



KNOWLEDGE FOR LIFE

Learning to Trust and Grow in Spiritual Knowledge

DALLAS WILLARD, April 17, 2010

Welcome to the “Knowledge for Life” conference with Dallas Willard at the Vineyard Anaheim church! Enclosed is a biography about Dallas, our complete schedule, along with helpful handouts for all five sessions. We have also included a list of recommend resources that will further strengthen your learning and growth as a result of this conference. Many of these resources are immediately available at the church’s Book Cellar.

BIOGRAPHY

For a few decades now, Dallas Willard has pastorally guided Christians in fruitful knowledge and practice of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Through his award-winning books, public speaking and lecturing in churches and on university campuses, Dallas’ seasoned leadership has directed people into a vision for their life in the Kingdom of God, and he has helped to pioneer a renaissance in Christian spiritual formation thought and practice among Protestants in North America. Some of his noteworthy books in this area include *Knowing Christ Today* (2009), *The Great Omission* (2006), *Renovation of the Heart* (2002), *The Divine Conspiracy* (1998), *Hearing God* (1999) and *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (1988).

Since 1965, Dallas has been a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California, where he is particularly known for his work on ethics, moral knowledge, and the history of the professions.

Over the years, Dallas has been frequently interviewed in *Christianity Today*, *Relevant Magazine*, a regular guest on KKLA’s Frank Pastore Show, and more recently at the website of the Evangelical Philosophical Society (www.epsociety.org). Biola University’s *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* will feature a forthcoming discussion about Dallas’ spiritual formation ideas in their October 2010 issue (<http://wisdom.biola.edu/sfj/>)

You can read more about Dallas Willard, including access to his free articles, by visiting www.dwillard.org.



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SCHEDULE

9:00-9:30: Worship

9:30-9:40: Welcome

9:40-10:40 – Session #1: Knowledge and Biblical Faith and Spirituality

10:40-10:55: BREAK

10:55-11:55 – Session #2: How Christian Spiritual Knowledge is Assaulted by Secularism

11:55-12:20: Q&A

12:20-1:30: LUNCH

1:30-1:45: Worship

1:45-2:25 – Session #3: Knowledge and Desire

2:25-2:35: BREAK

2:35-3:15 – Session #4: Knowledge and Public Presence as Witness

3:15-3:25: BREAK

3:25-4:05 – Session #5: Communities of Love and Knowledge

4:05-4:35: Q&A

4:35-5:00: PRAYER

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resources in the Vineyard Anaheim Book Cellar!*

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SESSION #1: KNOWLEDGE and BIBLICAL FAITH and SPIRITUALITY

- (1). The centrality of knowledge to Christian life and spirituality.
John 17:3, 2nd Peter 1:3, Phil. 3:8-10, Luke 1:4, Rom. 12:2, 2nd Peter 3:18, etc.
Do “inductive” bible study on “know” and “knowledge.” Just Ezekiel!
The current historical drive against this view of Christianity.
A battle for authority over public life.

- (2). Faith/belief is not contrasted, biblically, with knowledge but with sight.
2 Cor. 5:7, Heb. 11:1-3
The two “landscapes” in which we live. 2 Cor. 4:16-18
Humans are by nature a part of the invisible landscape. 1 Cor. 2:11
You know your thoughts, feelings, choices that make up your life, but they are **not present to you through your senses. They are not visible.**

- (3). Biblical faith or belief extends beyond knowledge, but is enviored in knowledge.
Abraham, David, Paul.

- (4). What is knowledge: You know something if you are able to represent it or treat it as it is, on an appropriate basis of thought and experience, including reliable communications (authority). Knowledge is a very common, day-to-day presence.

Belief: If you believe something, you are set to act, in appropriate circumstances, as if it is real (true). You cannot choose to believe. Try it.

Commitment: You have chosen to act as if something is real, even if you don't believe it. Of course you may also believe it, or even know it. Commitment should be based on faith that is based on knowledge.

Profession: You say you believe (perhaps are committed to) something, whether or not you are. Of course you can know/believe/be committed to what you know.



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(5). Note how very different these are. Knowledge alone conveys to its holder the right and responsibility to act, direct action, formulate and supervise policy, and to teach. It has authority.

(6). Spiritual knowledge is knowledge of the non-physical world—not a wild guess or “leap.”

Spirit is non-bodily, personal power. God and His Kingdom. You. Satan.

(7). Knowing that God exists, and what he is like: This is the foundation of all spiritual knowledge. You can know that God exists. From nature. Also from His actions.

Rom. 1:19-21, Psalm 19:1-4, Rom. 10:18-20.

But you don't have to know. You can evade such knowledge—for now.

(8). The basic line of reasoning:

All that is physical, even the current state of the entire physical realm, comes from something prior to it. (Heb. 1:8-12)

The physical sequence up to now must have a first member, because it has a last one, and thus is completed.

So: What produced that first member cannot be physical, but must be non-physical—in that minimal sense it is “spiritual.”

It must be vast—to produce this physical realm.

It must not be only causal, but must in some measure act by decision.

---To allow the sequence of causes to be completed, as it is.
And therefore it acts from deliberation, involving thought.
And therefore must be “personal”—and in that sense spiritual—in nature.



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(9). To “know” the conclusion you have to carefully follow the steps. It will strain your mental habits at first, and requires sustained effort. Some will not be able to carry it through, but will have to take their knowledge from others who have and share it as such.

(10). Christian teaching has historically been presented as knowledge of reality. E.g. John 8:31-32. Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, Wesley.

(11) The knowledge and the faith/belief that the Christ-follower has reaches far beyond this foundational knowledge of Romans 1:19-21. Specifically, through knowledge from the experience of God and is kingdom.

WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, HUMAN LIFE GOES UNHINGED,
AS PAUL SPELLS OUT IN ROMANS CHAPTER ONE.

BY CONTRAST, WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE ALL THE OTHER ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL
LIFE , AND OF HUMAN LIFE, OPEN UP TO HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND, LARGELY, TO
KNOWLEDGE: SUCH ASPECTS AS FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, NEW LIFE FROM
“ABOVE,” DIRECTION BY THE SPIRIT, PRAYER, RESURRECTION,
REVELATION, MIRACLES.

*EVERY PERSON WHO PROFESSES TO FOLLOW CHRIST SHOULD KNOW THAT GOD
EXISTS, AND CAN KNOW IT. SADLY, WHAT WE SEE IN CHRISTIAN LIFE BROADLY
RESULTS FROM NOT KNOWING THAT GOD EXISTS. THIS DESTABILIZES LIFE AND
DISCIPLESHIP. TODAY, MANY WHO “BELIEVE” IN CHRIST DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD!
THEIR FAITH HAS LITTLE OR NO POWER OVER LIFE, AND OFTEN AMOUNTS TO
MERE “PROFESSION.”*



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SESSION #2: HOW AND WHY CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE IS ASSAULTED BY SECULARISM—PARTICULARLY BY ITS “ SYSTEM” OF EDUCATION

(1). This assault is deeply felt by most Disciples of Christ who are active in our society. It takes the primary form of **rejecting Christian teachings from the domain** of knowledge, and **redefining knowledge** so that it must be “secular.” Thus the Christian “has no right” to present his or her Christian views as matters of knowledge—if in any way at all, and is under suspicion of their intellectual abilities—Not always, but more often than not.

(2). This is because knowledge of God undermines all human pretensions of independence and competence. It makes the believer “not of this world,” and so “the world hates them.” (John 17:14) It is the end of human kingdom, whether individual or corporate. Those who know God **will not bow**. (Dan. 3:16-18 is knowledge behavior, faith based on knowledge.)—The secret of anti-Semitism.

(3). Secularism worships the visible world—takes it as ultimate. The second of the ten commandments. (Ex. 20:4-6) Covetousness is idolatry. (Col. 3:5—Who is the idol?)

Make no mistake: Secularism is religious in its intent to deal with ultimate issues.

(4). The specific questions where the answers of Christ oppose those of secularism.

WHAT IS REALITY? WHAT IS REAL?

Secularism: The “visible” world with its constituents.
Christ: God and His kingdom.

WHO IS WELL OFF? BLESSED?

Secularism: Whoever gets their way? Fulfills their desires.
Christ: Whoever is alive in the kingdom of God. Thus, God gets His way.



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WHO IS A REALLY GOOD PERSON?

Secularism: Those of whom “all men think well.” Social approval.

(Luke 6:26) Success!

Christ: Those whose lives are permeated with *agape* for God and Neighbor. The “whole law.” (Mark 12:29-31; Rom. 13:8-10)

HOW DOES ONE BECOME A REALLY GOOD PERSON?

Secularism: genes, “education,” therapy, “luck.”

Christ: “Follow me.” By being a student of Jesus in all aspects of life.

(5). *One further question of great importance for our day:*

HOW DOES ONE KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTIONS?

Secularism: Get into the best schools. USC no doubt!

Christ: Be “taught of God.” (1 Thess. 4:9, Isa. 54:13, Jer. 31:34)

In all the ways he teaches us. And then do your best.

(6). It is with respect to this last question that the people of Christ (and indeed the entire world) are today in a deadly conflict with “secularism,” the contemporary form of idolatry that has been growing for four centuries.

(7). The myths of “intolerance” and “arrogance”—that knowledge makes you intolerant and that virtue can be based upon skepticism. The doubter is humble.

Tolerance and humility are Christian virtues, and only find a real-life basis in discipleship to Christ. “Education” as now understood is no help to human goodness! Doesn’t even try.



VINEYARDANAHEIM

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(8). **Certainty** is not knowledge, and has no direct relationship with knowledge. You can be “certain” and wrong, and you can know without being “certain.”

“Certainty” is a feeling. It is, by itself, blind, and has a tendency (not necessary) to make people arrogant and intolerant.

Doubt also is a feeling, and has no implications for knowledge one way or another. It is not a sign of intelligence, but possibly of lack thereof. Yet today our education system elevates doubt to a virtue.



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SESSION #3: KNOWLEDGE AND DESIRE: THE ONLY SAFE PATH FOR DESIRE IS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS GOOD

(1). What is desire: impulse toward something—a thing or a condition—possibly without regard to anything else. “I want that!” Not in itself a bad thing, but good.

(2). Desire is essentially conflictual: with other desires and with the desires of others.

Because of its narrow focus. Pleasure comes from gratification of desire.

The source of quarrels and conflicts. (James 4:1-3)

The mind of the flesh and the deeds of the flesh. (Rom. 8:5-7; Gal. 5:19)

The three “things that are in the world.” (1 John 2:16 <Gen. 3:6, Matt. 4:1)

(3). Desire is supposed to be subject to what is good (not just desired), by means of the will acting from knowledge of what is good. That was God’s plan for humans, and the only way in which human life can function with wholeness and power.

Paul’s helplessness in his unredeemed condition. (Rom. 7:15-16)

This—or something worse <unhesitating commitment to evil>—is the “normal” human life.

(4). The will can become enslaved to desire—the person “having his way”—but its role in life is to deliberate: **consider alternatives** to what, simply, one wants. When healthy it asks: What is best? It then thinks the thought that what I want may not be what is best—for me or in general. If repentant, God can be heard on the best.



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(5). To answer that question requires knowledge, or belief or commitment based upon knowledge. Only knowledge can stabilize the will in goodness and form a settled character where one does not have to “think about” whether they will follow their mere desires—knowledge, in Frank Schaeffer’s words, that “He is There and He Is not Silent.”

(6). Knowledge of God—no “leap of faith”—enables one to be content in every situation, for we have learned how to do it (Phil. 4:11-13), and how to “do all things without grumbling or disputing.” (Phil. 2:14) “God with me” is the answer to every situation. “I shall fear no evil.” (Ps. 23:4, Heb. 13:5-6) I have learned how: “I know how to be abased and how to abound.”

(7). Mere “information” has little power in itself. It is of use only insofar as it might lead us into the interactive relationship with reality—with God—that is knowledge of him. (John 17:3) And it is contact with reality that evokes godly passion for what is good and right. When this knowledge and its passion have taken over our body and its social setting, then we are inhabited by “the mind” and character of Christ.

He indwells us and we abide in the Vine. (John 15:1-8) We routinely and easily do the things he did and said. What else? The life vision in Col. 3:1-17



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SESSION #4: KNOWLEDGE AND PUBLIC PRESENCE AS WITNESS

(1). Paul's word to Timothy: "The servant of the Lord must not strive." (1 Tim. 2:24-26)

To bring others to the knowledge of the truth.

What witness is. It is essence of knowledge. Like redness is essence of red.

(2). To witness is not to try to get someone to do something, but to convey knowledge.

Not to be confused with soul-winning as not understood,
But, curiously, right in line with Prov. 11:30 and the power of "wisdom" in the book of *Proverbs*.

(3). St. Augustine: If one loves God "it follows that he must endeavour to get his neighbour to love God, since he is ordered to love his neighbour as himself." (*City of God*, Book xix, Chap. 14) And how is he to do that? By sharing knowledge of God, whom to know is to love.

(4). We must be sure to present knowledge of God, Christ, and His kingdom *as* knowledge of reality. This will be very different from trying to get someone to accept something. It is a different kind of project. You will not, normally, do this by giving a prepared speech, but out of the reality of life. It will be a matter of who you are, not of what you say.

Most people in our day think they have heard "the message," and either accepted or rejected it already. Prayerful, patient listening will usually be our first step in individual or public "witnessing" or bringing knowledge. They really haven't heard, and especially not heard the presentation as testable knowledge.



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(5). Our first witness—causing to know—is our demeanor: not even our actions, but how we do them. Do we have kingdom peace, joy and hope? Do we genuinely love others and put ourselves last? Are we devoted to what is good out of reliance upon God? Is what we call the gift of the Spirit just who we are—not perfectly, no doubt, but still overriding? As servants of the Lord we do not “strive,” etc. This is above all our knowledge of God, which we are to impart.

(6). God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world” (John 3:17), nor did he send us for that purpose. Note how Jesus “kept company,” and how it got him into trouble with the nice folks.

(7). We bring the knowledge of God to bear in every aspect of our life. The kingdom and The King are there, wherever “there” may be.

The “public square” is no longer “naked” because we are there with Christ.
Concede no place to evil.

We put this to the reality test and confidence grows along with peace and love. We enjoy others as we “abide in the vine.”

(8). We prayerfully and patiently watch for occasions to express our knowledge of the answers to The Five Great Questions in response to the human needs that surround us. As we do so, doing our very best, our confidence is not in our best, but in the one who is with us always. It is not our battle, but His. The need is vast.



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SESSION #5: COMMUNITIES OF LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE

(1). “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 3:18)

How do you grow in grace and knowledge?

Grace is God acting in your life and knowledge is interactive relationship.

They obviously go together.

(2). We are directed, commanded, to grow in these? Something for us to do.

The key is John 8:31-32.

Putting Jesus words into practice. Venturing on the kingdom.

Encountering the reality throughout life.

Showing the substance and power.

(3). This is something we can only do IN COMMUNITY, cultivating and manifesting both the fruit and the gifts of the spirit.

The effective challenge and opportunity of spiritual growth in kingdom reality is: **Will I love you now in the grace and power of God.**

No little planned or unplanned “vacations” from the presence of God.

“Forsake not the assembling....” “...stimulate one another to love and good deeds.” (Heb. 10:24-25)

This is not necessarily what is called “church,” or even “worship.”

(4). Imagine, then, a group of disciples who genuinely love one another—intensely seek out what is best of one another. That is what love means. And they do so because they know from both teaching and experience that the last word in the universe is love—will-to-good—under unlimited power. They learn this from Christ and know it. It is progressively informing all they are and do as they share life with one another.



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(5). The life of the group, under the example and guidance of the leaders, is entirely organized around becoming the kind of person who routinely and easily does the kinds of things Jesus said. They are disciples who make disciples and teach them in such a way that they are becoming that kind of person. Imagine what this group would be like and look like.

Do you imagine they could be “hid”? (Matt. 5:14) Would they have a problem of “getting the word out”? Since they are effectively living against “the things that are in the world”?

(6). Acting in love brings the kingdom into manifestation and progressively confirms the basic beliefs of the Christ-follower, advancing their knowledge and enabling them to love more. Thus they grow “in the grace and knowledge.”

(7). Such groups stand out in their environment as those who have the best knowledge of the things most important in human life. The five great questions. Their leaders and each individual do not try to get people to do things, but simply speaking “the words of this life” (Acts 5:20) from “the Prince of life.” (Acts 3:15)

WHAT WOULD BE THE COMPETITION TO THIS?



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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Purchase at a Discount in the Vineyard Book Cellar!

Dallas Willard (2009) *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust and Grow in Spiritual Knowledge.*

_____ (2002) *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ.*

_____ (2006) *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship.*

_____ (1998) *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God.*

_____ (1999) *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*

_____ (1988) *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives.*

* Purchase the "Knowledge of Christ in Today's World" (2003) 8-part CD series along with any of these resources. An excellent way to dig deeper into the topics of the "Knowledge for Life" conference!

Supplemental Resources

J.P. Moreland (2009) *The God Question: An Invitation to a Life of Meaning.*

_____ (2007) *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit's Power.*

J.P. Moreland and Klaus Issler (2008) *In Search of a Confident Faith: Overcoming Barriers to Trusting in God.*

Timothy Keller (2008) *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism.*

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