

Reigning in Life through Christ
from the Renovaré *Life with God* Conference in Houston, Texas, October 3, 2008
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This talk was originally titled, "What to Do After You Decide to Do What Jesus Said to Do." The theme of the conference was *Life with God: Celebrating Lifelong Discipleship*. The conference recognized the 30th anniversary of Richard Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*.

Dallas begins the talk by saying that he wants to put the theme of the conference, *Celebrating Lifelong Discipleship*, in the context of the "with-God" life, and he starts by unpacking two verses: Genesis 1:26 and Romans 5:17. These two verses, according to Dallas, help put everything in place and help us understand that discipleship is the greatest opportunity anyone ever has in life.

1. Understand that discipleship is the greatest opportunity anyone ever has in life.

- a. Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth."*

- This verse tells us who we are.
- God put you here to have dominion, to rule, to be responsible.
 - There's a problem with rule and responsibility and dominion. It has to be subjected to what is _____. You want _____ to be associated with goodness.
 - You and I are put here to rule for good, but that won't work unless you add "with-God" – that is, we are put here to rule _____ _____. That's the with-God life!
 - The objective that God had for us did not change after humanity's fall (Genesis 3). That's why you long to do what is good and to produce things that are helpful. Almost everyone wants to leave the world a better place.

- b. Romans 5:17 *For if by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

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Do you think of yourself as reigning in life?

- Discipleship is _____ in reigning. Wherever you are in your life circumstances, in your family, in your course of life, whatever your age...that is God's gift to you in training to reign in Christ Jesus. You have to reign where you are. You have to be who you are. (See 2 Corinthians 2-6: Paul had a difficult life, but his personal testimony is, *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.....[W]e do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal"* 2 Corinthians 4:16,18). That's discipleship!

- *With-God* means that as you act, God is with you acting. God is _____ his _____ with us as we can stand it.
 - God doesn't give you everything you pray for and we've learned to be thankful for that. Prayer is a rudimentary _____ activity.
 - Jesus comes and teaches us to rest in him and to love others. We grow in that knowledge and that makes it safe for us to have the power of God
 - God taught Moses about power-sharing. Moses' staff was not "magical," but was how God taught Moses about His power.

An Illustration of the With-God Life

Then he remembered the days of old,
Moses and his people, saying:
"Where is He who brought them up out
of the sea
With the shepherd of His flock?
Where is He who put His Holy Spirit
within them,
Who led them by the right hand of
Moses,
With His glorious arm,
Dividing the water before them
To make for Himself an everlasting
name,
Who led them through the deep,
As a horse in the wilderness,
That they might not stumble?
As a beast goes down into the valley,
And the Spirit of the Lord causes him to
rest,
So You lead Your people,
To make Yourself a glorious name."

Isaiah 63:11-14 (NKJV)

2. Accept Jesus' invitation.

- a. When Jesus comes to us, he invites us into the _____ of _____. *The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*: that means that we who have been out here trying to run our kingdom on our own now have the option to bring our _____ kingdom, which is a pitiful thing, into God's Kingdom, where it becomes something _____.

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- *Repent for the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand* means **redo your thinking about how you are going to manage your life**. Lay that aside. Here is your opportunity: You can live in the Kingdom of God. That's how your dominion, your responsibility, is _____ in the power of God.
 - It is a gradual process. We come in through _____ in Jesus Christ. Christ has come into the world lifted up on the cross and, in that way, has become a presence throughout all of the world.
 - The cross is a manifestation of God's Kingdom. It is the center of God's visibility in Christ. Jesus chose it. He said, "[I]f I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)
 - **The cross never comes without the resurrection.** The cross symbolizes the _____ of _____ in death – nailed to a cross – and the _____ of _____ over death – raised from the death to newness of life...the newness of life we are called to live in. Colossians 3:1-3 *Therefore, if you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*
- b. We are invited to trust Jesus and _____ in the Kingdom of God right where we are, right who we are. That's the gospel invitation: Trust the Crucified Risen One and enter into life with him now.
3. Decide to do what Jesus said to do.
- a. After the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells the proper response to his teaching: **"Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man** who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And **every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man** who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:24-27 (RSV)

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- Jesus says, "Here's the wise person – the one who hears my sayings and _____ them." This is the easy way to live; it's what wise people do.
- Many folks have never decided to do what Jesus said to do.
- b. When you _____ to do what Jesus said, the first thing you want to know is that we don't _____ our salvation.
- Grace is not opposed to _____. It's opposed to _____. Earning is attitude, and we want to stay out of that attitude. If you've genuinely heard the gospel, you know that Jesus took us past that. The heart of God is far beyond that.
- All along Jesus was looking for people who would put their faith in him. Jesus said to Philip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). He told the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). The emphasis is not on behavior. Behavior will take care of itself if we get the inside right. The emphasis is on what kind of person am I becoming. The issue is not so much getting into heaven, but heaven getting into us. Then, getting into heaven will take care of itself.

4. Live in the Kingdom of God

a. Progress in routine, easy obedience.

- Jesus brings us to God, then, as Jesus brings us along, _____ transformation progresses. We become really fond of God - who we are *inside* changes. And then the things that we decide to do that Jesus taught become a natural expression of who we are. We progress in **routine easy obedience**.
 - It's the change of what is _____ us that makes it possible for us to do everything Jesus said. It isn't that we remain the kind of person who is alienated from God and full of themselves and thinks they are running their life. It isn't that we remain that way and just put on top of that a layer of obedience. **We change deeply inside.**

Routine Easy Obedience

You don't have to stop and think about what you're going to do (routine) and are no longer struggling to manage to do what Jesus said (easy).

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b. Live in a Different World

- The first move of that deep change is _____ because we have come to believe that God so loved the world that he gave his Son (John 3:16). That changes our picture of God. That's what takes us back to Genesis 1:26. There I understand:
 - I am here with you.
 - When I have a responsibility to rule, it is with you.
 - When I am confronted with things in life, I am counting on you – I am expecting you.
 - _____ casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Fear is anticipation of evil. Now that I have brought my life, through faith in Jesus Christ, into the Kingdom of God, I have no fear - that changes everything!
 - Perfect love is God's love ____ us, then it's God's love _____ us to others. Then it will go through _____ and come back to us.
 - Perfect love casts out fear! You're in a different world and _____ that happens to you will have a different meaning. That's just part of the change that comes inwardly as we step into the life of Jesus.

c. Make Disciples

- Jesus tells us to go teach everyone to do everything he said. We start where Jesus said to start by _____. (*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you.* Matthew 28:19-20)
 - **Disciple** → Someone who trusts Jesus and is learning from him how to live in the Kingdom of God as he lived in the Kingdom of God.
 - Obedience comes about when we stop trying to do things (for example, keep the Ten Commandments) and, instead, focus on becoming the kind of person who does those things (becoming the kind of person who keeps the Ten Commandments).

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- With temptation, your focus _____. Temptation _____ as your focus gets narrower and narrower. This is how temptation always works!
- Jesus arranges for possibilities of failing. _____ is often the only way we can find out who we are. If we are submitted to Christ, then our failures become _____ in Christlikeness.
- What do you do after you decide to do what Jesus said? You decide to go to school with Jesus and become inwardly the kind of person who will do the things that he said.

That's where spiritual disciplines come in. We need a lot of them.

d. Practice spiritual disciplines.

- Spiritual disciplines work by _____. They don't deal with our failures directly. That's behavior modification.

Behavior modification is not character transformation, but
character transformation is behavior modification.

- Transformation of character into Christ's likeness would mean a revolution of behavior that would sweep the world. It would be the kind of transformation of love that Jesus described in John [17:20-23]:

"I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

That's Christ's idea of evangelization.