the Soul



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

Before diving into the dynamics of the soul, it may be helpful to consider how *both* law and grace play important roles in its formation—a major focus of this chapter. The following illustration should help, if you have to field some difficult questions on this topic.

### ■ God and Putt-Putt Golf

Here's an exercise for your imagination:

Picture yourself about to enjoy an afternoon playing miniature golf—putt-putt. It's a beautiful day. By your side is a small child—you pick the gender and relationship.

"Let's play!" the child announces excitedly, and immediately begins to smack a bright red ball against the sides of brighter orange planks.

You are amused. The child has never played this game before and thinks the rules are to hit as many planks as possible, as hard as possible, before the ball stops rolling.

As you smile, the red ball accidentally disappears into the cup on hole #1. The small child looks up at you with a puzzled expression, collects the ball from the hole, and promptly begins to attack the wooden boundaries.

After several hundred more "kapows!" the child becomes bored and moves on to the second hole. But the rules remain the same. It's war on wood.

The kid is having a great time. And you're enjoying the show. You both would be content for hours, but for one thing. A problem has

reared its ugly head. There's a long line of people formed behind the two of you. They want to play too.

So you walk over to the child and say in a soft voice, "Honey, I'm not sure you understand some of the finer points of this game." (or something to that effect) And then you offer, "Let me show you a different way to play. I think you'll like it too."

You walk with the child to the next hole, stand behind her, place those two little hands on the golf club, and demonstrate how to strike the ball.

You also casually mention that it is important to hit the ball *at* the hole in the carpet, making it disappear with just one swat if you can. Then you show her just what you mean, standing behind, guiding her through the motions, your larger hands resting now on the two small ones.

Immediately the child's golfing abilities are improved. The crowd roars.

Remembering what it was like to play putt-putt with my daughters provides me with a clear view of how law and grace go together in shaping the soul.

The law is like the boundaries of a putt-putt course. They are very important. They don't change. Without them the game would be chaos.

But it is important that you don't focus on the boundaries (where you are not supposed to go). Constantly banging into the planks is *not* how life is supposed to be played.

And in real life, the role of grace is even more pronounced.

Grace for you and me means having the Father walk up and say, "I'm not sure you understand some of the finer points of how this game is to be played. Let me show you another way."

And then, the Father does more than stand over and instruct. Through the miracle of incarnation, he is able to step inside and show you exactly how to play. The boundaries (the law) are still in place, still important in keeping us on track, but they are no longer the focal point of the game.

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



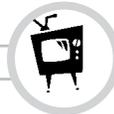
### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





The focus of the game is to get a holiness-in-one (sorry!). Through the indwelling presence of Christ, it is possible to learn from him until all the inner parts begin to function, well, like those of a pro.

In the words of Dallas Willard:

The presence of the Spirit and of grace is not meant to set the law aside, but to enable conformity to it from an inwardly transformed personality. We walk in the spirit of the law and the letter naturally follows as is appropriate. (p. 214)

The soul is initially helped most by the law. Its boundaries keep us on course. But the law does not transform the soul. It is the grace of Christ's indwelling presence that instructs and transforms—and also produces an even greater appreciation for the presence of the law. The law remains in place as “the structure of a life of grace in the kingdom of God.” (p. 215) But it fades as focal point as we learn to cooperate with the grace within—which is also the secret of an easy yoke.

### ■ Note to Leader

Yep, you're way ahead of me. You'll need to find a golf ball and a putter to turn this into an object lesson.

And also keep in mind that it will probably be best to use this lesson *after* teaching the three other points about the soul that are presented in the “Warm-up” section of this lesson.

### Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: golfball and putter

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil

## SESSION ELEVEN:

# Transforming the Soul

## INTRODUCTION



### Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session eleven of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Transforming the Soul.”

### Prayer

*“Dear God, I present my soul back to you for your care and safe-keeping. If there is disease, please make me whole and healthy. If my soul has become less open to your presence, show me how to unbolt the doors once again and let your grace pour in. You have given me this great gift, an internal computer that runs my life, connects all the parts, and causes me to function. And you also provide the service (even house calls) to keep my soul running smoothly. My soul is yours. Its care is in your hands. Amen.”*

## WARM-UP



### Three Things About the Soul

Prepare yourself: this may be the most difficult chapter in the book to wrap your brain around. Besides the fact that Dallas is just too smart, the topic of “soul” has been a slippery one for millennia. The modern discipline of psychology—which literally means “the study of the soul”—has, by and large, left this field unplowed. This is mentioned for empathy, not complaint. Clearly it is difficult to reach conclusions about something that is both invisible and beneath conscious control.

But even though we can’t examine it under a microscope, there’s something inside of you that is vital. It has the ability to connect with God, run your life, and integrate all of your “parts” into one whole, functioning person. That’s important, well worth the headache its study may induce.

In our “Warm-up” section we will focus on the soul by considering three central aspects of soul functioning.

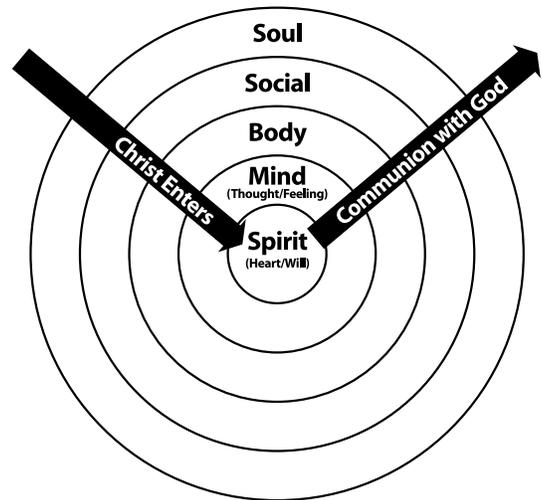
#### It’s the Outer Ring—a Permeable Membrane

Dallas portrays the soul as the outer ring of his diagram of the person. This is not done to imply location or proximity to the other com-





ponent parts. The soul is represented by that sphere to indicate it is the part of you that is like a permeable membrane in a biological organism—designed to allow passage of some but not all foreign objects. Your soul is designed to let God in and keep destructive forces out. And it can be sustained intact and can function properly only through the care and keeping of God.



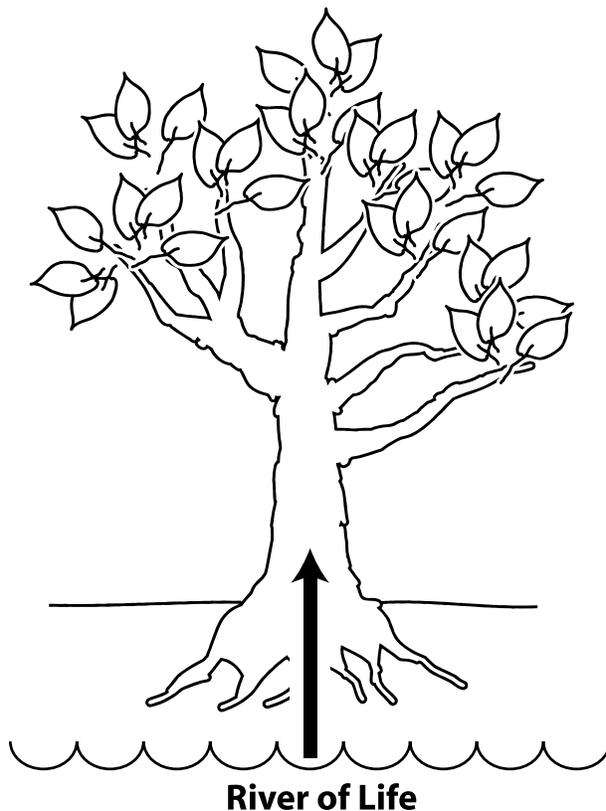
The soul is, however, but one component of you as a person. When a person is *saved*, it's not just the soul that is found and rescued. It's the entire person. But your soul plays a crucial role in this process.

It's the part of you that opens your entire self to the saving and transforming presence of God.

### It's Like a Tree.

Have you ever seen a tree growing from the bank of a stream? No doubt it was flourishing. No matter what the weather is like (monsoon or drought), no matter what the ground condition (rock, clay, or sand), a tree planted by water can stretch toward the heavens because its roots will have found their way to the life-giving water that flows by.

Your soul is like the root system of a tree planted by “the river of life.” Not only does it draw in life from God himself, but it also becomes an inner



stream of water, which gives strength, direction, and harmony to every other element of your life.

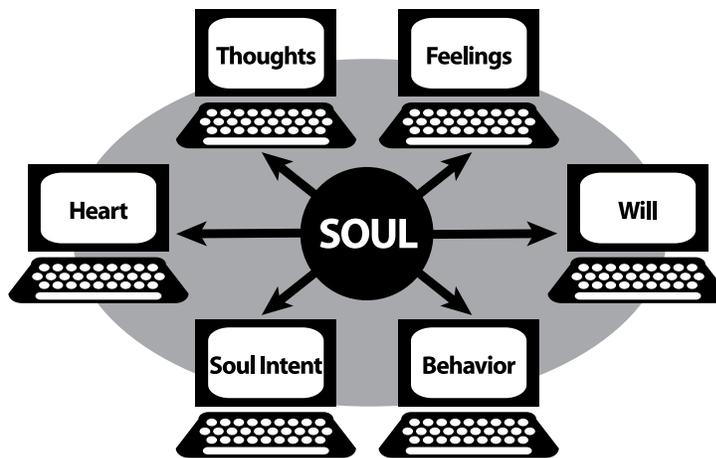
When your soul is healthy and functioning, it draws the life-giving presence of God into the capillary system that runs through the trunk, limb, and leaf of you. Healthy souls produce foliage and fruit bright with the vitality of God's presence.

### And It's Like a Network of Computers.

In Chapter Two we used the analogy of a Fortune 500 company to illustrate the functioning of your component parts. To review briefly, God corresponds to the board of directors. The Trinity sets the mission and vision for the company that is you. For Christians, the primary mission statement is always the same: Learn to love God and neighbor through cooperation and conformity to the indwelling presence of Christ.

Your will (spirit/heart) is the CEO of the company. It pulls the trigger, makes the conscious choices that determine the course of your organization. The CEO doesn't act in isolation. It receives input from and is shaped by four other division heads: research and development (thought), human services (emotion), labor (body), and corporate relations (social aspect).

So where does the soul fit in with this model, and how is it different from the will (spirit/heart)? The soul is represented by the information services director, who, in turn, represents the network of computers that keep the whole company running and communicating (both internally across the five divisions and externally with other companies and the board of directors).



I don't want to stretch this analogy too thin. It is used to communicate that there is a component of you that links all the other components and helps you to function as one integrated whole. It is also the part that links you to God. It is contrasted to the will (spirit/heart) in that it is more in the background, subconscious, and diffuse.





So, what have we said here? Your soul is like a permeable membrane in that it is designed to let God in and keep destructive forces out. God flows in like water entering the root and capillary system of a tree, bringing into you the life-giving presence of God. And your soul is also like a network of computers in a large company, allowing communication and maintaining function both within (linking the departments—thoughts, emotions, actions—of you) and without (linking you to God).

Whew! My brain hurts. Let's move on to the putt-putt story and group discussion.

### ■ Putt-putt Story

Use the story about putt-putt found in the “Before You Lead” section to prompt discussion about the role of law and grace in shaping the soul.

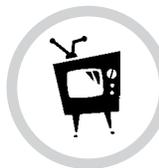
### ■ Discussion

Ask the group if they would like to discuss any of the illustrations that have been shared. (Keeping the following three points in mind may be helpful if you feel you need to anchor the discussion.)

- 1 It is through the soul that we become open to the grace of God's transforming presence—whether we choose to view it as membrane, root system, or computer network.
- 2 The soul is unlike the will (spirit/heart) in that it is deeper, cannot be dealt with directly, and represents more than conscious choice.
- 3 The soul is healed and reformed through the interplay of both law and grace.

### ■ Exercise

Have the class take a few moments to complete the exercise found in Appendix 11-A.



## CONTENT

We will now view the two video vignettes. In the first segment, Dallas Willard provides a summary of Chapter Eleven of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation among Dallas, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are also provided.

## ■ Video Vignette (Dallas' lecture on Chapter Eleven: Transforming the Soul)

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the group to respond to the reflection questions that have been provided.

## ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- It is important to understand the differences between spirit and soul. The human spirit (will and heart), the Holy Spirit, and the soul are all non-physical—and in that sense, spiritual. The spirit functions more as the CEO of the person. Its primary function is choice. The soul is much deeper. It cannot be dealt with directly, and it is not under conscious control. It is like the computer network running behind the scenes, connecting and integrating all the parts.
- Your soul, now, is the part of you that brings all aspects of the person to interact well.
- The soul is not the “person.” The person includes all aspects of the self—will, thoughts, emotions, behavior, social interactions, *and* the soul. The soul is a subset of the entire person.
- If the soul is working correctly, the indicator is that the mind and the body and the will (spirit/heart) will each be working properly (fruitfully) and relating to one another well.
- There's no instrumentality (means/agency) to the soul that's under conscious control.
- Growing and transforming the person in the way we are talking about here is not something that can be done by personal ingenuity. We can change our thoughts, emotions (to some extent), behaviors, and choices, which can have an indirect impact on the soul. But the primary way to soul change is by becoming more open to the indwelling presence of the Word and Spirit of Christ.
- Souls need more than to be saved; they need to be grown and developed as well. Ignoring the soul [after it has been “saved”] is one reason why Christian churches have lost members to cults and other religious or political groups.





- “Our soul is like an inner stream of water, which gives strength, direction, and harmony to every other element of our life. When that stream is as it should be, we are constantly refreshed and exuberant in all we do, because our soul itself is then profusely rooted in the vastness of God and his Kingdom . . . .” (p. 204)
- “The book of Psalms is, of course, the great ‘soul book’ in the Bible, simply because it, more than any other, deals with life in its depths and with our fundamental relationship to the One who is keeper of our soul (Psalm 121:7).” (p. 207)
- We can’t deal with the soul directly. God can, however, deal with it directly, and we can pray for that miracle.
- One reason Dallas puts the soul on the outer circle of the human self is to make it clear that this is where God comes in. He’s been in direct contact with the soul.
- “Rest *to* our soul is rest *in* God. My soul is at peace only when it is with God, as a child with its mother.” (p. 209) Part of learning to rest *in* God is learning how to abandon *outcomes* to God.
- Law and grace come together in forming the soul. Law cannot be ignored. It is the primary expression of the order that God has in God’s kingdom.
- For the purpose of the individual, he has to understand that things can be done about the soul by grace and by effort, but nothing can be done directly.
- “The presence of the Spirit and of grace is not meant to set the law aside, but to enable conformity to it from an inwardly transformed personality.” (p. 214) While “you cannot separate spirit from law . . . you must separate spirit and law from *legalism*—righteousness in terms of actions.” (p. 214)

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Lecture

- 1 If the soul cannot be dealt with directly, how does soul-change happen?
- 2 How would you explain the difference between your spirit (will/heart) and soul?
- 3 Which is the more comprehensive term, “person” or “soul”? Explain why you made that choice.
- 4 What are some things you can do to take care of your soul?

## ■ Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow.

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Conversation

- 1 What are the indications that your soul is working correctly?
- 2 So, is your soul the same thing as your character?
- 3 Why did Dallas place the soul as the outer ring of his diagram of the person?

### Book: Chapter Eleven

- 1 Why does Dallas consider Psalms to be the “great soul book”?
- 2 How does the failure to do what you intend to do relate to a problem with the soul?
- 3 If you (your entire person) are like a “tree planted by streams of water,” and God is the “stream,” where is your soul in this image, and what does it do?
- 4 How does taking on the easy yoke of Christ relate to Dallas’ discussion of the soul?
- 5 How can you explain the roles of law and grace in restoring your soul?





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## BIBLE STUDY

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We will now turn our attention to the Bible. A brief Bible study is found in Appendix 11-B and may be used in class or as a “homework assignment.”

### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study exercise in class.

### ■ Leader's Insight

The “Psalm 1 person” has learned the secret to having a healthy soul and flourishing life. She has learned to delight in words of God, dwelling upon them day and night until they have become nourishment for her entire person. Such a person will be “*prepared for and capable of responding to the situations of life in ways that are good and right.*” (p. 199)

A healthy soul is one that is a conduit to the presence of God. Evidence of his presence will be seen in the lush fruit of his spirit and delight in both law and grace.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to spend 10 to 15 minutes slow-reading the following verses of Scripture to appreciate more deeply the secret of an easy yoke.

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me”* (John 17:20, 21, NIV).

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV).

## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES



- **Thoughts:** Write the following verse on an index card that you can keep in a pocket or pocketbook. Whenever you begin to feel stress or anxiety, pull it out and breathe it for a few moments.

*“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine . . . .”* (John 15:4)

- **Emotions:** Every time you pause to take a drink today, take an additional five seconds to ask God to teach you to delight more fully in his law and his presence.

- **Will:** In this chapter Dallas Willard discusses the importance to soul health of learning to abandon outcomes to God. To help weave this into the fabric of your soul, recall the serenity prayer each morning before rolling out of bed.

*GOD, grant me the  
Serenity to accept the things I cannot  
change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
and the  
Wisdom to know the difference.*

- **Behavior:** Practice abiding with God by imagining that he is present with you throughout the day—sitting in the passenger seat of your car, walking beside you when you walk, by your side at work and play.
- **Social Interactions:** Pray a prayer of release of all your most significant relationships to God. Ask him for the faith to believe that these people are better off in his care than your own.





## SUMMARY

For this chapter, Dallas Willard provides his own concise summary.

In summary, then, transformation of our soul requires that we acknowledge its reality and importance, understand scriptural teachings about it, and take it into the yoke of Jesus, learning from him humility and the abandonment of “outcomes” to God. This brings rest to the soul. Then our soul is reempowered in goodness by receiving the law and the Word into it as the structure of our covenant fellowship with God in grace. (p. 215)



## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

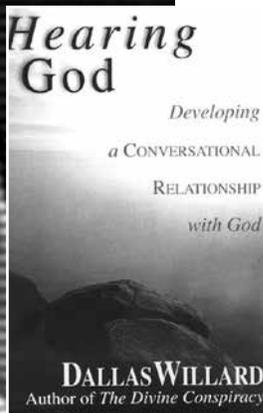
#### Soul

- “The soul is that aspect of your whole being that *correlates, integrates, and enlivens* everything going on in the various dimensions of the self. It is the life-center of the human being. It regulates whatever is occurring in each of those dimensions and how they interact with each other and respond to surrounding events in the overall governance of your life.” (p. 199)

## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

### ■ Hearing God

- “In the union and communion of the believer with God, their two beings are unified and inhabit each other just as Jesus prayed: ‘I ask...that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me’ (John 17:20-21).” (p. 100)
- “Usually those who want a word from God when in trouble cannot find it. Or at least they have no assurance that they have found it. This is, I think, because they do not first and foremost simply want to hear God speaking in their lives in general.” They just want help in times of trouble. (pp. 198, 199)

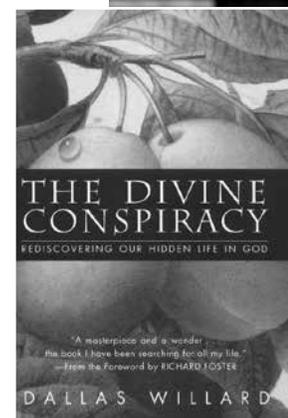
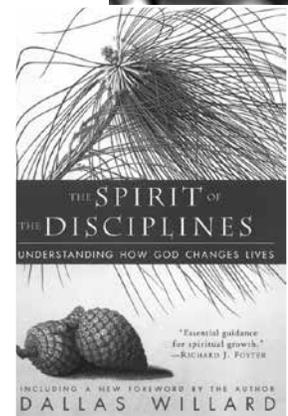


## ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- In Eden, one of those specifically human powers was the ability to interact—not only with the other living elements in the creation but also with God. “The death that befell Adam and Eve... was also the death of this interactive relationship with God...” (p. 54)
- “What is it that is missing in our deformed condition? From a biblical perspective, there can be no doubt that *it is the appropriate relation to the spiritual Kingdom of God that is the missing ‘nutriment’ in the human system.* Without it our life is left mutilated, stunted, weakened, and deformed in various stages of disintegration and corruption.” (p. 65)
- “A ‘spiritual life’ consists in that range of activities in which people cooperatively interact with God—and with the spiritual order deriving from God’s personality and action.” (p. 67)
- “The fact that he [Paul] viewed his doctrine of redemption as a doctrine of the transformation of the self required him to be a psychologist.” (p. 112)
- “The aim and substance of spiritual life is not fasting, prayer, hymn singing, frugal living, and so forth. Rather, it is the effective and full enjoyment of active love of God and humankind in all the daily rounds of normal existence where we are placed.” (p. 138)

## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “We are meant to exercise our ‘rule’ only in union with God, as he acts with us. He intended to be our constant companion or coworker in the creative enterprise of life on earth. That is what his love for us means in practical terms.” (p. 21)
- Paul is plainly saying it is love that practices godly behaviors, not us. We cannot love if we “have not been substantially transformed in the depths of [our] being, in the intricacies of [our] thoughts, feelings, assurances, dispositions, in such a way that we are permeated with love. Once that happens, then it is not hard. What would be hard is to act the way we acted before.” (p. 183)
- “The Pharisee takes as his aim keeping the law rather than becoming the kind of person whose deeds naturally conform to the law. Jesus ... concludes his exposition of the kingdom kind of goodness by contrasting the ordinary way human beings love, loving those who love them, with God’s *agape* love.” (p. 184)





- Four things we must not take as primary objectives: external conformity (behavior), professing correct doctrine (thoughts), seeking out special states of mind or ecstatic experiences (emotion), faithfulness to activities of the church (social). (p. 320)
  
- What are the two primary objectives? 1) “To dearly love and constantly delight in that ‘heavenly Father’ made real to earth in Jesus.” 2) “To remove our automatic responses against the kingdom of God, to free the apprentices of domination, of ‘enslavement’ (John 8:43; Rom. 6:6) to their old habitual patterns of thought, feeling, and action.” (pp. 321, 322)



SESSION TWELVE:

# The Children of Light and the Light of the World



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ Becoming a Living Magnet.

Before beginning his discussion in Chapter 12, “The Children of Light and the Light of the World,” Dallas Willard offers this quote from Frank Laubach:

*The simple program of Christ for winning the whole world is to make each person he touches magnetic enough with love to draw others.*

Hmm. Let’s take a close look at magnet-making to see if that process may help clarify what it means to be transformed by love into children of light.

Have you ever made a magnet, perhaps back in an elementary school science class? I remember seeing someone else do it.

My teacher walked into my sixth-grade science class carrying an oversized battery (the biggest I had ever seen that wasn’t under the hood of a car), a six-inch nail, a box of paper clips, and a coil of wire. He poured the shiny paper clips out on a dull black lab table and demonstrated that the nail—lacking opposable thumbs—could not pick up the paper clips.

He proceeded to connect the coils of wire to the two poles of the battery—while warning us not ever to try this with an electric wall outlet, lest we be turned into magnets with funny hair. Then he wrapped the wire around the nail, and before you could say, “Shazam!” the nail was picking up the spilled paper clips faster than an obsessive-compulsive secretary.

The next day that same nail was back to its non-magnetic ways. A temporary (but not a permanent) magnet had been produced. In a nutshell, here's what happened:

Inside that nail were billions of individual atoms, each having the properties of a microscopic magnet. These atoms tend to get together in tiny little groups that magnet scientists call “domains.” Within each domain the atoms are inclined to point in the same direction. This makes each domain (or component) behave like a tiny little bar magnet.

But here's the thing: The domains inside a typical nail are not lined up—they point in more different directions than a room full of eschatologists. Because of this, nails in their natural habitat do not function as magnets with north and south ends.

When the electric current ran through the coils and around the nail, it caused the domains to line up—all pointing in the same direction. This gave the nail a definite north and south pole and turned it into a magnet. Then when that nail was brought into contact with the paper clips, it caused the domains within them to line up as well. The north end of the magnet pulled the south end of the domains in the paper clips to itself. And each paper clip—connected to the magnetized nail—became a magnet itself and attracted other paper clips.

And this is exactly how Christian formation works. *What?*

God is the battery, the source of energy. The spirit of Christ is like the coil of wire that brings divine energy, presence, and love into contact with us—the nail. Prior to coming in contact with the word and Spirit of Christ, our domains (component parts that include thought, emotion, will, behavior, and social interactions) are not in sync. And having component parts that are nonaligned makes us useless for the task of attracting others—the paper clips—to the love of God.

But when we allow the presence of Christ to transform us, causing all our component parts to align with the love of Jesus, we attract others to ourselves and to God. We

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



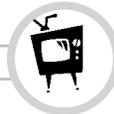
### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



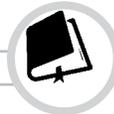
### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?

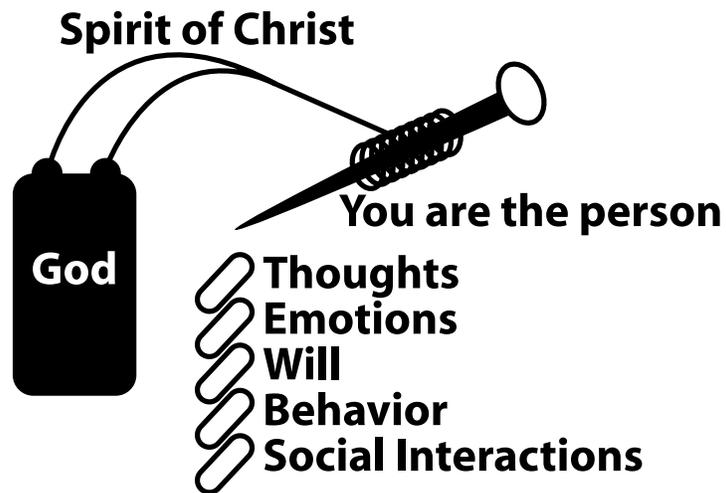




are magnetized by the energy (or light) of the world. We are transformed by his love until we *become* his love. This is Laubach's notion of a simple program for winning the world—each of us magnetic with love, drawing others to Christ because of the energy in our own transformation.

But there is one important caveat. There are two kinds of magnets: temporary and permanent. Temporary magnets will lose all or most of their magnetic properties. Permanent magnets retain their “alignment” for a very long time.

It is only by staying connected to God through openness to the word and Spirit of Christ that Christians can keep their component parts aligned and stay magnetized by love.



#### ■ Note to Leader

We don't assume you have a science lab at your disposal, so we've provided you with some diagrams for telling the magnet story. However, if you do have access to a bar magnet and some paper clips, they may enhance the object lesson.

This illustration does summarize what this lesson is about. Coming into contact with the presence of Christ can realign our internal domains until they imitate his. It is the way we are energized by the light of the world and become children of his light.

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: magnet, paper clips

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil





SESSION TWELVE:

# The Children of Light and the Light of the World



## INTRODUCTION

### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session twelve of *Renovation of the Heart*, “The Children of Light and the Light of the World.”

### ■ Prayer

*“Father, we know that we are here for a purpose. It is your desire to bring forth a vast community of people who will be your kingdom of priests under God. You have called us to become your children, children of light. We surrender every part of ourselves to you. Reign in every atom of our being. Transform us into your image and likeness. Let all darkness be banished, and cause us to burn brightly with your energy, power, and truth. Amen.”*



## WARM-UP

### ■ How's Your Fairy Tale Coming Along?

Consider again these words written by Dallas Willard:

According to the biblical picture, the function of human history is to bring forth an immense community of people, from “every nation and tribe and tongue and people” (Revelation 14:6), who will be a kingdom of priests under God (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; Exodus 19:6), and who for some period of time in the future will actually govern the earth under him (Revelation 5:10). They will also, beyond that, reign with him in the eternal future of the cosmos, forever and ever (Revelation 22:5).

These people will, together as a living community, form a special dwelling place for God. It will be one that allows his magnificence to be known and gratefully accepted by all of creation through all of the ages (Ephesians 2:7; 3:10; Philippians 2:9-11). What the human heart now vaguely senses *should* be, eventually will be, in the cosmic triumph of Christ and his people. And those who have fully taken on the character of Christ—those “children of light” in Paul’s language—will in eternity be empowered by God to do what they want, as free creative agents. And it will always harmonize perfectly with God’s own purposes. (pp. 217, 218)

Wow! These responsibilities take the Christian way beyond getting saved, paying tithe, and playing church league softball. In these two paragraphs Dallas summarizes the two principal purpose statements of the Christian faith—ours and God’s.

During our time on earth, our job is to become authentically transformed into Christlikeness through an ongoing apprenticeship with Jesus. But why is that so important, our supreme reason for existence? The answer: because of God’s purpose for human history. He is using our earth-lab experience to create a kingdom of light-bearing rulers who will reign with him forever (Revelation 22:5). We are to be the *real* sky walkers (my apologies to Luke), who don’t just carry light sabers, but who have become light—the power, energy, love, and truth of Christ.

Yes, I know, that sounds a bit too mystical. But it also sounds completely biblical. And perhaps the path from our present state to our ultimate destiny in Christ explains the universal attraction to fairy tales. Only fairy tales (and parables) do justice to our story.

### ■ Place Yourself in the Ultimate Fairy Tale

We read about Camelot and the lost empire of Atlantis and hear inner whispers that somehow these are our story. Our true citizenship is in a different place, a magnificent kingdom that for the moment appears distant and beyond our ability to find.

We read about the adventures of Pinocchio and find ourselves described. We too were crafted and set free by love. We too followed fleshly desires that rendered us lost and more like donkeys than the divine. Yet by grace, we too can make a journey of transformation that leads to a renewed relationship with our maker and a mature balance between dependence (knowing his ways are best) and independence (no strings attached).

We read the story of Cinderella and realize that our real home is not in the soot of a chimney hearth but in the glow of a castle. Our identity is not that of a mistreated stepchild, but that of a beloved partner in a bright and joyful kingdom.





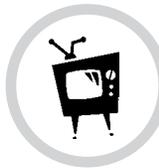
In fairy tales we live happily ever after. We are princes and princesses who reside in harmony with the King, assisting in the rule of the kingdom. In fairy tales the lost find their way home, good defeats evil, and light chases darkness. In fairy tales we glimpse the most profound purpose of human history and see ourselves clearly as children who live and play and rule in the light of God’s love.

■ **Exercise**

Turn to Exercise 12-A and have some fun writing your own fairy tale.

■ **Discussion**

Is anyone willing to share her experiences during this exercise? What does your personal fairy tale teach about your current status on your journey of transformation?




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## CONTENT

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We will now view the video vignettes. In the first segment, Dallas Willard provides a summary of Chapter Twelve of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a brief statement by Dallas (as part of the ongoing conversation), and then a skit by Curt Cloninger will be presented. Discussion questions for each segment follow.

■ **Video Vignette (Dallas’ lecture on Chapter Twelve: The Children of Light and the Light of the World)**

After viewing the lecture, you may wish to stop the tape, go over the central points of the lecture/chapter found below, and ask the group to respond to the reflection questions.

■ **To Clarify**

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- “According to the biblical picture, the function of human history is to bring forth an immense community of people...who will be a kingdom of priests under God (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; Exodus 19:6), and who for some period of time in the future will actually govern the earth under him (Revelation 5:10).” (pp. 217, 218)
- “Those who have fully taken on the character of Christ—those ‘children of light’ in Paul’s language—will in eternity be empowered by God to do what they want, as free creative agents. And it will always harmonize perfectly with God’s own purposes.” (p. 218)

- “Spiritual formation in Christlikeness during our life here on earth is a constant movement toward this eternal appointment God placed upon each of us in our creation—the ‘kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’ (Matthew 25:34; see also Luke 19:17).” (p. 218)
- Where “children of light” differ from “children of darkness” is primarily (and most importantly) on the inside. The six dimensions of the person will be different in the followings ways:
  - *Thoughts*. Children of light think constantly about God. They “dwell upon God and upon his greatness and loveliness,” as manifest in the life of Jesus Christ. They are “God-intoxicated.” (See p. 218.)
  - *Feelings*. Love is the dominant emotion of a child of light.
  - *Will (spirit, heart)*. They are habitually “devoted to doing what is good and right. Their will is habitually attuned to it, just as their mind and emotions are habitually homing in on God.” (p. 219)
  - *Body*. “Their body has come over to the side of their will to do good. It is constantly *poised* to do what is right and good without thinking.” (p. 219)
  - *Social relations*. “In their relations to others they are completely transparent. Because they walk in goodness they have no use for darkness, and they achieve real contact or fellowship with others—especially other apprentices of Jesus. ‘If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7).” (p. 220)
  - *Soul*. “. . .All of the above is not just at the surface. It is deep, and in a certain obvious sense, it is effortless. It *flows*.” (p. 220)
- The outcome of spiritual formation is to have a soul that is whole and restored. “Such a soul effectively interfaces God and the full person and enables every aspect of the self to function as God intended.” (p. 221)
- In contrast to Scripture’s picture of “children of light,” we find passages portraying the “unfruitful works of darkness’ . . . In Galatians 5 Paul described ‘the deeds of the flesh’ when natural human impulses and abilities are allowed to be the rule of life. These ‘deeds’ are acts of [sexual] immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities [or grudges], strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these’ (verses 19-21).” (p. 221)
- In authentic Christian spiritual formation, each component of the person must change. “You cannot bypass any of the six dimensions if life is to be transformed.” (p. 222)





- The big mistake made by those who approach the glowing passages about children of light is simply this: “They do not understand the presupposition of inner transformation into Christlikeness that accompanies all the passages. They assume that we are supposed to ‘do’ all the glowing things mentioned in such passages without loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In fact, they think we must do them while our heart, soul, mind, and strength are still strongly inclined in the opposite direction, against God.” (pp. 223, 224)
- Sanctification comes “through the process of spiritual formation, through which the heart (spirit, will) of the individual and the whole inner life take on the character of Jesus’ inner life.” (p. 226)
- “Our walk with Christ, well learned, is a burden only as wings are to a bird or the engines are to an airplane.” (p. 228)
- “There is no effectual response to our current situation [the practice of Christianity that does not require authentic transformation] except for the children of light to *be* who and what they were called to be by Christ their head.” (p. 231)

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video before we look at some reflection questions?

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Lecture

- 1 To whom is Dallas referring by the phrase “children of light”?
- 2 According to the Apostle Paul (see Romans 14:17), “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but r\_\_\_\_\_, p\_\_\_\_\_, and j\_\_\_\_\_ in the Holy Spirit.”
- 3 What does Dallas suggest to be the three components of “light”? (Hint: l\_\_\_\_\_, t\_\_\_\_\_, and p\_\_\_\_\_.)
- 4 What are the “big five” feelings that dominate the emotions of a child of light? (Hint: It’s the first three of the fruit of the Spirit plus two).
- 5 Around what two things is the soul of a child of light integrated?

## ■ Video Vignette (Conversation/Curt Cloninger Skit)

The conversation segment is brief and is followed by only three questions. Please note that a skit by Curt Cloninger follows. Play both segments before asking the following questions.

## ■ Reflection Questions

### Video: Conversation/Skit

- 1 Dallas says that a child of light is “translucent.” What do you believe he means by that?
- 2 Describe the impact Curt’s skit had on you.
- 3 What are the implications of the skit for what it means to be a “child of light”?

### Book: Chapter Twelve

- 1 According to the biblical picture, what is the function of human history?
- 2 What needs to happen to believers before they can become empowered by God to do what they want, as free creative agents?
- 3 Describe how each dimension (component/domain) of a child of light has changed.

*Thoughts*

*Feelings*

*Will*

*Body*

*Social Relations*

*Soul*





- 4 What is the big mistake often made by those approaching the biblical passages about becoming a child of light?
- 5 What happens during the process of sanctification?




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## BIBLE STUDY

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### ■ Group Exercise

If time permits, form small groups and allow the participants to complete the Bible study in class.

### ■ Leader's Insight

The text for our Bible study is taken from a list of well-known passages presented by Dallas Willard on page 221 of *Renovation of the Heart*. Each passage offers a description what an apprentice of Jesus is to be like.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 was chosen for our study text. Some may find it both overly familiar and idealistic. And these are precisely the two reasons it was selected. The primary purpose of this study is to consider how we may avoid what Dallas calls “the big mistake” in approaching such glowing descriptions. The mistake is to attempt to “do” all the stuff that flows from the character of a child of light, while remaining distant from God and having component parts that have not been fully realigned by his magnetic love. If anyone has attempted to “do” 1 Corinthians 13, he or she has probably walked away from these virtues of love with shame and humiliation.

Reading passages such as this one, however, should not direct us to a checklist of behaviors but to a deepening relationship of conversation, communion, and ultimately union with the one whose character is being described. 1 Corinthians 13 should inspire us to humble surrender and commitment to an apprenticeship with the one whose character is being described, not to white-knuckled effort. This passage should be read in awe of Christ—who is love—and while whispering, “Yes, Lord, love like that through me.”

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Find a couple of time periods this week to “breathe” the following two passages. As you slowly inhale the words of 2 Peter 1:3-11, reflect on the process of your transformation. On a separate day you

may want to meditate on 1 John 4:7-21 and then again ask God to love through you.

## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES



- **Thoughts:** According to Dallas Willard, the thoughts of children of light are constantly on God—they have become “God-intoxicated.” (p. 218) Pick a day this week and make a game out of seeing how often you can think about God. (Hint: Be creative in thinking of ways to remind yourself of this desire. Perhaps you will set your watch to “beep” every hour as a reminder to turn your thoughts to God. Maybe you will decide to pair each sip of coffee you take with thinking of God, or perhaps you will place an empty chair by your desk or kitchen sink to remind you of his presence.)
- **Emotions:** Do an examination of your emotions each time you sit down for a meal. Before taking the first bite, ask yourself how often you were aware of feeling deep love, peace, or joy during the preceding hours of the day. As part of a silent prayer before eating, ask God to intensify your awareness of his presence and his love for you as you experience the remainder of the day.
- **Will:** Write on an index card (that will fit into a pocket of your clothing), “My prayer is to will the will of God.” Each time you become aware of the card, slip it out of your pocket and pray those nine words.
- **Behavior:** Prepare a boxed lunch for a homeless person and deliver it to the first needy person you see—even if you have to drive to a homeless shelter.
- **Social Interactions:** Ask God for a specific and practical way for you to be a child of light in your family. They ask him to help you do just that.





## SUMMARY

In Ephesians 5:8-11 (NAS), the Apostle Paul writes, “You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of the light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

In this chapter Dallas Willard defines spiritual formation in Christlikeness as becoming children of light—character transformation toward complete trustworthiness before God. This is important because it involves the health of our souls, and it is important because it is central to the purpose of human history—to bring forth an immense community of people (both sanctified and set apart) who will be able to govern with God (see Revelation 5:10).

We have observed that in this chapter Dallas has underscored the very purpose of human existence, defined what it means to become children of light, and issued a call—the same call given in Matthew 28:30—to become serious apprentices of Christ who will serve him until the end of the age.



## MORE DALLAS

### Key Term Box

#### Children of Light

- “[This] is, in biblical terminology, to say that they have the basic nature of light: that light is their parent and has passed on to them *its* nature, as any parent does.” (p. 218) The primary reference is to Jesus, as light of the world. (See John 8:12.)

#### Restored Soul

- “Such a soul effectively interfaces God and the full person [thoughts, emotion, will, behavior, and social interactions] and enables every aspect of the self to function as God intended.” (p. 221)

#### Sanctification

- “It is the condition of the soul in the mature children of light” (p. 224). It is “the Christianizing of the Christian” (p. 225).

- According to Wayne Grudem (see page 226), “*Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.*”
- In summary: “[Sanctification] is a consciously chosen and sustained relationship of interaction between the Lord and his apprentice, in which the apprentice is able to do, and routinely does, what he or she knows to be right before God because all aspects of his or her person have been substantially transformed.” (p. 226)

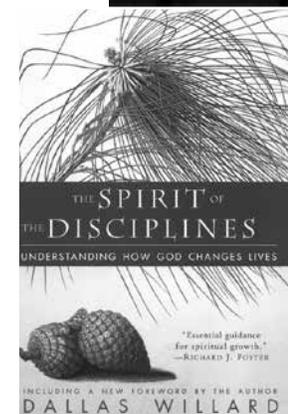
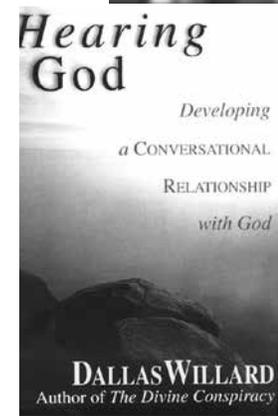
## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

### ■ Hearing God

- “Today participation in the kingdom rule of God through union with Jesus is open worldwide.” (p. 133)
- “Those who receive the grace of God’s saving companionship in his word are by that very fact also fitted to show humankind how to live. They, and they alone, are at home in the universe as it actually is. . . .The light they radiate is not what they do but who they are.” (pp. 146, 147)
- “But what is the *process* by which we can be fully transformed into children of light—‘blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. . . .holding fast to the word of life’ (Phil. 2:15-16)?” (p. 147)
- “The key concept underlying all the themes I have raised in this book is this: *Hearing God’s word will never make sense except when it is set within a larger life of a certain kind.*” (p. 211)

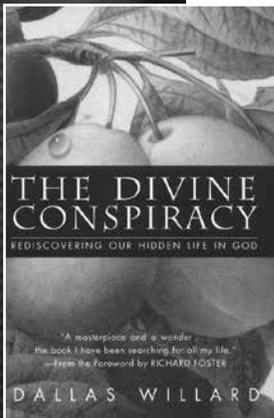
### ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

- “The secret of the easy yoke, then, is to learn from Christ how to live our total lives, how to invest all our time and our energies of mind and body as he did.” (p. 9) “*The secret. . . .has been placed within your reach.*” (p. 10)
- What is the meaning of being a saint? “For the sinner it means nothing else than a return through effort and discipline to the state of innocence of the first man. When the soul is made holy the body becomes holy also. . . .That is the mystery of spiritual nature!” (p. 48, from *The Way of a Pilgrim.*)





- “But in light of the immensity of the task [ruling with God], God also gave humankind another very important ability—the ability to live in right relationships to God and to other human beings.” (pp. 49, 50). There is a need to live in community with God.
- “In worship we engage ourselves with, dwell upon, and express the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God through thought and the use of words, rituals, and symbols. We do this alone as well in union with God’s people. To worship is to see God as *worthy*, to ascribe great worth to him.” (p. 177)



### ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- “To be the light of life, and to deliver God’s life to women and men where they are and as they are, is the secret of the enduring relevance of Jesus. Suddenly they are flying right-side up, in a world that make sense.”(p. 13)
- “*He was himself the evidence for the truth of his announcement about the availability of God’s kingdom, or governance, to ordinary human existence.*” (p. 20)
- Jesus’ presence on earth meant that God’s rule was here now. (p. 20)
- It is very important that we accept “the fact that our familiar atmosphere is a ‘heaven’ in which God dwells and from which he deals with us...” (p. 70)



SESSION THIRTEEN:

# Spiritual Formation in the Local Congregation



## BEFORE YOU LEAD

### ■ A Special Kiss

Our final object lesson involves a Hershey’s kiss—and what it has in common with Christian spiritual formation. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

Milton Hershey—the man who first envisioned a chocolate kiss—was born in Pennsylvania in 1857 to Mennonite parents. He was raised on a farm and stopped going to school after the fourth grade. At the age of eighteen Milton Hershey turned in his farm clothes and became an apprentice to a chocolate maker. After a period of learning the craft, and a few false starts, Milton became a very successful candy man.

He founded the Lancaster Caramel Corporation and in time sold it for one million dollars—a huge sum for the mid-1800s. But his heart was not in caramel; it was in chocolate. So Milton invested his fortune into a chocolate factory and the research of chocolate. Milton Hershey had a simple idea. He wanted to make the world’s best tasting chocolate—with no apologies to the Swiss.

At the conclusion of his experiments in chocolate making, he built a plant in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The green dairy land was a logical choice since he needed to be close to a dependable supply of fresh milk for the production of milk chocolate, which at that time had been primarily known in parts of Europe.

Hershey’s product was an immediate success, and he poured much of the profits into philanthropic projects and the building of a model town for his workers.

But these factors are not why we are telling this story. Milton Hershey didn't believe in advertising. In fact, until the early 1970s the Hershey Corporation did not put a dime into advertising. The philosophy of the founder was simply this: if you make the world's best chocolate, the word will get out. No need to advertise if you really are producing something that everyone craves.

When it came to advertising and product development, Hershey used the same approach as Jesus. Christ's focus was on product development too: produce people whose hearts truly are renovated—bursting with love, peace, joy, humility, truth, and power—and the world will want in. Jesus and Milton both kept the primary goal the primary goal. Do the best job of producing what everyone craves.

In this chapter Dallas Willard make a compelling case that authentic transformation (Christian spiritual formation) should be the primary mission of each local congregation. The best way to do *outreach* is to do an outstanding job of *inreach*—the renovation of hearts that turns people, wherever they are, into lights in the darkened world.

If making a quality kiss of chocolate got the attention of the world without advertising, just imagine what making quality Christians would do. After all, who *doesn't* enjoy the experience of love, peace, and joy?

The problem, as we will see in this chapter, is with the overwhelming tendency to be distracted by lesser goals and produce bland products.

### ■ Note to Leader

Locate the one-page outline sheet (13-C) provided to help in organizing your presentation. And if you are using the object lessons presented in the “Before You Lead” section, you may want to bring in a bag of individually wrapped Hershey's Kisses. Just make sure you have one for everyone present. (Note: Some teachers like to toss them to whoever answers a question or participates in the discussion in

## SESSION OUTLINE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Welcome
- Prayer



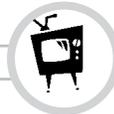
### II. WARM-UP

- Overview/Object Lesson
- Exercises and Discussion



### III. CONTENT

- Video Vignette
- To Clarify
- Class Response
- Reflection Questions



### IV. BIBLE STUDY

- Small Groups or All Together



### V. EXERCISES FOR...

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Will
- Behavior
- Social Interactions



### VI. SUMMARY

- Review



### VII. MORE DALLAS

- Key Term Box
- Where Else Did He Say That?





any way. If you've never tried this, be prepared for an explosion of class involvement.)

By now, which aspects of these lessons the majority of your class prefers have been clearly established. So continue to customize your lesson to class preferences.

At the heart of this final lesson is Dallas' challenge to the church to keep Christian spiritual formation as its primary goal.

## ■ Materials

For this session *the leader* will need:

- RESOURCE GUIDE
- Bible
- Video Player, Monitor, Stand, Extension Cord, etc.
- *Renovation* Videotape
- Possible objects: a Hershey's chocolate kiss

For this session *the participant* will need:

- Bible
- Participant's Guide (Optional)
- Pen or Pencil

## SESSION THIRTEEN:

# Spiritual Formation in the Local Congregation

## INTRODUCTION



### ■ Welcome

Call the group together and welcome the participants to session thirteen of *Renovation of the Heart*, “Spiritual Formation in the Local Congregation.”

### ■ Prayer

*“Father, as your servant Paul reminded the church at Ephesus, ‘Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church radiant, having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish; but that she should be holy and blameless.’ As we complete the study of these lessons, we open our hearts to your presence. Move in. Make yourself at home. Renovate us so that we are to your taste and liking. Do that in each individual life—especially my own. And then teach us how to live together as a body of believers just as you, Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit live as a community of love. Amen.”*

## WARM-UP



### ■ The Main Thing Is to Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing

Did you hear about the Army Company that achieved their

primary objective but lost the battle? The problem was, they made not stepping on land mines their primary goal. So each morning they got up, stayed on familiar ground, and successfully avoided land mines. Mission accomplished. The only problem was that their number one priority should’ve been winning the battle.

Who knows if that ever actually happened—at least on a battlefield? Dallas Willard believes that a similar scenario plays itself out in almost all local congregations. Churches choose good goals, excellent goals, but





instead of making them secondary targets, they make them the main thing—and lose the battle of Christian spiritual formation. How does that work?

In his previous work, *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas identifies four common goals of local congregations:

- External conformity
- Profession of perfectly correct doctrine
- Seeking special experiences
- Faithfulness to the church

What's wrong with these goals? Nothing! There's nothing wrong with having any or all of these as important objectives for a local congregation. But there is a problem when any one of them is made to be *the* primary objective. That's when it becomes possible to achieve your mission and lose the war.

So what should be the primary objective of a local congregation? To love dearly and delight in the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter into an apprenticeship with him until our entire being has been transformed into his likeness. And that, according to Dallas, is what's missing in the vast majority of churches—keeping the main thing (Christian formation) the main thing.

*Note: You may find it interesting that the four secondary goals listed above correspond to different components of Dallas' model of the person. External conformity usually is measured by **behavior**. Profession of perfectly correct doctrine emphasizes the component of **thought**. Seeking special experiences often focuses heavily on emotion, while faithfulness to the church—being present every time the doors are open—can become a matter of white-knuckled will. By contrast, the suggested*

*primary goal of dearly loving and delighting in Jesus—and surrendering the heart to his healing presence—expresses a holistic focus.*

## ■ The One Thing Liberals and Conservatives Have in Common

Dallas makes the somewhat humorous observation that there is one thing both liberal and conservative Christians agree on: “What the right and left have in common is that neither group lays down a coherent framework of knowledge and practical direction adequate to

personal transformation toward the abundance and obedience emphasized in the New Testament, with a corresponding redemption of ordinary life.” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 41). In short, both groups agree that actually becoming like Jesus is too difficult to even try.

So over time, what is taught about Jesus has no natural connection to entering a life of discipleship to him. While the forgiveness of sins (a common primary objective for those on the theological right) and social responsibility (a key objective for those on the left) are important, when they are made the main thing, the real primary objective—becoming like Jesus—gets pushed aside. Neither side is actually saying it is possible to live life (with our thoughts, feelings, will, behavior, and social interactions radically transformed) the way Jesus did. Battles are won, but the war is lost.

### ■ Distractions

Once churches turn a secondary goal into a primary goal, it becomes easy for them to become distracted by matters that are not even worthy of being a third-, fourth- or fifth-level goal. Dallas quotes Leith Anderson on this matter (see p. 235):

While the New Testament speaks often about churches, it is surprisingly silent about many matters that we associate with church structure and life. There is no mention of architecture, pulpits, lengths of typical sermons [or *sermons!*], rules for having a Sunday school. Little is said about style of music, order of worship, or times of church gatherings. There were no Bibles, denominations, camps, pastor’s conference, or board meeting minutes. Those who strive to be New Testament churches must seek to love its principles and absolutes, not reproduce the details.

Dallas does not believe that the New Testament church is either a relic from the past or a hopeless ideal. Establishing local congregations that are free from distractions and singularly focused has been done and can be done here and now, “if we turn our efforts under God in the right direction.” (p. 235) And what is that direction? It is to make “spiritual formation in Christlikeness *the exclusive primary goal of the local congregation*. That is what one would naturally expect after having read what Paul says—and, indeed, after having read what Jesus sent his world of revolutionaries out to do (Matthew 28:18-20).” (p. 235)

This final chapter is a call to local congregations to return to the primary goal of Christian spiritual formation. And as this goal is achieved, indi-





vidual behavior will conform to holiness, correct doctrine will be proclaimed, experiences of Christ will be special, faithfulness will flourish, the lost will be reached—and church growth consultants will find other work.

### ■ Exercise

Take a few moments to complete the exercise found in Appendix 13-A. It’s a self-assessment of both yourself and your local congregation concerning what Dallas calls “God’s Plan for Spiritual Formation.”

### ■ Discussion

Is anyone willing to share his experiences with this exercise?



## CONTENT

We will now view the final two video vignettes. In the first segment, Dallas provides a summary of Chapter Thirteen of *Renovation of the Heart*. Following this lecture will be a continuation of the three-way conversation. Discussion questions for each video segment and the parallel chapter from the book are provided.

### ■ Video Vignette (Dallas’ lecture on Chapter Thirteen: Spiritual Formation in the Local Congregation)

#### ■ To Clarify

Here are the Central Truths of this chapter:

- Local congregations should be “entirely devoted to the spiritual formation [renovation of the heart] of those in attendance.” (p. 233)
- Local congregations should function as “spiritual hospitals.” (p. 234)
- Local congregations are made up of “children of light who light up their world” with the power and love of Jesus. (p. 234)
- “What characterizes most of our local congregations [however], whether big or little in size, is simple *distraction*” (p. 235) [from the central cause of making spiritual formation in Christlikeness the exclusive primary goal].
- The New Testament is primarily silent about many of the matters we presently associate with church life (e.g., architecture, sermon length, style of music, etc.). (p. 235)

- It is common for present day churches (including denominations) to be distracted from the primary goal of spiritual formation by mistaking the “vessel” (the group’s history and distinctives) for the “treasure” (the real presence of Christ). (p. 237)
- Being distracted from the primary cause often produces mean, angry, and fearful Christians instead of communities of love, peace, and joy. (p. 237)
- A fundamental mistake on the conservative side of the American church is to be more concerned with getting people into heaven than heaven into people. (p. 238, 239)
- Producing authentically transformed lives is the best way to do evangelism (p. 239).
- The “principles and absolutes of the New Testament” are contained in the words of Matthew 28:19-20: “As you go throughout the world, make apprentices to me from all kinds of people, immerse them in the Trinitarian reality, and teach them to do everything I have commanded you” (PAR). (p. 240)
- God’s plan for spiritual formation:
  - “*Making disciples—that is, apprentices of Jesus.*” (p. 240)
  - “*Immersing the apprentices at all levels of growth in the Trinitarian presence . . . the healing and teaching of God in the midst.*” (p. 240)
  - “*Transforming disciples inwardly, in such a way that doing the words and deeds of Christ is not the focus but is the natural outcome or side effect.*” (p. 240)
- “Disciples of Jesus are those who are with him learning to be like him.” (p. 241)
- There are two inseparable aspects of discipleship: 1) trusting oneself wholly to Christ, and 2) learning from him about how to live in every aspect of life (p. 241).
- “The process of spiritual formation in Christlikeness is a process through which all the dimensions of our life are transformed as they increasingly take on the character of our Teacher.” (p. 242)
- Spiritual formation happens *only* for those who have become apprentices of Jesus (p. 242).
- The key problem for those who are not on the path of Christian formation is the rejection of God and the choice to live life on our own terms—this problem affects both non-professing *and* professing Christians. (p. 243)
- “It is, I gently suggest, a serious error to make ‘outreach’ a *primary* goal of the local congregation, and especially so when those who are already ‘with us’ have not become clear-headed and devoted apprentices of Jesus, and are not, for the most part, solidly progressing along the path.” (p. 244)





- “One of the worst mistakes that can be made in practical ministry is to think that people can choose to believe and feel differently. Following that, we will mistakenly try to generate faith by going through the will—possibly trying to move the will by playing on emotion. Rather, the will must be moved by insight into truth and reality. Such insight will evoke emotion appropriate to a new set of the will. This is the order of real inward change.” (p. 248)
- Local congregations should openly (and with confidence) announce their intent to do two things: 1) “*Expect* the apprentices to learn to do the various things that Jesus taught us to do”; 2) “*Announce* that [your church] teach[es] people to do the things Jesus said to do.” (p. 250)

### ■ Class Response

Do you have any questions or observations about the video vignettes before we look at some reflection questions together?

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Lecture

- 1 In his lecture, Dallas suggests that it would be reasonable to expect local congregations to be filled with apprentices of Jesus who are learning how to love one another and help one another become different in their bodies and minds. Do you agree that this is reasonable? Why?
- 2 What is the institution that Dallas suggests the church should resemble? (Hint: It’s not a school.) In what ways does your church mirror this suggested model?
- 3 If Jesus was not aiming at giving a whole bunch of laws and principles, what does Dallas suggest was the aim of Jesus’ teaching?
- 4 How does Dallas suggest that grace and obedience work together? (Hint: \_\_\_\_\_ leads to \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ is the outcome of \_\_\_\_\_.)
- 5 Dallas stated, “We need to stop worrying so much about getting people into heaven and be more concerned with getting heaven into people.” What are some ways that is happening in your life and in your church?

## Video Vignette (Conversation)

After viewing the video, you may wish to stop the tape and consider the reflection questions that follow:

### ■ Reflection Questions

#### Video: Conversation

- 1 What is a reason—suggested by John—that people began to look to the therapist’s office instead of the church for solutions to life problems?
- 2 What do you think the church will look like if it becomes a \_\_\_\_\_ community that reclaims the task of the cure of souls?
- 3 Larry suggested that “we have become a community of pretenders who then are required to be distant to maintain the pretense.” What is the solution Dallas offers for this dilemma? (Hint: It’s step 3 of his “Plan for Spiritual Formation.” See page 240).
- 4 If you were a member of a “red dot” group, where would you say you are right now?

#### Book: Chapter Thirteen

- 1 Dallas suggests that local congregations should be entirely devoted to what activity?
- 2 But often this is not the case because of d \_\_\_\_\_ . (See page 235.)
- 3 List the three things that are most likely to distract you from the process of authentic transformation.
- 4 How would you summarize the three-step plan for spiritual formation presented in this chapter? (Hint: See page 240 after taking your best shot.)
- 5 What are the two inseparable aspects of discipleship? (Hint: See page 241.)
- 6 How can Dallas suggest that even something as important as “outreach” should not become the primary goal of a church?





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## BIBLE STUDY

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### ■ Group Exercise

We will turn our attention to the Bible to help us better appreciate and apply the primary themes of this chapter. A brief Bible study can be found in Appendix 13-B and may be used in class or as a “home-work assignment.”

### ■ Leader’s Insight

This week’s Bible study is composed of three passages: Ephesians 5:1-2, 6:10-18, and Acts 2:24-27. The selection of these passages is very straightforward. The two selections from Ephesians were chosen because they are found as part of Paul’s longer description of a community composed of “children of light” (See Ephesians 4:17—6:18).

Ephesians 5:1-2 provides the clear injunction to “be imitators of God.” But yet this imperative is followed by a cluster of words dripping with the fragrance of God’s love. It seems more of a wooing to allow Christ to live his life through us than a demand for white-knuckled determination. This distinction gets to the heart of how our becoming like Jesus is more a by-product of developing a conversational and communal relationship with him than an act of willpower. The more important question is not “What would Jesus do?” but “What would I be if he were living his life through me?”

Ephesians 6:10-18 is the familiar passage about putting on the armor of Christ. It is presented here to emphasize that this kind of protection from the enemy of our soul involves all the domains of our personhood. The intent of question number 2 [13-B] is not to have the participants find an exact match for each of Paul’s instructions, but to underscore the importance of each of an individual’s “components.”

The beautiful picture of Christian community painted in Acts 2:42-47 was selected to highlight the incredible community of the early church and to challenge the modern reader to deeper levels of love and service.

### ■ Scripture Meditation

Encourage the group members to use the “Five P’s” exercise found back in Appendix 6-A as a foundational exercise before meditating on the following passage of Scripture (We recommend that this relatively lengthy passage be broken down into seven sections—one for each day of next week—of approximately 8 to 10 verses each. Then focus

only on one section per sitting, allowing ten to twenty minutes for the time of meditation.).

The passage selected is a picture of how a congregation made up of “children of light” should look. See Ephesians 4:17-6:24 for this week’s meditation.

## TRANSFORMING EXERCISES



- **Thoughts:** Be ruthlessly honest with yourself in identifying the primary goal that is determining how you live your life. If it is Christian transformation, wonderful; if it is not, pray that Jesus would begin to help you reform priorities.
- **Emotions:** Find a quiet place to consider the following. If you were going to check yourself into a “soul hospital,” what would be your most painful emotional symptoms? If you do not immediately become aware of these, ask Jesus, the great physician, to provide the diagnosis. Then imagine that you are yielding your entire being into his hands for healing. (Note: This can be a powerful exercise. However, if you do not feel a sense of peace and closeness to Jesus when you complete it, you may want to talk with a pastor or pastoral counselor about additional resources for the health of your soul.)
- **Will:** Dallas states (on page 241) that “disciples of Jesus are those who are with him learning to be like him.” Develop a sure-fire plan for becoming aware that you are in the presence of Jesus on at least 10 occasions tomorrow (e.g., set your watch to “beep” each hour, tell yourself you will think of Jesus being near each time you see the color blue, etc.). Then when each of the reminders comes before your mind, take a deep, slow breath and enjoy Christ’s presence. Perhaps you will even find yourself asking him, “Is there anything you would like to teach me in this moment?”
- **Behavior:** Each time you come to a stop sign or red light tomorrow, use the event as a reminder to pray, “Jesus, I am giving up my life as I have understood it to this point. Show me now how life is





supposed to be lived and where it is you would have me go.”

■ **Social Interactions:**

Consider that each person in your life is an earthen vessel that contains a valuable treasure—the human spirit that is capable of relationship with God. Pick a day next week and be in awe of the treasure inside those who are most significant in your life (e.g., your spouse, children, parents, best friends). Then, each time you are in their presence, interact with them as if they were worth more than all of the world’s wealth.



**SUMMARY**

In *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*, Dallas Willard has presented a practical and comprehensive plan for spiritual formation—the authentic formation of the human person as seen in apprentices of Jesus throughout the ages. While each of the components of the person has been given considerable attention, the primary focus was always on the treasure of Jesus Christ, living with increasing fullness inside the believer.

While the component of “heart” is featured in the book’s title, renovation into Christlikeness involves a grace-orchestrated experience by each aspect of the person—not only the heart but also thoughts, feelings, behavior, and social interactions. In authentic Christian formation, all of the “*aspects of the person*” come into line with the intent of a will brought to newness of life ‘from above’ by the Word and the Spirit.” (p. 253)

Not only is this process not easy; it is completely impossible—at least by human effort. Effort and cooperation are necessary but insufficient conditions for transformation. It is only by the grace and mystery of “Christ in you” that transformation is possible.

The final chapter with its focus on the local church is not meant to condemn but to challenge. Local congregations are challenged to refocus their efforts on the primary goal of become a hospital for souls whose medicine is the experience of love and delight in the healing presence of the Trinity.

## MORE DALLAS



## Key Term Box

## Apprentices of Jesus

- People who have come to trust Jesus with their whole life, so far as they understand it and want to learn everything [Jesus] has to teach them about life in the kingdom of God now and forever. They are constantly with him in order to learn this. (see p. 241)

## Performance

- “Performance is where we try to make an impression rather than just be what we are. The element of performance would be absent in the Trinitarian gathering, as would constant solicitude concerning ‘How did the service go?’” (p. 246).

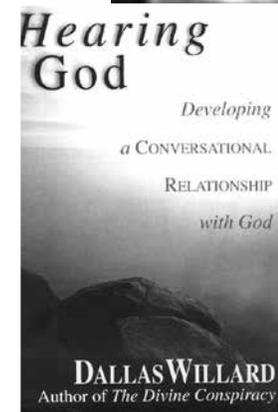
## God’s Plan for Spiritual Formation

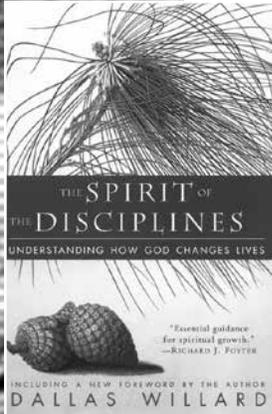
- God’s plan for spiritual formation is found in Matthew 28:18-20. It has three stages: 1) making disciples; 2) immersing them in the Trinitarian presence; and 3) transforming them until being like Jesus is a natural side effect of how they live. (p. 240)

## WHERE ELSE DID HE SAY THAT?

## ■ Hearing God

- We need “Elishas today who, by life and teaching as well as by prayer, might open our eyes to see the reality of God’s presence all around us.” (p. 79)
- “To manipulate, drive or manage people is not the same things as to *lead* them. The sheepdog forcibly maneuvers the sheep, whereas the biblical shepherd simply calls as he calmly walks ahead of the sheep. This distinction between the sheepdog and the shepherd is profoundly significant for how we think of our work as leaders of Christ’s people.” (p. 81)
- “When we align ourselves with the kingdom of Christ, when we come into the family of God, we become an outpost of that kingdom.” We have a telephone installed so we can talk directly to the commander-in-chief. (p. 185)





## ■ The Spirit of the Disciplines

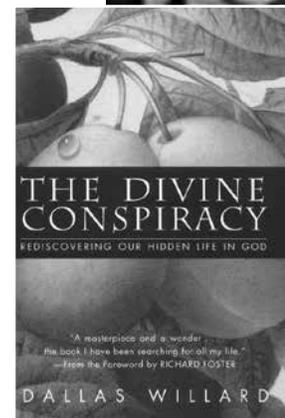
- “Ask your church: ‘What is our group’s plan for teaching our people to do everything Christ commanded?’” You won’t find such a plan, “just as you will not find any national leader who has a definite plan for paying off the national debt...” (p. 16)
- “Most liberal Protestant churches have never even heard of the prayer of power in his name. The church has become an organization of well-meaning idealists, working for Christ but far from his presence and power.” (p. 22)
- Conservatives have the problem of transforming “saving faith into *mere mental assent* to correct doctrine.” (p. 23)
- The way of living the church recommended was too “shallow... ‘too trivial to be true.’ It was not adequate to life and indeed did not even take life—our lives, the ordinary minutes and hours of our days—seriously in the process of redemption.” (p. 24)
- “For at least several decades the churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian. One is not required to be, or to intend to be, a disciple in order to become a Christian....” (p. 258)
- “But in place of Christ’s plan, historical drift has substituted: ‘Make converts (to a particular faith and practice) and baptize them into church membership’ [instead of go and make disciples].... We also omit the step of taking our converts through training that will bring them ever increasingly to do what Jesus directed.” (p. 260)
- “Not having made our converts disciples, it is impossible for us to teach them how to live as Christ lived and taught.” (p. 260)

## ■ The Divine Conspiracy

- In considering why the church today is so weak, we should “consider the possibility that this poor result is not in spite of what we teach and how we teach, but precisely because of it.” (p. 40)
- “The only thing made essential on the right wing of [Christianity] is the forgiveness of the individual’s sins. On the left it is removal

of social or structural evils. The current gospel then becomes a ‘gospel of sin management.’ Transformation of life and character is *no* part of the redemptive message. Moment-to-moment human reality in its depths is not the arena of faith and eternal living.” (p. 41)

- “What the right and left have in common is that neither group lays down a coherent framework of knowledge and practical direction adequate to personal transformation toward the abundance and obedience emphasized in the New Testament, with a corresponding redemption of ordinary life. What is taught as the essential message about Jesus has no natural connection to entering a life of discipleship to him.” (pp. 41, 42)
- But if we look at the bright light of Christian history we see: “To be a Christian means to be like Jesus Christ.” And, “Being a Christian depends on a certain inner relatedness to the living Christ. Through this relatedness all other relationships of a man—to God, to himself, to other people—are transformed.” (p. 42, quoting Anglican Bishop Stephen Neill)
- The gospels of both the left and the right have something in common. They “lack any essential bearing upon the individual’s life as a whole,” or with becoming like Christ. (p. 54)
- “Who among us has personal knowledge of a seminar or course of study and practice being offered in a ‘Christian Education Program’ on how to ‘love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who spit on you and make your life miserable?’” (p. 57)
- Church systems are perfectly designed for the product they are producing. (p. 58)
- “Non-discipleship is the ‘elephant in the church.’” (p. 313)
- “There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?” (p. 400, from Augustine’s *City of God*.)



# Learn how your character can be transformed into that of Christ.

Welcome to *Renovation of the Heart*, the second installment in a *Curriculum of Christlikeness* series.

*Renovation of the Heart* is a video-based curriculum built on Dallas' most recent book, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*. It is designed to help Christians develop inward Christlikeness.

With these curriculum materials, you and your group will have the resources to experience significant growth in your Christian walk. You will be able to listen to Dallas as he discusses each of the chapters in his book, and you will be a fly on the wall for an unscripted conversation among Dallas Willard, Larry Crabb, and John Ortberg concerning authentic transformation.

The focus for your journey is the six different components of you—thoughts, emotions, will, behavior, social relationships, and soul. Through lecture, conversation, group exercises, Bible study, and spiritual practices, you will learn how transformation happens.

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**"NO ONE HAS THOUGHT MORE CAREFULLY THAN DALLAS WILLARD ABOUT THE HUMAN PERSONALITY AND HOW IT CAN BE TRANSFORMED INTO CHRISTLIKENESS. I GIVE MY HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION TO RENOVATION OF THE HEART."**

**—RICHARD J. FOSTER**