

The Theology of Spiritual Formation in Christ – Part 2
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Dallas continues this part with a caution: Many of the words we need to teach and practice have to be carefully understood because of our over-familiarity with words. In this session we will explore the meaning of “spirit.” You cannot understand spiritual formation unless you first define what is being transformed.

1. What is spirit?

a. We are told in scripture that God is spirit.

- The 1st Commandment

The first three of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-7; Deuteronomy 5:6-11) are about how we _____ about God. They are absolutely relentless in insisting that God is not something seen.

God is a god who acts, and the action of God is in the _____ world. That is why God is constantly spoken of in the Bible as a Living God. This contrasts Jehovah, the Covenant-Making God, with gods who don't do anything (idols).

The danger is that we will take something in the domain of the visible and try to treat that as if it were God. If we do that, we will elevate the _____ over the _____ (2 Corinthians 4:7). Idolatry always attempts to use God for the idolator's purposes.

_____ is characteristic of the spiritual. You have to work this through to where you understand your spirit because your actions come from your _____ and that's what matters about you. That is why, even in criminal law, there is such a weight placed on intention. For example, we have hate crimes because the Law places weight on the intention behind your action. Hate means a settled intention to harm.

- The 2nd Commandment:

The second of the Ten Commandments is designed to guard us: *You will not make unto yourselves a graven image of anything that is above the earth or on the earth or below the earth.*

Why? Because a _____ cannot portray God, much less serve in the place of God, because God is spirit.

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- The 3rd Commandment

Taking the Lord's name in vain, the third commandment, is about using God's name _____ and without understanding. It is an emphasis on the nature of a spiritual God who is _____ everywhere and who is all good,

When Jesus teaches us "The Lord's Prayer," what is the first request?
Hallowed be thy name.... May your name be treasured and loved. If God's name is hallowed, then when you speak of God, His name will be used in a way that honors God's _____ and _____. Although unseen, our God is to be revered.

- John 4

Jesus encounters the woman at the well. She focuses on the visible realm, the differing places of worship for Jews and Samaritans. Jesus says in John 4:24: *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.* Dallas paraphrases v. 23: *"God is seeking everywhere for people to worship Him in spirit and in truth."*

b. Understanding spirit

- Spirit is independent reality. It is not under the _____ of anything. Your spirit is your _____ that God has created in you to allow you to have some degree of self-determination.
- The primary function of the will or spirit of Man is to _____. Under it, there are many other functions, but, when you take that away, then you have the loss of the power of determination for good in the human being; you lose that power.

Exodus 3: 13 *Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"*

Moses wanted to know who is sending him to Egypt, "Who are you?"

Exodus 3:14: *And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

Moses has encountered the invisible Living God and basically wants to know, "Who are you?"

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For the first time God begins to reveal His personality in human history for the larger scene, rather than for just an individual here and there (like Abraham, Jacob or Joseph). His response, "I AM THAT I AM" means, "My being that I am is based on my being I AM." *This is absolute self-determination.*

- Partial self-determination
 - In our spirit, self-determination is limited, but, when we uproot ourselves from God, it is almost non-existent because we _____ in _____ to the _____. The only way we can have glory in the vessel is through our _____ with God.
 - The heart of nearly everything is the _____ of God's presence and action with us. That's how we induct the glory of God into the vessel and possess the treasure.
 - God reaches out to us in the form of _____ to give life to our spirits.
 - Jesus reached out to the twelve and began the process of transforming the disciples, but one day he says He will leave them. John 13:36: "*Where I am going you cannot follow....*" They become fearful of losing His presence and influence, so He tries to comfort them, "*Don't let your hearts be troubled...*" (John 14:1).

It's obvious that they are focused on the vessel. Thomas blurts out, "*Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?*" Jesus replies with a monumental statement: "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). It is through Christ that God reaches out to us spiritually and calls us out of the grave of spiritual death and gives us _____ from above. Jesus did leave the disciples, but, after His resurrection, Jesus promised, "*I am with you always.*"
 - When we come alive to God in Christ, we can say, no matter where we are, "God is here!"
- Expectation
 - The key to the spiritual life is _____. We can now bring every part of our lives into submission to God. Submission to God is not about obeying a list of rules, but means *expectation of God*.

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- Submission to God means...

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake...

- Submission is expectation of God with us in everything.

2. Who am I?

a. A spiritual being

Who am I? That's the deep human question. Spirit is basically made up of thoughts, desires, feelings, valuations, and character. It is _____ personal power. This is the essence of who you are - a spiritual being.

All the current spiritualities offer various pathways, but promise you two things: identity and power.

Jesus offers _____ and _____ by inviting us to put our confidence in Him and in so doing step into the _____ of God by grace in an interactive relationship resulting in identity and power. Sadly, many are turning to other spiritualities because their experience with the Church and Christianity has not given them identity and power.

We must stay focused on the _____. We are coming to the _____ of the spiritual aspect of ourselves and a God who is spiritual. The spiritual world is the _____ that _____ the physical universe.

b. Your will is your spirit

You are fundamentally your will. Your _____ is your _____ in _____ and it will be either toward the vessel or toward the treasure – toward something _____ or toward something _____.

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3. How do I think about God?

The formation of our spirits depends upon how we think about God. God Himself is something we have to learn to think well about.

God is community

This is why we have a teaching about the Trinity. At the foundation of all physical and all reality is this great _____ in God, a community of _____. You cannot have the nature of love if you are by yourself. God in Himself is a sweet community.

John 17:5: *...and now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.* The members of the Trinity admire one another. They delight in one another. The Father is delighted to _____ the Son and is not protecting a superior position or attempting to control.

Many people tie themselves in knots over the Trinity, and some conclude the three members are the same.

- John 5:26 *For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have to have life in himself.* The Father and Son are two persons. Their equality is not based upon sameness, it is based upon decision. They are _____, but not the _____.
- The reason the members of the Trinity are equal is because they will not put up with subordination. Philippians 2:6-7: *Being in the form of God he did not think there was anything wrong with that, but he laid it aside* (DW paraphrase). Think of the degree of love and trust that had to be there for Jesus to lay this aside. That trust was based in love – love for the Father and the Father's love for him.

John 17:22 *The glory you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one.*

Through Christ we have been invited into the loving community of the Trinity. Heaven and earth, the visible realm will pass away or be transformed, but the Trinity – God – is always there.