

# The Way of Jesus

## Week 8 – Getting to Know Jesus All Over Again

### Introduction to The Divine Conspiracy

*"My goal in writing The Divine Conspiracy was to make Jesus accessible to the people of the twenty-first century. While there is a lot of teaching about Jesus among Christian people, it is often an attempt to make some theological or problem solving system work. The reality of Jesus as a dominating presence in one's life is not taught... If we do not approach Jesus as the master of human life, we cheat ourselves. The person we know as Jesus is not only running the universe, but also teaching us how to life in the Kingdom of God now." (SG Foreword)*

*"My hope is to gain a fresh hearing for Jesus, especially among those who believe they already understand him... Very few people today find Jesus interesting as a person or of vital relevance to the course of their actual lives. He is not regarded as a real life personality who deals with real life issues, but is thought to be concerned with some feathery realm other than the one we must deal with, and must deal with now. And frankly, he is not taken to be a person of much ability." (DC, XIII)*

### Key Verse:

*"God's care for humanity was so great that he sent his unique Son among us, so that those who count on him might not lead a futile and failing existence, but have the undying life of God Himself."*

John 3.16 (D Willard, trans)

### Reflection: Getting to Know Jesus All Over Again

*"Taking our culture's pulse reveals we are in a moral free fall. Even for Christians, spirituality relegates Jesus to the position of 'Savior', the great forgiver of sins, but sees little effect of him within the 'real issues of life'. Jesus is not a person you would think of having much ability outside the realms of religion." (SG p.13)*

- How does Dallas describe the values of our culture in pp 1-9? In what way is this *'flying upside down'*? Do you agree with that assessment?
- On pg. 8, Willard describes Tolstoy's "A Confession" as *'possibly the most important document of the last two centuries for understanding*

*our plight... only 2 things are real: particles and progress.* Explain what Tolstoy meant.

- *"In the gloom... we are invited to make a pilgrimage into the heart and life of God. "Whosoever will may come." The major problem with the invitation is over-familiarity. People think they have heard the invitation. They think they have accepted it – or rejected it. But they have not. The difficulty today is to hear it at all..."* (DC 11) In what ways are we over-familiar with the gospel?
- Why does Willard think this makes the gospel hard to hear? Why does Dallas say (p.12) *"Our usual gospels are, in their effects – dare we say it – nothing less than a standing invitation to omit God from the course of daily existence?"*

## **Living in a Divided Universe**

Let's think for a few minutes about this matter of *'omitting God from the course of daily existence.'* One of the effects of the enlightenment on moderns is the division of life into two realms. Life in the upper realm, we are told, is important and highly personal, but not subject to verification and not a matter of objective truth. Life in the lower realm is where we spend most of our hours, and must not be unreasonably influenced by sacred values that are entirely a matter of personal and private convictions.

See if you don't recognize this division:

**Sacred / Faith / Religion / Spirit  
Personal Truth / Church**

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**Secular / Facts / Science and History / Flesh  
Objective Reality / State**

Jesus, most moderns allow, was a master (among other masters) of life in the upper realm. In the lower realm, he is hardly thought to be competent, much less an expert. His Gospel brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life, but does not (so this worldview tells us) have much to do with the life I must live here and now; it does not (and cannot, modern multiculturalists tell us) infect and transform life below the line.

The dominance of this worldview in the Western World today – even among Christians - is why Dallas says, *"Our usual gospels are, in their effects – dare we say it – nothing less than a standing invitation to omit God from the course of daily existence?"* It is why we have such a hard time making our Sunday faith effective on weekdays. Our culture is always telling us this can't be (or shouldn't be) done.

This, of course, is not the Gospel of the Kingdom, not the vision of the Bible, that sees all of life lived for God's glory and from the resources of his Kingdom. Every action, every thought, every minute of every hour – all for him, and unto him who is creator and sustainer and Lord of all.

- *Read the section, "Entering the Ordinary" (pp 13-14) What surprises you or stands out to you in this section?*
- *Do the same with "God's Kingdom Opened to All" (pp 15-17)*

## **Bible Study:** Read Colossians 1.15-17; 2.1-3, 9-10

*"The Apostle Paul experienced Jesus beyond his ability to forgive sin. He saw Jesus as one positioned to know all the mysteries of the universe and the keys to all knowledge, both seen and unseen. In what areas of knowledge are you unaccustomed to viewing Jesus as an authoritative expert? Geology? Nuclear physics? Human relations?"*

*"This week reflect on the aspects of your life – family, job, friendships, leisure, ethics, morality – and ask yourself:*

- *"Do I regard Jesus as a sufficient guide and teacher in those areas?"*
- *"Do I believe Jesus really has 'all wisdom and knowledge' about everything, as the passage from Colossians declares?"*
- *"In what areas do I have confidence in Jesus to guide me in those areas of my life?"*
- *"In what areas do I not have confidence in Jesus about those areas of my life?"*  
(SG, p.14)

## **Spiritual Tool: Sleep**

Repeat last week's exercise on sleep. Most of us are so weary that we have forgotten what it is like you be well rested.

I want to ask you to do this once a week over the next three weeks. The biblical day begins with the evening. Go to sleep praying. Psalm 23 and 127, the Lord's Prayer, or perhaps the prayer we learned as children, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Sleeplessness is a spiritual issue, tied to issues of the heart, especially our sense of self importance. God is able to care perfectly well for his world while you get the sleep and rest he gives to his children.

**Homework:**

Reread The Divine Conspiracy, Chapter One

Reread Study Guide pp 1-20