

# Learning From Jesus

## Week 9

### Taking a Deeper Look at Ourselves

#### Video Vignette With Dallas Willard, John Ortberg and Larry Crabb: The Heart of the Matter

The heart is the center of the human self. We also call it the will and the spirit. We mentioned in the previous session that we run from the inside. That inside is the invisible part of us. The child learns very early that there is a part of her that Momma and Papa can't see, and that she has an inner life. And children begin to cultivate that at a very early state. A tiny child can't hide her soul because her body hasn't been trained to do that yet. As she grows older, she learns to lead an inward life. And that is the place where redemption really begins.

You can call it the heart. The heart refers to the place of this center. Will refers to the function of that center. They are the same thing, the heart and the will. And then Spirit refers to the basic nature [of the center]. Heart, will, and spirit in the human being really are the same thing. [It is the place where redemption begins.]

For the time being—until you have time to work on it further—just think of spirit as unbodily personal power, the capacity to make things happen. We all came here today because of that; we made a choice. The laws of physics didn't bring us here—though they made some contribution. It is the power of the spiritual side that brings us here. This is what has to be redeemed. [The will, heart, spirit.]

We don't understand this very well because we focus on science, on business, on the world; and the inner self is not cultivated. But Jesus tells us this is precisely what we need to cultivate. It is by starting with the heart we can transform the whole self. It's by starting with the heart that we begin to transform the whole self.

Now you have a diagram that gives a picture of the self that starts at the center with the heart/spirit/will. [Insert here]

Heart/Will/Spirit (The Center)

**Mind.** The mind really includes both feelings and thoughts—no thoughts without feelings, and vice versa.

**Body.** God's power pack given to you to lead your life with. That's where you begin to master your world and grow from it. And we live primarily from our body and feelings. Those are the immediate things that guide our life.

You don't ask someone in the morning, "What are you thinking today?" What do you say? "How are you feeling?" Usually that refers to how we feel in our bodies and our public space. Now beyond that is the social world.

**Social World** Also has great power over us. Humans are made as social beings, and we live in a context of others. And then, taking in the whole thing is the soul.

**Soul** I put the soul on the outside. This goes even beyond the social realm. The important thing about the soul is that it is that part that integrates all the other parts and integrates them into one life. If the soul is broken, we are in real trouble...and the soul is broken. That's the human condition.

And that's why life as a whole rarely makes any comprehensive sense. The more the soul is broken, the less sense it [life] makes. The human being is a spiritual being through and through. Even the human body is fundamentally spiritual. You see, this is Jesus and his incarnation.

Perhaps the Transfiguration is where we get the clearest view of what matter is all about. The body is meant to be the foundation of the spiritual life in this world. But it must be permeated (integrated) into the spiritual world through redemption that comes from Christ.

If you notice on your diagram, on one side I have **the Word of God coming into the heart.** When that comes in and the Spirit moves from God, then the human spirit comes to life. And if you notice, on the other side of the diagram I have **an arrow leading back to God.** That's where Jesus came to bring us—back to God. Now then, we have a principle that allows us to become whole persons.

And the great commandment, as you remember in the Old Testament, or Jesus quoted it also, "You should 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." That's **whole life.** That's the kind of life that Jesus came to give us, to bring us back to the point to where we are **fulfilled in all aspects of our nature by living in the kingdom of God, through faith in Jesus Christ that gradually takes over every aspect of our life.** Our thoughts are different. They are the thoughts Jesus would have. Our feelings are different—faith, hope, love, joy, peace are the natural conditions of self. They permeate our bodies, no longer just in our heads. Our bodies are joyful, loving, peaceful.

[As this happens, all of who we are, all the component parts, are transformed.] As we progress, the soul is brought more and more into line with God's kingdom. Now that comes to us through Christ.

**Jesus interprets the kingdom of God and makes it available to us.** He does this through bringing us to faith in him that gradually, progressively transforms the whole self so that we actually do love God with our whole heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves.

If you are worried about **perfection**, it probably will be a little while before you have to be seriously concerned about it. The path of discipleship leads in that direction, and he that has begun a good work in you will complete it, and it will be to his glory and our everlasting benefit.

### ***Video Vignette (Conversation)***

JO: Let's talk about **trying** to do as we should for a moment, because when I think about relationships—for example, I ought to love my wife—I think what happens so often in church is we hear messages about that. Jesus was loving, patient. People hearing this think, **I've got to try harder** to be more loving, I've got to try harder to be more patient. And trying harder to be patient with a three-year-old [doesn't work]. And yet, on the other hand, people aren't supposed to be passive: we have a role to play. So **what is the role of the will and trying?** What does it do, and what does it not do?

LC: I think one of the most crucial things that's neglected in a lot of our churches is a richer understanding of what **the New Covenant** really is. You say to the average Christian—who has even heard the term—what does the word New Covenant mean, and he'll think in terms of Sinai versus Pentecost or Calvary, getting to heaven by good works [which never worked], and now it's getting to heaven by faith in Jesus; and that's true, but it's the door into something. I think the question you're asking about the will centers on the fact that under the terms of the New Covenant notion of a new heart, **God has changed the location of the law.** He's not weakened the law; he's changed the location. No longer is it out there being declared on tablets of stone—"I ought go home and love my wife; I ought to do better; I ought to do what is right; so I will try hard to keep the law." Israel tried that, and it didn't work out so well. So the New Covenant takes the law, which was outside, and literally **puts it on my heart.** I think what this means is, what has been a requirement remains a requirement, but **now it's a desire.** And one of the major functions of the spiritual disciplines puts me in touch with the fact that I don't have to love my wife; I want to love my wife. Robertson McQuilkins' wife struggled with Alzheimer's for a number of years. He's a wonderful Christian man. He was asked once, "You cared for you wife for ten years, did you have to do that [care for her]?" " Did I have to do that? That never occurred to me. I've got to do it." I had chills thinking about that.

DW: You see, that reflected who he was.

LC: Yes! There was a readiness to give in a benevolent way because [there was something new written on his heart.] I think that when we stir this up in each other [the Hebrews 10 idea, by being for each other] then maybe the response of the will will go from being more than a white-knuckled requirement to **an incredible privilege that yields to desire.**

DW: That's the word. And, John, I think about your point about how people read 1 Corinthians 13, about oh, no, I've got to do all those things. Just crushing.

JO: I've got to do all those things—10 more requirements.

DW: I think this is where we really have to know where the will comes in. I can never take this one directly. We've got to ask ourselves questions. **What do I need to choose that would bring me into that place?** The first question is, **do I really want to be like the person described in 1 Corinthians 13.** And for most people that brings us back to thoughts and feelings. They honestly don't. They think this would be a fate worse than death. We've got to get past that, and this is where our vision of the kingdom can come in: when we do say yes, I would really like to be like that; I'd like to be a 1 Corinthians 13 type of Christian.

JO: Let me just pause for a second right there. If someone says, "Right now I don't want to do that," then he needs to be alone and to study, until it become clear to him that that would be the best way for him to be.

LC: And the response from the other person to whom he says that is important. If someone hears that and says, "You must," that might harden him. But if the person says, "By the power of God, that's going to change. There is something in the core of your being you're not in touch with, and when it's touched, you're going to want that."

DW: Or say to them, "Consider the alternatives. Do you really want to be that other way?"

JO: Where's it heading?

DW: And then I think people are more likely to say, "Well, this is the point about wanting to want what I don't want now." **Say honestly to God, "I don't want that, but I want to want that."** Honesty. And I think that this is where fellowship, prayer, and teaching, come in. so that we can honestly say, "You know, Jesus has that sometimes puzzling statement. Jesus says, anyone who wills to do his will will know that the teaching is right." There's that business of **willing to will.** This is very important. We are multi-layered people, many divided people. It's possible that we don't want it, but we want to want it.

That's where we need help. That's where the person turning his nose up won't help. If you can be there [with the one who doesn't yet want to do Jesus' will] and say, "What are the alternatives to this? Do you want to be that type of person who does not take care of his wife with Alzheimer's?"

LC: And it is the spirit in which you say it that makes all the difference. There should not be a mood of, "I'm above you and judging you," but [instead] "I'm journeying with you and I long for you to know some of the joy that I'm beginning to experience."

DW: That's really true.

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## **Spiritual Tool for the Week**

The following exercise is to be done this week. Record your experiences in the spaces below.

### **Spiritual Tool: Practicing God's Presence**

Read again the appendix on Frank Lauback. Set aside a time and a place and a method to 'practice God's presence. Do it several times over these next two weeks. Be attentive to your experience and write about it below.

#### **Reflections on your experience**

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**Readings for Feb 11<sup>th</sup>**

Complete The Divine Conspiracy, Chapter Three  
Read Study Guide pp 29-39