

# Understanding the Will and the Mind, the Center of Brokenness and of Healing

**Series: Healing the Heart and Life by Walking with Jesus Christ Daily, Session 2**

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## Transcript

**Dallas Willard** 00:06

Thank you, Bill very much. I'm delighted to be here again this evening, thank you for coming. I hope your week of experimentation with the 23rd Psalm has been something that has been refreshing and vital for you. Sometimes we can fall into a little routine and kind of lose the point. So you have to experiment with the Psalm meditatively thoughtfully, you have to not just say the words, but let the word sink in. And I hope that it has given you a sense of how change works. You see, when we try to change ourselves, like the song says, normally we fail. And that's because we focus on what we want to change. Instead of changing what causes what we want to change.

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And the series that we're bringing here now is on healing the heart, taking the center of the personality, bringing it to God, and out from the heart, let healing come to all parts of the person. Because in order to enable the heart to function differently, we have to change the other aspects. And tonight, we're focusing on thought. And next week, we'll be talking about feeling. Now, that's difficult, because really, you can't treat them separately, they interact. But for purposes of teaching, we're going to separate them out a bit. And tonight we'll talk about thoughts mainly and then next week about feelings. And feelings are one of the hardest things to deal with. The ordinary person, whether they're Christians or not, are normally trapped by their feelings. And that's one reason why we in this country are such an addictive society is because we have essentially conceded to feelings, the right to rule our lives. So we have to learn how to handle that. But actually, we can only handle that, if we have dealt with thoughts. So now just a little bit of summary.

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This is our theme that we started with that human life is increasingly made whole by living in interactive relationship with Jesus. And that is how we are healed is by this interactive relationship. And so the theme for the whole series has to do with that the healing of the heart, by walking daily with Jesus Christ. And we are faced with the fact that to begin with, we are broken. And the character that we have, as human beings, lies fundamentally in self-will, that is essentially destructive, and it turns inward on the self, as well as outward, and leaves us where we don't work, broken just means we don't work. And, of course, that's the common human condition.

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And we want to take just a little time here to look at this passage Galatians five, because this is a picture of the brokenness, and we have to have that fixed before us before we can really deal with the remedy that comes to us in Christ. Now, this is a kind of a tough passage, because I

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mean, it really, Paul really does lay stuff out on the line. And you have to read Paul as if he were a social scientist, a psychologist, historian, someone, you know, we have this problem in reading the Bible, that we think somehow it's in a different category. And we have to get over that. It's, this is this is basic instruction about the realities of human life. And in this passage, Paul is talking about the works of the flesh. And the conflict between the flesh and the spirit and this is basic brokenness. This is brokenness 101. Verse 17, the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you want to do, you may not do the things that you want to do. He the three main dimensions of brokenness, our moral failure, unhappiness, and incapacity to accomplish the good that you set before you. There's three things inability to do what you know, to be right. I mean, of course, sometimes you can, but then many times you can't. You're overwhelmed by the things around you and the things within you. And so just doing the thing that is right, for example, just telling the truth, just being sensitive and loving to other people. Number one thing that gets in the way, there's fear. I mean, that's, that's why people don't tell the truth is fear they won't get what they want, if they do. So, yeah. I may have told you about a little girl in Sunday school who was asked what a lie is. And she said, it's an abomination to God, and a very present help in time of trouble. She kind of got her scriptures mixed up there. See, she's right on, she understood that. And fear comes into the lie. That's why it's so important to know the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack so I can tell the truth. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack so I can actually pay attention to other people. Be aware of them and not just be thinking about how they affect me. See. And so I don't want to go into this at length, I hope you see how that works.

**Dallas Willard 06:41**

And then just happiness. People are so unhappy. And they can't find rest and peace. They're broken. And then one of the things that is so important is how can I accomplish the good, which I find before myself in this world. I'm not talking about anything, especially religious here, I'm just talking about creating good things, and being a blessing to others, and achieving the aspirations of my heart to count for something good in this world. See, everyone has that there really isn't any exception to it. Everyone wants to leave the world a better place than they found it. And that's built into us. That's a part of our nature, in the image of God is having a desire to create what is good. But we can't do that on our own.

**Dallas Willard 07:48**

And self-will as it comes in, breaks us up. Now here's the outcome. the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissension, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like that. Now, when, when we are when we live from self-will, we have resort to these kinds of things in order to succeed with our project of getting what we want. And if you if we had time to just look at all of these, you'd see that that's, that's what's involved here. This is the natural outcome of a life that is devoted to getting what I want.

**Dallas Willard 08:54**

And so, now, in contrast to that, you see, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and so on why does it call it fruit. It calls it fruit because these only come from the deep character of the person. Love, joy, peace along so just think



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about joy a moment, what is joy. Well, Joy is a pervasive sense of well being. It just, it goes with peace. You know. Peace is real peace when it hits your body. So there's so little peace. I mean, we have an epidemic of sleeplessness in this country. And it's really tied to the lack of peace. And sometimes it's tied to garbage trucks backing up at two o'clock in the morning saying Beep beep beep But you know, some people can even sleep through that.

**Dallas Willard 10:04**

And peace, love, joy, peace, all those things come from the transformation that changed me on the inside, you see, that goes beyond trying to modify behavior and touches the springs of behavior in the self. We have one fella, here's sitting here reading Aristotle's ethics, would you believe that? Aristotle had the problem that every human being has, which is how to how to have people who are able to just do the right thing and be happy. That's the universal problem. And Jesus responds to that, and the Old Testament teaching, about the law and about the nature of God, and the wonderful expression of the spirituality of the Psalms. See, that's a life that can actually produce people that can do the things that are right, they can be happy, can devote themselves to what is good and know the power of God in realizing it. So now, until we change, this, set up here, these are the dimensions of the human self, every one of you got one of those. And these are parts of the human self, that work together. And sometimes we are dominated by one or another. But the basic problem here is that that's permeated with me, me, me, me, me. Not with God, God, God, God, God. So that's why both in the old testament and the new, the the law of God is summed up in the simple teaching, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength, and your neighbor as yourself. See, that's all. That's where that comes from. Some of you may get worried your theological types about trichotomy and dichotomy. I just want to say to you that when Paul says in the last chapter of First Thessalonians, that he prays that you would be sanctified in your whole soul, body, and spirit, body, soul, and spirit, he's not trying to give you an anatomy of the human self.

**Dallas Willard 12:37**

I mean, that's not his purpose there. So don't worry about that. Some people worry about it, because I think this is cutting into Paul's teaching. But Paul's teaching there is not intended to be an analysis of the human self. And if you if you take it in, you're going to wind up with questions like, Okay, where's the mind in the soul or the spirit or the body? And so, so try to just not worry about that. There's a huge theological discussion about whether or not we should be trichotomous or dichotomous? Well, you can go to heaven either way. Right.

**Dallas Willard 13:15**

But I actually think it's very helpful if you will think about these, all three, all five or six of these, what do we got five. And the the, the spirit is the inner part, it's like the executive center of the self. It's the will. And there's a basic problem with the will and we've talked about that, namely, it is directed to getting my own way. Now, then, the Word and Spirit of Christ come in to my mind, and through my mind, my spirit can receive it. And change can begin. Now I have new life, I have resources that I didn't have before. But that's not the end of the story. See, having that I'm able to relate back to God. And my faith in God, the primary function, really of the will is to trust God. That's the bottom bedrock layer of the will is to trust God, and to turn away from God and to trust one self is the root of all corruption. I am my shepherd. I'm in real trouble. That's the way

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that one goes. I'm in my, well, you know, now, when I have turned back to the Lord, and now his power is working in me, My heart is directed rightly, then I have to deal with the rest of the story.

**Dallas Willard 14:57**

Now God constantly reaches out to everyone. And the ways I've listed here we talked a little bit about, we don't have time to be thorough on them. But God is looking for people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. And you know, many of the people that have been most holy and powerful in the life of Christ have been people who didn't find God in church. Like CS Lewis, for example, he tells a story how when he got into the sidecar of his brother's motorcycle to ride to another place, he was an unbeliever. And when he, when he got out he was. Now, you might take that as a comment on his brother's driving. But actually, that's the way the Lord is, you may know that in many countries in, especially east Africa and the Middle East, many Muslims are finding Christ because Christ is appearing to them. See, Christ is able to reach out, God is looking for people to worship him, in spirit and in truth.

**Dallas Willard 16:16**

And in all ways, he's always reaching out. And the constant general goodness of God, that Jesus spoke so much about, for example, in Matthew six, when he says, Don't be anxious, because God cares for you, God loves you. And that is the avenue towards healing, as we find our way out of the brokenness of human life, just to trust God. Now, let me just say, it isn't a big theological deal.

**Dallas Willard 16:50**

Let me tell you that you can be wrong about a lot of things about God and still trust him. You don't have to have all your doctrine straight. Really, the only thing that's required is you have to have in your thought, the idea, Jesus is really it. Jesus is the greatest. And if you have that confidence in him, and you call out to Him, and you begin to act in that confidence, no matter how wrong you may be, or uninformed, you may be about doctrines, he will pull you straight. You know, I often say to people, you're not saved, because you're right, in your doctrine. If anything, you're right in your doctrine, because you're saved.

**Dallas Willard 17:45**

It's only the living relationship to Jesus that can actually pull us straight, and begin to help us find our way in him towards the fullness that is in Christ. So really, Whosoever shall call on the Lord shall be saved. That's what it takes see that's the turn away from one self. And it's very practical. It's not mainly theological. It is something where you can begin where you are, no matter where you are, who you are, no matter who you are, and begin to say, I will trust Jesus Christ at this point, with what is now what I'm now dealing with. And when one does that, then God finds you. Christ finds you. And that begins the interactive relationship, which is eternal life.

**Dallas Willard 18:47**

See eternal life is now in session. It isn't future. It's now it's like the kingdom of God. It isn't coming into existence, there will be some changes and some advances. But basically, it's here now. And that's what Jesus preached. And when we put our confidence in him, then he brings us into the kingdom of God through the new birth. And then, from that point of view, all of the wonderful promises that God gives and that we see in Jesus Christ become real. We find we

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are able to do what is right, we find that we are happy. We find that we can even be content no matter what our circumstances are.

**Dallas Willard 19:35**

And of course, that's the secret of the 23rd Psalm. But the 23rd Psalm is simply placing the saving faith that puts God back on the throne. And then through Jesus, we are believers in God. He's the one who helps us really understand what God is like. And we see that God raised Him from the dead and we realize that he is now present in our life. And if we're working in a school or a business or whatever it may be in the army or the police or whatever our place in life might be, then we began to understand that Jesus is right there with us. And he's in action.

**Dallas Willard 20:14**

Now, as long as we're on the throne, he'll let us run it. But when we abandon the throne, and we say, I'm going to turn my life loose, and see how you run it, then things begin to change. So our efforts now meet with His Spirit, we don't become passive. I said that last time, and it's so important to say it again and again. Because even our songs often open the open the eyes of my heart, Lord, we need the Lord to help us. But how about us opening the eyes of our heart too? Right, can we do that? Not by ourselves, but with God. It's something also for us to do. We pray for this to happen. But yet we devote ourselves to it. So when we pray open the eyes of my heart, Lord, the question comes back, what are you looking at now?

**Dallas Willard 21:30**

See, and so our efforts meet with His Spirit, and grace progressively redeems every dimension of the self. So that what that we increasingly love God in the way that Jesus said, See how that works. Now this is what is called working out our salvation. And see, salvation is your relationship to God. Okay, that's your relationship. Salvation is not something's going to happen to you later. Basic idea of salvation is deliverance, deliverance, and you study that scripture, you'll see how that how that is used. But deliverance is now.

**Dallas Willard 22:25**

Deliverance is now and whatever circumstance we are in, and we're primarily talking about the broken condition of human life. By the way, I'm up here tonight, instead of down there, like I was last time, because some folks said, we couldn't see you. So I'm gonna try to stay up here.

**Dallas Willard 22:46**

But it's see deliverance is from the broken condition of human life. And then heaven when you die is a natural consequence of that. But your salvation is that relationship, out of which healing comes. And when that relation is established, because the Spirit and the Word have now come into your heart, and it is brought the news of the availability of Jesus, and that he will really be my shepherd, and I don't have to take on that job myself. When that comes. And I say, Yes, I want it to be that way. I want it to be that way. Well, then that relationship, which is our salvation, is established.

**Dallas Willard 23:32**

And I want to say it again, because there's a lot of confusion about this. And many people think their salvation is having heaven nailed down. Well, Heaven will be nailed down if you have a



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relationship of trust to Jesus Christ and his father. But it'll be nailed down not because there was a transfer of credit that happens too it'll be nailed down, because you are in a vital relationship to Jesus now.

**Dallas Willard 24:03**

So Paul speaks that way, you know, Colossians, three, if you then be risen with Christ. And that's the assumption. risen with Christ means that now there is a life in us, which is not all of us. That we are sharing the life of Jesus, Jesus is alive and He is acting in this universe, with the Holy Spirit and with his father, and that wonderful community. That divine community is actually conducting the universe. And we are permitted to come into union with that and begin to move with it.

**Dallas Willard 24:43**

See eternal life is when, my eternal life is when I immerse what I'm doing in what God is doing. My life becomes a part of God's life, and that's what makes it eternal. Now, when that happens, then there's still work to do. And Paul talks about it in terms of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Because, why, because of the one that's working with you. God is working with you. And because he is working with you, you need to be conscious of that. And not arrogant and not presumptuous, but rather saying, Well, I must be attentive to what God is doing today with me. Now, the fear and trembling, there is not fear and trembling in the sense of something dreadful, that's about to happen to you, it isn't like you take a wrong step and you're dead. That's not what the fear and trembling is about. The fear and trembling there is something is something that comes upon us because of the preciousness of what we're working with. So watch a father, hold a newborn baby for the first time, say, or any kind of dealing with something that is tremendously precious, your, your you concern, to do the right thing with it. And because God is working in my life today, then I want to be sure and make a place for him, I want to be sure, and follow his instructions. As far as I know, I want to be sure to ask him to change me on the inside.

**Dallas Willard 26:31**

But then I'm going to do the things that may change me on the inside also. Okay, so now, that's where we come to the thought life and the feelings. The thought life, and the feelings are absolutely essential for the changes that have to happen. And let's consider now what's the thought life consists in. The thought life consists primarily of the images and preoccupations, the ways of thinking that we're habitually involved in images, images are tremendously important. They're very dangerous, they can also be a great blessing.

**Dallas Willard 27:24**

The image of the Lord as my shepherd, you see, that's an image. And we can keep that present in our minds. And it can make a tremendous difference to us, as we go through the day. And as we go through our lives. All the whole thing that's described there in that Psalm, you see, that covers everything from the Lord is my shepherd. Now he takes care of my physical needs. He leads me in paths of righteousness, He restores my soul, to the conflicts of life, the dangers of life, through death. And forever, you see that that image is extremely powerful. And that's why it shows up in so much of art and in Christian bookstores, and churches, church buildings and

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things of that sort, because it's such a powerful image. Now, the question is, is that the image that occupies my mind?

**Dallas Willard 28:35**

Is that how I see myself in the world? When I'm dealing with my desires, and my frustrations and my efforts to get things done? Is that image, the one that is constantly present in my mind? Or is it an image of being forsaken in the world of being at the mercy of everything, and having really no hope, as the scripture says, without God and without hope in the world. So these images, patterns of interpretation of events, the meaning of a smile or a frown, or a handshake or something that someone said, see the patterns of interpretation that's a part of our thinking. And we have to be very careful, of them we know how harmful it can be to misinterpret people's gestures and facial appearance and the words that they might speak. And so the world is full of animosity, and distancing and attack and anger, because of the way we interpret things that happen to us.

**Dallas Willard 30:00**

So now Ephesians 5:26 uses this image of the washing of the water of the Word, and it applies there to the church. But you know, it's good for us sometimes to think of ourselves as needing a washing. And when things get dirty, there's all sorts of stuff in them a shirt. For example, if you have a dirty shirt, have all sorts of stuff that's in that shirt that shouldn't be there. And the word when the water and the soap and whatever else you use, when you put that in there that removes the dirt that removes what should not be there, the washing of the water of the word does the same thing. It takes all of the images of the harmful ways of interpreting and thinking that make up the ordinary person's mind. And in place of that puts other things and what a tremendous need there is for that.

**Dallas Willard 31:02**

Look, just a moment at First Corinthians 10, a second Corinthians 10. You know this passage possibly. Paul is talking about here, though we walk in the flesh that is in the natural abilities, we do not war in terms of the flesh, For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. That second Corinthians 10:4 the destruction of fortresses, in other words, is stronghold, the destruction of strongholds. See, our minds have strongholds in them.

**Dallas Willard 31:41**

You go back to the people that were described there in Galatians, five, as manifesting the works of the flesh. One of the things that's most interesting is when you begin to talk to them, they have mental strongholds for what they're doing. And that is a very sobering and difficult thing to think about. Nearly all of those strongholds are devoted to the kinds of ideas that would prove to that would serve to justify what they're doing. And our world is full of that. I have a, I was reading a review today of a book on a woman named Iris Murdoch. And the writer used this language, he said, according to Wilson, the writer, perhaps the most important element of her personal life, was her lesbianism. Now you think about that, actually, that's the way many people would think today. And I'm not I'm not just talking about lesbianism. I mean, I'm talking about any kind of sexuality. I mean, I hope you if I come to your place, you won't introduce me as one of the world's leading heterosexuals.

**Dallas Willard 33:13**

But you see, in our culture, because it is a sensualist culture that is devoted to feelings. people's feelings are elevated to the point to where something like this can actually be the most important element of her personal life. Now think of that. And he said, Well, what about our family? What about the work she was trying to do? She actually she was a writer and had considerable success with it, and professed to be trying to do things that would help the world as I say, be a better place. Isn't that more important than your sexuality? Now see, I raised that to illustrate the strongholds. See, we live today with a massive stronghold on this point. That leads people to say things like this, it's a reflection of the sensual nature of our culture. And if you want to see the sensual nature of our culture, just watch the advertisements on television. I mean, one of the things that most amazes me is the way cars are advertised on television. You know, they actually sing love songs to them now. You know, someday my love will come along. I think that was a Cadillac or a Mercedes or something like, Now, see, that's stronghold stuff. And as long as a person's mind is tied in knots with these things, they cannot think straight about their life. And what what does it matter what kind of a car you drive Well, I mean, it matters if it won't run. But beyond that, beyond that, it doesn't matter an awful lot. And so we have this problem now with these strongholds.

**Dallas Willard 35:15**

And Paul is addressing that. And he is looking at what he says in verse five, there, we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. See, the rationalizations of the world have to be overcome. Because the world will come and say, Nah, the Lord isn't your Shepherd. What kind of a world do you think this is? Right? You must be a fool. And then the worldly wisdom will begin to roll about what you might do to prove that you actually are really very smart.

**Dallas Willard 36:00**

Well, then you have to say, my being smart isn't exactly the issue here. But for many people it is, it's an ego thing. People get into this with reference to things like God speaking to you, or God leading you or answers to prayer. Many people are permanently stopped in their prayer life, because they pray, God answers and they say, oh, maybe that's a coincidence. Or God speaks to them. And God doesn't normally speak in a loud voice. You know, like the voice from the Mormon Tabernacle or something it is, you don't know God's voice because it has that overwhelming quality you have to learn it. And just when God speaks to you, you can well say, oh, no, maybe maybe that's just my thought. And then you want to be right. And now there, there are things you have to learn how to hear that. See, the important thing is that we don't exalt our own thinking, and our own smartness, as a way of trying to run our lives.

**Dallas Willard 37:14**

I want to tell you a little bit here about Frank Laubach. Because he's such a beautiful illustration of learning to interact with God and learning how to, to really let God's thoughts replace your thoughts. Frank Laubach, was a Presbyterian missionary in the Philippines back in the 30s. And he has an interesting story is how he got there. But he wound up out in an area of the Philippines where there's a tribe called the Morass tribe, they're very strong Islamic tribe. And

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Frank was out there alone as a missionary among these people, and began to think about Islam. And you know, the word Islam really means submission. And I don't No need to comment on that at great length as to what it means and how it works out. But Frank Laubach, began to think the question, how would it be if I were able to submit myself to God, moment by moment, if I were able to turn my mind to God, and Frank Laubach, was actually a well educated man. And he realized that you can, things don't disappear from your mind immediately. They stay there for a while. And in staying there, they continue to affect you. And so here's what he decided to do. He decided that he would try to turn his mind back to God in some way, every once a minute, once a minute. Maybe it would just be the singing of hymn, or looking at a symbol of a cross, or maybe he would just murmur to himself, hallowed be thy name, or something of that sort. And so Laubach chose to think, on God. This is the heart of our teaching tonight. This is something we must choose to do, and then learn how to do it.

**Dallas Willard 39:29**

We can keep God present before our minds if we want to, we have to choose that. And Frank Laubach chose to do this. And so what he did was he started out just sort of keeping a little awareness of how his mind would turn to God and then he continued with his business and you know, you can think of many things at the one time at the same time. Do you know that? and So you can, you can turn your mind to God and it won't get in the way of what you're doing. Now many of you know this because of how you drive. But that's another story. But it's true, isn't it, you can do a number of things at the same time. And so it's a matter of habit of learning. If you're worried about something, you do it without habit, you just worry about it, you see, you keep thinking about it, no matter what you're doing. But now what Laubach found was that you can actually turn your mind back to God, every minute or so.

**Dallas Willard 40:39**

And that will keep God in your consciousness and allow you as David says, In the Psalm, Psalm 16, eight, I have set the Lord always before me, he is in my right hand, I shall not be moved. When he had practiced this experiment for a while, it really began to transform his life. Here's what he said, after four weeks. Okay, now, I want to pause on that 4 weeks. Because, you know, you say four weeks, my goodness, can I do that? Well, you're going to spend four weeks anyway. Four weeks from now, it'll be four weeks later. Isn't that profound, okay, so see, that's where choice comes in. The choice here is what am I really want to accomplish in my life with God?

**Dallas Willard 41:40**

What I really want to accomplish what I like to have constantly the sense of walking with the great Lord, who is my shepherd, see he will, he will not force his presence on you. Sometimes that happens, but you cannot count on it. And that's because he will not compete for your attention. He's not competing. He says, Seek Me, for you shall find me when you seek me with all your heart. Now see, that's something for you to do. Go back to last week's lesson. That doesn't mean you have to do it on your own.

**Dallas Willard 42:21**

You don't have to do it on your own. But on the other hand, it does mean it will not be done for you. And Frank Laubach took that seriously. And if you have time to read his little book called

**Dallas Willard**

Letters from a modern, modern mystic, he wrote letters back to his father, in I think New York, and his father published the letters in a little magazine, and then these are collected later. It's just a record of how his life was transformed. And here's what he says, After four weeks, quote, I feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan, which is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in little things, is what so astonishes me. For I never have felt it this way before. I need something and turn around to find it waiting for me. I must work to be sure. But there is God working along with me.

**Dallas Willard 43:29**

Does that sound good? See that is for us. But it requires that we transform our mind by keeping it constantly turned towards God. It requires the habit now to most of us have a habit of thinking of something else. And now the real question is wouldnt we be better off to have the habit of thinking, of God. I think you know the answer that question. And so the point then is to choose what we will think of and that is the first freedom that comes to us. Even a person chained to a wall in a prison can choose what they're going to think. And people who are in those conditions learned quickly. That is going to be the difference between going crazy or staying sane.

**Dallas Willard 44:39**

And they learn how to work with their minds to keep themselves alive. And who will keep themselves from being eaten up with anger and hatred and loneliness. They learn how to direct their mind. And that's just at a human level. I think God hears prisoners and I think he helps them, but when we turn ourselves loose to God, we say now, at my office in my home, wherever I am, whatever is happening, I'm going to have God before my mind, that's a choice. And if we want going back to those circles, if we want to see progress in all those circles, we have to focus on the mind.

**Dallas Willard 45:24**

Now, why is that? So? Well, you see, the will can only work in terms of the mind. You make your choices, in terms of your thoughts, and your feelings. So what you choose, will be determined by what you think. Now, interestingly enough, what we've seen here tonight is what you think, may be determined by what you choose. So you have to choose to think of God. And then thinking of God will enable you to choose differently with reference to everything else.

**Dallas Willard 46:06**

Do you see how that fits the description now change me on the inside. And spiritual growth is not designed to solve particular problems, but it does. See, that's the difference. For example, between AA program, see an AA program is very specific, and I'm not in any way criticizing it or knocking it. Because if you've got a problem with alcohol, you need help. And the Alcoholics Anonymous program, or similar programs are designed to modify your behavior. And they do it very effectively, because they understand the sources of behavior. They do it very effectively. But you can be sober and still be a miserable person. Right? See, what we want is indirection indirection.

**Dallas Willard 47:07**

We change the thinking, feeling social body, all those dimensions, and then the behavior takes care of itself. That's what Paul means when he says, Love fulfills the law. So if you're living out

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of love, you don't have to say, Well, shall I steal or not? That doesn't come up. doesn't come up. And now, I want to emphasize at this point, what I said last night, and what you want to do, or last week was, if we're going to deal with behavior, what we want to do is stay out of even the thought. And the way to stay out of the thought is through the renewal or transforming of the mind.

**Dallas Willard 47:55**

Now, let's be honest with it. Not everybody can. Some people are so in bondage in their thinking they can't break out. And typically the person who, as Paul says is dead in trespasses and sins is the person who can't even think the right thoughts. And that's why it's so important that as a church here, and wherever your church is, it's so important that you tell people about Jesus Christ, you tell people about God, you bring knowledge to them, you bring light, you bring information, and challenge them to act upon it. Not to accept it uncritically or thoughtlessly it won't do any good. You say to people, here's what I think here's what's happened. Now, why don't you try that? And let them put it into practice. And then things begin to change. You see.

**Dallas Willard 48:51**

So some people, even if they're told can't help, and that's why, as I say, Here, often ministry is required of others who have the character and power of Christ and can go to an individual and pray with them and lift a burden that they can't manage on their own. So some people aren't free is the second problem though. And the second problem I think, is going to be the one that would perhaps trouble most of us do we really want this and I pause just so that we can reflect on it.

**Dallas Willard 49:30**

Do we want a mind filled with God? You see that really challenges so much that is in us because if I fill my mind with God, there are other things I can't fill it with. And perhaps I don't want to let go of that just yet. Now, last night I last week I said at the opening of the session, that everything that is held out in the scriptures, and in the people of God as an ideal can be realized and can be realized by anyone who will seek it. So, all of the things that Jesus said they're possible. They're good for you. They are good, they can be done.

**Dallas Willard 50:34**

I'm reminded of a saying by a man named Surren who was asked why when so many people talk so much about spiritual growth, there's so little of it. And he said, because people pay too much attention to insignificant things. See, that's a way of saying they let their mind be distracted into other things. And that is the curse of human life. But what lies back of it is, well, I'm not sure I really want this. Did you get a little bored with the 23rd Psalm. You didn't? Okay, good. See, sometimes people say Why am I saying this? Well, that's normally when they have backed off of putting themselves into it. And they're just sort of rattling off the words, and their heart is not in it. And we're wedded to our ways of thinking. We're wedded to ideas about what we really want, and what we really need, what's important and what isn't important. And to say, I want to fill my mind with God, I want to retain God in my knowledge. See that? That's a statement from Paul in Romans one, where he's, he's trying to account for how people have turned away from God. And they refuse to retain God in their knowledge. Because, well, they wanted other things.

**Dallas Willard** 52:26

And you know, the universe is probably not big enough for two gods. So, I pushed God away. There are some things that come up here. The Psalm, one type of person. You remember, this person was a man who delighted in the law of God. And he just stayed with meditation on it day and night. He didn't stand in the counsel of the ungodly. He avoided the path of sinners. He did not sit in the seat of the scoffer. And I think that's a kind of progression. Because if you live in the counsel of the ungodly, it's going to move you into the path of sinners. And as you become sinful, you're going to scoff at righteousness. So I think it's kind of progression there. And you see a lot of that. But notice this man, his delight is in the law of the Lord. Well, that's the Psalm one person, the law of the Lord is a teaching about the nature of God what God has done, it isn't just the 10 commandments, and biblical terms, the law refers to the first five books of the Bible. And it's an account of how God came into human life and how he wants to be a part of that.

**Dallas Willard** 53:54

And then Psalm 23, is a reflection of what happens. When that takes place. You see that then the person who delights in But now notice, he delights in it. He delights in it. There's so much in the Psalms about the law as a wonderful treasure as something that is better than gold, sweeter than honey, all those wonderful phrases about the law of God, and you have to think now, well, if it's that delightful, then perhaps I could give up my other ways of thinking, and let my mind be full of that. See, something is going to be on your mind. And if it's the person of Jesus, or the law, or the good things that God has done for you, those are very important to keep before your mind.

**Dallas Willard** 54:56

See, then, your whole being will respond to that, but if you pull those out, something else will take their place. You know the big brouhaha over the 10 commandments now? Right? Well, you see, there's a there's an issue here of whether or not the 10 commandments represent something very important. Some people are sure they do. Others think no. I mean, they're not important. So that's what lies back of the so called separation of church and state. I mean, there are many important issues there. But on the side of those who wants to do things, like put the 10 commandments out of our consciousness, there really is the idea that this is these are not good things. These people don't delight in the law of the Lord, right, they don't delight. Now, what they don't often recognize is if you take them away, something else takes its place.

**Dallas Willard** 55:57

What is it? There's not going to be a vacuum. People are going to live by something. Charles Colson tells a story about being in high school to speak, where they had a problem with theft. And Colson said, Well, why don't you put up a sign that says, Thou shalt not steal. Good idea. Now, if you don't have there, what what Isn't it what is in its place? And this is a serious, serious problem for us today. We keep the person of Jesus, there the righteousness of the law, then other things are pushed out. Now, here's the problem. Do we really want those other things? What would I be like? If my mind was just full of the law of God and delight in the law of God? If it were just full of images of Christ? If I if I was constantly looking for him to be present in my life? What would my life be like? Well, I can tell you, it would be wonderful. But see, I have to

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deal with this problem of whether or not that is something I might like to take a little vacation from.

**Dallas Willard 57:10**

And there's something very deep here. It has to do with this idea that well, I will lead my life. And I think there is something God given and healthy about that. The problem is that I have been raised up to think that if I'm going to lead my life, I have to put God's life aside. And so this problem of, Am I cornered? Can I still sin if I want to? Now, let me surprise you. You can. You can, because that's what God is really after is allowing you to live with him in such a way that your wantier is changed. Right. And that is a process. That is a process that I have to work that through until I become so sure that I really don't want to sin, that it's no longer something that well, that'd be real nice. If I could just get away with it. No, no, it really isn't nice. It's really bad. It's really bad for you. And that's what we have to learn is go through that process of, of changing our wantier.

**Dallas Willard 58:47**

You know, I could stick that pin in my eye. I could do that. I'm not going to prove it. But I could. I could. Now why don't I do it? I really don't want to. I really don't want to. Now think of that same things. Imagine. I mean, you're living so fully in the presence of the Lord. I mean, you really have got him right here. He's with you. He's at your right hand. And when you are settled in the goodness of that, you feel the same way. You say I could sin? Sure. People get worried about God. They say, Could God sin? I get that question often on college campuses, could God sin. And I always I tell them what I believe, which is very surprising to them. And that is of course he could he can do anything. And then their next question is, why doesn't he? Because they're still thinking that it would be a rather good thing. And if you're God, you could get away with it.

**Dallas Willard 1:00:07**

And my answer is always the same, he's too smart. The same reason I don't stick the pin in my eye. see now, that's the kind of understanding that God wants to bring us to. And what I want to say to you this evening is when we're moving into that it's okay to feel a little uneasiness. Like this is going to wipe out your personality or something. That's it's okay to feel a little uneasy about that. We have to learn how that works. And we have to learn that it's really by entering into the goodness of God and His Kingdom. And knowing the action of God with you, as you go through day by day, it's only that way that you feel comfortable. You don't you break the habit. The God world is not where you've learned to be comfortable in your life. And that all changes in time as the habits of the mind change, which were a while we will have to pray now that God will help us think, like, we don't necessarily want to think. And we have to make efforts to change that.

**Dallas Willard 1:01:29**

See, we have to will, and to pray, you know, sometimes you're not willing, but you're willing to be willing, do you know that. And that's, that's really honest, good place to work with God, I'm not willing to let us say, return evil, good for evil. Maybe someone has really done something very mean to me. And I'm not really willing. But I can say to God, Lord, I'm willing to be made willing. I'm willing. And so we pray. And we begin to think differently. And for example, if we get our vision, right, and our thoughts right with God, we can say, quite honestly, look, I'm not

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bothered by what people can do to me, I will take reasonable steps about that. I might put the lock on my door. But I'm not going to trust the lock, I'm going to trust God.

**Dallas Willard 1:02:39**

And that's the normal pattern of life for the person whose mind has become absorbed. So for health, I'd be reasonable, do the things that are good for health, but I will trust God. If I have an affliction, I'm not just going to go to the doctor, I'm going to pray. And I'm going to come to the fellowship of the church and ask them to pray for me. And I'm going to hope that they have learned how to do that. So that they really know how to move with God, to make a difference in my world.

**Dallas Willard 1:03:17**

You see, that's what it means to say the Lord is my shepherd. It means I do the things that I know are right and good. But my trust is in the Lord. And in order to have that trust in the Lord, my thoughts have to be absorbed in him caught up within him. So that no matter what is happening, no matter what I'm doing, there's always as Frank Laubach found, there's always the Lord right there. Sometimes I go through the day, just thinking of the cross on this side and the open tomb on this side. That's an image. See you need to use redeemed images to help you move along in that way.

**Dallas Willard 1:04:02**

Now our feelings can stop us. And that is what is apt to happen. We have to talk about those next time. It's a huge issue in the spiritual life is feelings. And that's the other part of our mind. And if we're going to have renewal of the mind as Paul speaks of it, we have to deal with that. But in the meantime, let's practice directing our minds to God as best we can. I want to encourage you to continue to work with the 23rd Psalm. Now if you of course if you're want to go on to other Psalms or other, that's fine.

**Dallas Willard 1:04:41**

But as you work with that song this week, I'd like you to focus on this statement from Paul, in everything give thanks for this as the will of God concerning you. Now that's going to put tension on your mind So last Wednesday, after exhorting you on Tuesday, as I went from my office to my car on the USC campus, I realized I had lost my keys. And so I had to scramble around and how to cope with that. No, I because I had told you to do the 23rd Psalm and I do what I tell people. I was in very good company. And I enjoyed that and worked out and everything came out, right. And but you see, the difference was my experience as I went through that, and walking around in the dark, and the neighborhood there around USC. Is an opportunity, an opportunity, see it here. So now, be thankful. You can be thankful, what are you going to be thankful for? You're going to be thankful for God. You're going to be thankful for God, you're going to be thankful that wherever you are, you're in his care.

**Dallas Willard 1:06:21**

And so this week, would you please put together the 23rd Psalm. Romans five, eight, all these other verses that I've mentioned here, they're very good. God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us and so on. Work with your mind is what I'm saying. Work with your mind, and then use as a focus, giving thanks in now. It doesn't say give

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thanks for everything it says in everything, in everything. So when you got something you can't be thankful for in it. In that situation, you can still be thankful. And who knows, maybe you'll even wind up being thankful for that. What you couldn't be thankful for.

**Dallas Willard** 1:07:07

All right, well, then, keep this in mind then, that the path forward towards the healing of the heart means the renovation of the mind. And that means that the images and thoughts and the teachings of the Scripture about God and your world, now come in and occupy your mind. And that lays a foundation for your will to act differently. And then we will progress on to the rest of the story next week. So let's have a prayer. Father, we thank you for your wonderful, beautiful teachings. We thank you for the scriptures. We thank you for the presence of the word upon the earth we ask that you would give to each person here this evening. Just exactly what they individually can profit from, but lift our hearts in hope and joy and peace because we know the Good Shepherd, in whose name we pray. Amen.