

Week 42

10/11/11

**Betty:** Thank you so much for joining us on *LIFE Today*. I'm Betty and this is James.

**James:** And Dallas Willard is our guest. He wrote the book *The Divine Conspiracy*. He wrote what many have said is the greatest book on hearing God, and he has written one on the spirit of the disciplines, many other great, great books. He is a professor at the University of Southern California. And truly, in my opinion, when I talked to him, and visited with him and his wife Jane, it really is like visiting with Jesus. I can only wish that when people talk to me they might get some of that sense in the presence of the Lord and a lot of wisdom.

Dallas wrote a book that is as important as any -- I've read lots of them in the last years. I am a reader. I've been reading since I was in elementary school. I read all the children's biographies of famous people. I don't know if they're available now for children; they were when I was a kid. The academic community has gravitated away from God to the point that they pooh-pooh everybody that even refers to God or dim witted enough to claim they believe in God.

Dallas sits in that academic community just full of God, and I know they respect him. But he has been in southern California at the university there for a long time -- for many, many years. But he wrote *The Divine Conspiracy*. This is on the kingdom of heaven is here at hand now. It is not a place you're waiting to go. It is living in his presence.

See, listen, the thing that has happened -- that Betty and I stepped into that as teenagers and any time there was a move on this planet within the realm of religion or anything else or the realm of our own trappings of success that moved us away from the awareness of this abiding presence and living in the presence there was an emptiness. And if you've ever been birthed into, if you've ever experienced as Dallas talks about grace, not just talking about "We're not perfect, we're forgiven" like the little bumper stickers, but it is like we professed a faith that made no difference. We've talked about a transformation that has no effect. We're just going to wait to get out of here and we can hardly wait for somebody to come get us out of here... an escapist mentality. It is so foreign to what the Word of God taught and what Jesus left us with when he started with a transformed life in the reality of kingdom power and your attitudes change and everything about you changes so that the life you now live is not

more rule keeping but it is a changed life that invites you into this new realm, and Dallas makes it so clear.

Welcome Dallas Willard to *LIFE Today* again. Dallas, we're glad to have you.

**Dallas:** Thank you.

**James:** I think you can tell, Betty and I are both excited about what you wrote, and everything you've written I've just enjoyed it. *The Divine Conspiracy* is not something you just jump in and read through in a few days like so much of the light reading. This is where you focus and all of a sudden your mind is being renewed, and you're being challenged, and a lot of these old really idols and traditions of men, often taught as commandments of God are suddenly ripped down and smashed.

Now if you start getting critical of everyone who has erroneously gone there, then you've not moved into the righteousness that Jesus talked about and Dallas makes so clear, you've moved over into this religious self-righteousness that makes you smug and critical and unkind. We're not talking about exposing error or evil, but we're talking about becoming mean spirited and thinking, look how I keep the rules. This is a smugness that is a kind of righteousness that Jesus actually exposed for what it really was, death.

Dallas, I want you to just kind of take off with our viewers and somehow help us as people are looking in, understand some of the important aspects of the faith and the grace that isn't just grace to get out of a pit but it is a grace to live and a grace to be transformed by the power of God.

**Dallas:** Well, that's what the Kingdom of God basically is, is grace to act with us and take us out of the burden of that kind of rule keeping, critical attitude, which was foreign to Jesus. Jesus was so often criticized because he kept company with people that you were not supposed to keep company with. But the secret was that Jesus knew that the Father was with him and he was perfectly comfortable anywhere, and therefore he was able to bring the kingdom of the heavens in his person into the lives of others so they could experience just by his presence in their lives and that experience is grace.

Grace is God acting in our lives to enable us to do what we can't do on our own. Of course, it is unmerited favor but what form does it take? The form it takes is presence. And the sign of that is always -- the outcome of his presence leads us far beyond anything we could accomplish on our own. That isn't just in the domain of miracles

but also in the domain of character. So when we look at the Sermon on the Mount many people make the mistake of looking at that as a set of rules to keep, it's not. It's the expression of life in the Kingdom of God and that is beyond the righteousness of the scribe and the Pharisee because it's a matter of the heart.

Now of course, out of that comes a purity of life that makes old rule keeping look like nothing you could imagine. If you want to keep the Ten Commandments or the teachings of Jesus, you don't try to keep them, you try to become the kind of person who will keep them, out of whom they pour naturally. That's what Jesus brings into the lives of people. And he set people free by introducing them into the presence of the Kingdom of God. Of course, he was the door and he is the way, but the kingdom, you don't want Jesus without the kingdom and you certainly don't want the kingdom without Jesus. They come together. That's what you see in the book of Acts. So that by the time you get down to the end you have Paul preaching Jesus and the Kingdom of God in Rome. They go together. Jesus puts a face on the Kingdom of God. And the Kingdom of God makes sure you don't have a victim Jesus, you have a triumphant Jesus who takes the cross in stride, moves beyond that to resurrection and then says to the world, why don't you join me there in resurrection life?

**James:** And he wouldn't have invited us into impossible.

**Dallas:** Oh, no! It isn't impossible -- it is the other side that's impossible. What's impossible is life without Jesus. And everyone who tries it enough will find that out. So many people have this idea that the way of Jesus is difficult. It is only difficult if you are still unchanged, and then it is impossible. But when you let him come into you, change your mind and your feelings, and even change the way your body is ready to act without thinking, it is easy.

If you think it is hard to love your enemies, just look at the lives of those who hate them. That's what's hard. And life without Jesus is actually impossible because we're made to live under the Kingdom of God from Genesis one to the end of the book, it is all about reigning in Christ Jesus. Once that idea of the kingdom emerges in the Bible and you move onto its development and then Jesus stands there as the fulfillment of it, then you begin to see hope. But until that, there is no hope.

**Betty:** Don't you think it's realizing that -- I know it was for me personally -- is I don't want to be out of his presence. I want to stay in his presence so that his life overflows through mine.

**Dallas:** Betty, you don't feel like you're missing anything. Right?

**Betty:** No, I don't.

**Dallas:** That's right, so among other things you start -- you no longer try to get away with anything and that characterizes so much of human life. It is a lovely phrase, "get away with." You don't do that anymore because you know God's way is best and he's with you and so you don't need to hide anything because his presence is loving and restorative. It certainly is corrective also and it has to be that.

But the presence of Christ in our lives is what transforms us, gradually through a progression of friendship and fellowship as his disciples. And that transformation of the mind, the feelings, the body, the soul, our social relationships, see that's what he packs into the great commandment, love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself. Well, that's Dr. Jesus talking. And he's just given you an analysis of all there is to you out of which love or the lack of it could come. And then he comes to restore that and make us to the point to where when we think about something that's wrong, we look at it and we would say, "Who would be interested in that?"

**James:** You really won't love your neighbor properly as you love yourself if you don't love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Because if we don't get God in first place self will tend to be there and then you've got the inappropriate idolatry and worship, and if you inappropriately think of yourself you'll never appropriately think of others. So you really have to get first things first. And loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is not mindless following God. It is with all of your mind -- he is brilliant -- he is brilliant!

And that is one of the comments someone made that you reveal Jesus as brilliant, he is not just nice, he is brilliant. He is radiantly brilliant. So when you get captivated by Jesus and you love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength you will properly love your neighbor and even enables you to love your enemy.

Dallas, you taught me so much from the Sermon on the Mount about turning the other cheek. This was to me -- this was a profound insight because if you're loving your enemy and you turn your cheek -- here's what you've got to understand. If somebody is abrasive and harsh, and by the way, the abrasiveness can be a fine honing mechanism in our own life to strengthen our own character and especially if they come at you straight on, which normally, if you're coming at each other like this, you dull the blade, you've got to come like this. Well, if somebody comes at you and you turn the other cheek you deflect it and it glances off, and it becomes a honing mechanism.

So I've learned even with the harshest critics, and I can't imagine anybody criticizing me, I'm so sweet and loving. I'm so much like Betty and like Jesus! But when they come, if I will handle it appropriately I get stronger for it and it really catches them totally off guard.

By the way, you can only help someone improve if they are convinced you have their best interests in mind. And somehow the people in the religious community have not communicated to a world that we really give a rip about what's good for them. We look like we're pretty self absorbed and we don't have the love that God talks about.

Dallas, you cannot believe what you've shared in this book has done for me. Has it ever done anything for you? I need to know! Has it helped you?

**Dallas:** Well, actually, in the process of learning this, I found a very different way of living. And one of the points that is most important here, James is what is going to happen to me if I turn the other cheek? And the answer is God has got my back.

**James:** Yeah! He is a rear guard.

**Dallas:** So I don't have to take care of me, God takes care of me. That's the most important thing in there. And that lays the foundation for the kinds of transformations that makes it just sensible to do the things that Jesus said. And of course, that's what we're supposed to do and that's what's very lacking in our churches is a sincere effort to teach people how to do the things that he said.

**James:** You make it real clear that it is grace and not works but true grace works. That grace works in us and keeps working starting now throughout all eternity. And it is transforming grace. And I can't help but believe that's what you want. I mean you're not just tuning in because you want to feel better, listen to a preacher and go away and say, "You are like a fine song and like someone who plays well on an instrument." And you go away and you talk about the speaker but you never do what you hear. Somehow inside I believe I know I should do and what has to happen is the transforming power of God, kingdom presence giving us not only the desire but the ability to do those things Jesus says. Can I ask you a question? When we miss the mark, when we fail, how should that make us feel?

**Dallas:** It should make us feel like we need to understand why we failed and ask God for help in changing that instead of just trying again to do the thing that we failed at. I once had a man that worked at a jet propulsion lab in a seminar out in southern

California, and I had been teaching him, it isn't when you fail, try, try again. But when you fail, find out why you failed, fix it and then try again. He said, "Boy, that's what we do when we blow up a rocket. We don't try, try again."

[Laughter]

"We fix it and then we try again." That's why training, not trying is the key.

**James:** It is hard to get the volunteers for that try, try again program.

[Laughter]

**Dallas:** On that one is certainly is. But you know we often believe that and we get people trying so hard.

**James:** And they're so frustrated.

**Dallas:** Oh, they are indeed!

**James:** Frustrated in their failure and misery but they look like all the rest of the bunch that is frustrated and miserable. See, we've really made like kind, this is the thing divine conspiracy makes so clear. It is not a matter of like kind measuring ourselves among ourselves being totally void of the wisdom and understanding of God but it's really becoming Christ-like. We're not walking with a pompous step of a know-it-all or some arrogant person, "Look at me, I'm like Jesus."

As a matter of fact, I think the more we really are yielded to God, the more aware of his presence, it's amazing how you can walk with a confidence but not a cockiness and there is a peace that passes understanding. And it is what the whole world is looking for -- they're looking for love, joy, peace, happiness; they really don't even know what it looks like. Some of them get drunk so they can feel like they're better, they don't know any better. It is crazy, and people get drunk on religion. They're drunk but not on wine, so they're just drunk on church and they all sit around. Hey, don't go there. God is not inviting us to live there. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, that was the good news.

Dallas, I want to thank you for writing *The Divine Conspiracy*.

Would you say thanks to Dallas Willard? It is in the bookstores. You can go online and get it. You'll wade through it. You'll get water not to wade in but it will carry you.

You'll have yours all marked up like this. I go through and -- you just mark everything you read. I read whole chapters of books and don't underline a word. But I'm telling you, when I see something that just resonates with life then I'll meditate on it and I'll go back and look at it. I'll go back and look at the points that I underlined and then ended up putting a star by them and go back and highlight some so I could really think about it. And I really encourage --

I wish, Dallas, if we could just get people into the renewing of their minds, then some of them are so frustrated, I just wish I could know the will of God. How about we present our bodies the living sacrifice, wholly acceptable, separated unto God, not being conformed by the world or by religion but transformed by the renewing of our minds, continual process, you don't just arrive, it is a process, that we may know the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. God, I pray that for our viewers.

I'm so glad you watch. I want to ask you to help Betty and me and the missionaries rescue precious little children that have been sold into the sex trafficking. A lot of them are abandoned by parents or sent by parents because they've been told they'll have a better life. They're impoverished. The missionaries want to rescue these children and they can. And we're asking you to help.

Listen closely. Watch!

**Begin video clip:**

**Jeanne:** This is Peeya. She is so beautiful. I hate to see her get kidnapped and taken by human traffickers but that's happening all around the world.

>> Many of these little girls are sold into this slave trade, sexual prostitution.

>> If something doesn't happen to rescue this little girl off the street then when she gets just a little bit older, somebody will take her and exploit her.

>> I'm hearing, I'm saying, why should this little precious innocent girl be violated we don't know tomorrow, a week from now, a year from now? I can't even -- it is unthinkable. You know what is devastating is that it is possible. Let's get these kids off

the street. They're asking me why I'm crying. It is for them... God's children. I just need a break.

[Sobbing]

**End of clip**

**In the studio:**

**James:** You know we've watched the missionaries and our workers that go at our request all over the world to see the things firsthand that Betty and I have seen and that they can bring another perspective.

And, Betty, I wouldn't be able to watch this just like Kathy couldn't. So many times it was just easy to go away and weep and then say, "I don't want to see it anymore." Betty and I were never able to go away and not want to see it because we knew we could change it -- love could change it -- and it does.

Betty, the missionaries that are there in the midst of that suffering, whether it is in India or whether it's on the streets where children have been left, abandoned or whether it is in Thailand or other countries of the world, some we don't even mention because we would endanger the missionaries, but we're able to take those children who have been abandoned and give them a home and give them a future and get many of them out of the trafficking because they want out. And the missionaries are so wise in their dealings that we're able to do it.

And all they need -- and this is the amazing thing -- in order to do it they just need our support. And what we try to do is we find somebody that is doing it in an effective way and undergird them, we don't try to go in and duplicate something. We find where God's enabling and gifting and we call it the anointing or touch of God, the divine enabling to do something and the love to do it and then we undergird them so they can stay at the work. And our viewers have been able to do that.

Betty, I couldn't look, as Kathy was, if I didn't know we could change it. And when I say "we" that would include the viewers because that's the only way we can give those children a future hope is with somebody helping us do it.

**Betty:** That's right. James, I guess the thing that really touched me as I was watching was when that little girl said, "I cry myself to sleep." Why does she do that? Because there is no one there to comfort her and give her hope and help her come out of the life



that she was forced into. We can be the ones that can reach out and make the difference in the lives of these precious children James. Most of them never had a choice of their life but we can help bring them out if we will care, if we will give them hope through our caring and sharing.

I hope you will join with us and let's be able to comfort them when they weep and let them know that they can soon have a smile because someone cares.

**James:** Or because someone like you cared we've been able to join together and build incredible *LIFE* Centers like the one in Thailand. It is one of the most beautiful facilities I've ever seen. And the most beautiful part of it is the children learning -- they learn to speak English, they learn how to study, they learn how to do crafts, they learn how to make a future. Some of them have gone on and some of them have gone on into universities and have actually graduated and become teachers themselves over the last years.

We've been working with these people like this for nearly 20 years. We've joined with Mark Rutland who is now the president of Oral Roberts University in helping him in the House of Grace. So we've been involved for a long time but the great Thailand center is incredible. We're renting facilities in all the other areas. Some, like we said, we can't name that community because we could jeopardize the safety of the mission workers.

But what it takes in order to rescue a child, or rescue someone out of that is an average of \$128. So what we want to ask you to do is would you help us rescue a life? \$1280, we can rescue ten. I'm really asking you if you can do that. I'll be honest with you, we really need people to step up and say, "You know what? I've been blessed. I'm blessed to bless. We'll help you rescue ten or more."

We want to send the beautiful "Heart of the Father" bronze as a great art piece and collectible; great artists gifted to bless you to say thank you for helping others. We're going to send *The Butterfly Effect* by Andy Andrews that is an incredible bestselling book, talks about the importance of one person, even a butterfly. You're important!

Would you dial that number and take your bankcard, please? Use it like a check; that's how you should always use it. But please right now make the best gift you can. Go online, [LifeToday.org](http://LifeToday.org) and make the gift God puts on your heart. Would you do that?

If you want to write a check make it to *LIFE* but call us and tell us you're mailing it. We need to hear from you this week. It's real important. I need to hear from everyone

wherever you are; would you do something to help? Would you rescue life? Thank you for sharing God's love!

**Begin video clip:**

**Announcer:** Human trafficking... it's hard to believe it is happening! But at this very moment innocent children, many very young are being sold and forced into sexual slavery and exploited in every way imaginable and someone must save them!

With your support of mission rescue life you can help rescue more than 5,000 children from the horrors of the sex trade in parts of Thailand, India, Cambodia and other targeted nations. Together we can reach vulnerable families and children by providing much needed food and relief. We can rescue those already ensnared by offering them a way out and we can restore their hearts, minds and bodies to enable them to enjoy life as God intended.

Your gift today of only \$128 will help rescue a child and change their life forever. And with gifts of \$64 or \$32 we will combine your gifts with others to help rescue one more child from the shame and pain of this lifestyle.

As our way of saying thank you, please request "*The Butterfly Effect*," how your life matters. The story of this book reveals how you were specially created by God to make a difference and have the power to change the world.

As a special challenge, please prayerfully consider a gift of \$1280 to help rescue ten children. With your gift be sure to request "Heart of the Father," our beautiful new bronze sculpture that demonstrates God's fatherly love for us as his children.

Call, write, or make your gift online today!

**End of clip**

**In the studio:**

**James:** I can promise you, this beautiful gift book, *The Butterfly Effect*, you'll read it and you'll pass it on! I've got pastors who preach sermons after they read it; they said it blessed them so much.

And this book, every church leader, every person that says I want... I want to know what it is like to live in His presence now. Incredible read! I encourage you to get it.

Join Betty and me again saying thanks to Dallas Willard.

Dallas, thank you for being here.

Thank you! Thanks for watching. We really appreciate you helping us share life and love and rescuing life. Thank you!

**Beth:** How do you live the kind of life that makes such a great story you could sing about it?

**Announcer:** A story fit for a song -- tomorrow on *LIFE Today*!