Knowing Christ

Celebrating the Teaching of Dallas Willard for Pastors, Ministry Leaders and Christian Educators

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The Spiritual Formation Alliance exists to facilitate spiritual formation in the hearts of pastors and leaders. Serving the greater Christian community, we are a catalyst for transformation, bringing together national authors and thought-leaders with leaders in local communities. Joining spiritual formation thought and practice to personal connection and community, we offer regularly scheduled events and conversations for pastors, serving ministries, women in ministry and Christian leaders in the workplace.

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February 2013

Dear friends,

On behalf of Westmont College and the Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation, welcome!

We are delighted that you have joined us for the Knowing Christ Conference. We hope that your stay here in beautiful Santa Barbara will be both restful and invigorating. Our prayer is that you will be met by God, encouraged by the presentations and inspired to walk more closely with Christ as you return to your daily lives.

The Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation (MI/DWC) was founded in 2011 at Westmont College for the purpose of helping to establish the field of Christian spiritual formation as a discipline of public knowledge. We look forward, in this time together, to making meaningful connections with others who share the vision for living life in the Kingdom of God.

Outlines for conference sessions are included in this guide (pp. 8-25). Also, to help you find your way around, we have included a map of the Fess Parker DoubleTree Resort (p. 30) as well as the Santa Barbara waterfront area (pp. 31).

We would like to take a moment to express our deep gratitude to those who have helped to make this conference possible:

For the generous support of our sponsors:
- Azusa Pacific University
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- InterVarsity Press
- Renovare
- Spiritual Formation Alliance

For our partnership with Conversations Journal, Christian Audio, and the Aprentis Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation.

To our gracious team of volunteers who have pitched in selflessly at every turn.

To Westmont College, especially President Gayle Beebe, Paul Larson, Nancy Phinney, Scott Craig, Reed Sheard, Joel Patterson, and Greg Smith, all of whom have assisted in invaluable ways.

To Matt Rhodes of Fox Fire Creative (www.FoxFireCreative.com) for beautiful website and graphic design support.

To Menlo Park Presbyterian Church for their amazing technical and video work and for making it possible to stream this event.

And finally, to our wonderful speakers, Dallas Willard, John Ortberg, Mike Leuken, Kent Carlson, David Ross, and Richard Blackmon, for their work in the Kingdom of God.

Thanks be to God and may we each live more and more moments of our lives in a knowing, interactive, and transforming relationship with the Trinity.

Warmly,

Gary W. Moon
Executive Director

Erin Patterson
Conference Coordinator
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Thursday, February 21

PRE-CONFERENCE

8:00 am  Pre-Conference Registration
9:00 am–3:00 pm  Pre-Conference Workshops

SOUL CARE FOR THE PASTOR (Anacapa Room)
Are you growing into God’s best version of yourself in ministry? Without an attentiveness to self-awareness and self-care, many gifted leaders fall into ruts of imbalance, self-reliance, and burnout. In this interactive, multimedia seminar you will learn to identify attitudes and behaviors that can drain your enthusiasm for ministry, as well as to develop a specific plan to sustain the health of your soul. Specific topics will cover healthy boundaries, routines of rest and play, maintaining joyful and life-giving connections with God and others, and understanding and navigating the emotional and spiritual hazards of ministry.

SOUL CARE FOR THE CHURCH (Santa Ynez Room)
Spend the day with co-pastors Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, authors of Renovation of The Church: What Happens When A Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation. They will tell the story of how their thriving, consumer-oriented church became a modest congregation committed to experiencing life in the kingdom of God and authentic spiritual formation into Christ-likeness—even when it meant a decline in numbers.

Thursday, February 21 (Santa Ynez Room)

CONFERENCE

3:00 pm  Conference Registration
Dinner on your own
7:00 pm  Worship
Session One: How to Live Well: Eternal Life Begins Now.

Friday, February 22 (Santa Ynez Room)

9:00 am  Session Two: Who Are The Experts On Life Transformation?
11:00 am  Session Three: How to Step Into the Kingdom.
12:30 pm  Lunch
2:00 pm  Session Four: Experiential Knowledge of the Trinity for Pastors and Ministry Leaders.
3:00–7:30 pm  Enjoy Santa Barbara and dinner on your own
7:30 pm  Worship
Session Five: Understanding the Person: Including the Invisible Parts.

Saturday, February 23 (Santa Ynez Room)

9:00 am  Session Six: The Importance of the Christian Disciplines in the Life of Pastors, Ministry Leaders and the Congregation.
11:00 am  Worship
Session Seven: Blessing and Commitment.
IVP at Knowing Christ 2013

Your keynote speakers: Dallas Willard • Kent Carlson • Mike Lueken

Hearing God (Expanded Edition)
In this classic introduction to the Christian spiritual life, Dallas Willard lays out how to develop an intimate partnership with God and attune your heart to his voice. This revised and updated edition includes new material from Willard’s teaching at Renovaré.
978-0-8308-3546-1, $17.00

Hearing God (DVD)
In the new Hearing God DVD, groups can join John Ortberg, Richard Foster and Dallas Willard as they discuss the conversational relationship with God. Small group discussion guide is also included.
978-0-8308-3588-3, $30.00

Renovation of the Church
Copastors Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken tell the decade-long story of how God took their thriving, consumer-oriented church and transformed it into a modest congregation of believers committed to the growth of the spirit—even when it meant a decline in numbers.
978-0-8308-3546-1, $15.00

"The release of Renovation of the Church is a bright day for the church. . . . A wonderfully candid, bold book about the journey of a church that stopped appealing to religious consumers and started producing disciples of Jesus.”
—Gary W. Moon, executive director of The Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center at Westmont College

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James Bryan Smith
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Jan Johnson
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Richard J. Foster
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Knowing Christ Today

Dallas Willard is Professor Emeritus in the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. His most recent book, Knowing Christ Today, was published in May 2009. He is also the author of The Great Omission, Renovation of the Heart, The Divine Conspiracy (Christianity Today’s Book of the Year for 1999), The Spirit of The Disciplines, and Hearing God. Dr. Willard is married to Jane Lakes Willard, a marriage and family therapist. They have two children, John and Rebecca (married to Bill Heatley), and a granddaughter, Larissa. He makes many of his articles and audio recordings available at no cost at www.dwillard.org, and he can be followed on Twitter @DallasAWillard.

John Ortberg

John Ortberg is an author, speaker, and the senior pastor of Menlo Park Presbyterian Church (MPPC) in the San Francisco Bay Area. His books include The Life You’ve Always Wanted; Faith and Doubt; and The Me I Want To Be. John teaches around the world at conferences and churches. Prior to joining MPPC, John served as teaching pastor at Chicago’s Willow Creek Community Church. John is a member of the Board of Trustees at Fuller Seminary, serves on the board for the Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation, and is a former board member of Christianity Today International. John is married to Nancy Ortberg, and they have three grown children. He can be followed on Twitter @JohnOrtberg.

Richard Blackmon

Richard Blackmon has been a psychologist specializing in counseling pastors and their families for over 25 years. He conducted his doctoral dissertation on ministry hazards and taught clergy self/soul care classes at Fuller Seminary for 21 years. He received his M.Div. in 1984 and his Ph.D. in 1985 from Fuller Seminary.

David Ross

David Ross has been helping pastors and churches become healthier and more effective for more than twenty years. In addition to counseling and consulting Christian leaders, he teaches classes on vision, church consulting, and creativity at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. He received his doctorate in clinical psychology from Fuller’s School of Psychology in 1988.

Kent Carlson

Kent Carlson founded Oak Hills Church in 1984. He is co-senior pastor and carries his passion to invite people to experience the reality of Kingdom life into every aspect of his life and ministry. He graduated from Trinity College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Kent and his wife, Diane, have three daughters and two granddaughters.

Mike Lueken

Mike Lueken has been co-senior pastor of Oak Hills with Kent for the past thirteen years. He’s committed to going deeper and experiencing personal transformation in all aspects of life. Mike challenges others to do the same. For his undergraduate studies, he attended University of Wisconsin/Madison and is a graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Mike and his wife, Julie, have three children.
PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP: SOUL CARE FOR THE PASTOR

Thursday, February 21 | 9:00 am–3:00 pm | Anacapa Room

9:00–10:30 am  Session One: Soul Care Overview

Objectives:

1. To help pastors develop a relevant understanding of the nature and needs of their own souls in order to better nurture them.

2. To help pastors navigate the demands for ministry so that they become an opportunity for spiritual development instead of spiritual burnout.

3. To help pastors develop a theological and psychological basis for self-care that leads them beyond “surviving” ministry to “thriving” in ministry.

10:45–12:15 pm  Session Two: Boundaries

Objectives:

1. To help pastors maintain more consistent energy and joy in ministry by developing a clear sense of when and how to set limits on the expectations and requests made by parishioners.

1:00–2:45 pm  Session Three: Inflow

Objectives:

1. To help pastors change their concept of “devotions” from an obligation to a delight by creating “inflow,” i.e. developing a framework for renewal which “enlightens our minds, lightens our loads, widens our hearts, animates our wills, and provides fresh possibilities in daily life.”

2:45–3:00 pm  Question and Answer Session
The Oak Hills Story

1. Early Years and Donner Party
   1.1. The Story
   1.2. Post-Donner Changes

2. Theological Issues
   2.1. Gospel
   2.2. Discipleship
   2.3. Church

3. Church Issues
   3.1. Elder Board
   3.2. Staff Alignment
   3.3. Complaints
   3.4. Elitism
   3.5. Self-Absorption
   3.6. Organizational vs. Formational

4. The Pastor’s Formation
   4.1. Authentic Spirituality
   4.2. Redefining Success
   4.3. Ambition
   4.4. Co-Pastoring

5. First Steps
   5.1. Teaching
   5.2. Subversive
   5.3. Time
   5.4. Traveling Companions
Knowing Christ Today: Equipping Pastors and Ministry Leaders as Teachers of the Nations and Churches as Schools for Living

Session One: How to Live Well: Eternal Life Begins Now.

The purpose of this conference is to assist pastors and ministry leaders (spokespeople for Christ) to fully enter into the joy, power, and dignity of the role assigned to them by Christ, to be the teachers of the nations.

Outline of Presentation:


• What pastors do: Exemplify eternal living and bring it to bear on all surroundings.

• Eternal living is the “with God” life: It takes our real life into the kingdom of God and makes that very life eternal. (John 17:3)

• The gospel Christ preached and lived: Life now in the kingdom of the heavens, available to all by relying on Christ for everything.

• Our job is not to “make it happen,” but to speak the kingdom and live in it.

• Pastors are the most important people in the community. Why? (John 6:68)

Conversation between Dallas and John & Your Questions (time permitting).
Session Two: Who are The Experts on Life Transformation?

Outline of Presentation:

• The two ways of Psalm 1.

• The shortcomings of human wisdom: the philosophical quest. (1 Cor. 1:17-31)

• Psychology emerges: the meaning of this emergence for humanity.

• Christian psychologists required. (Is there a Christian psychology?)

• Spiritual exercises and life give actual transformation through the ages.

• “Spiritual formation”—a way that actually works.

• What transformed people look like. (1 Cor. 13, 2 Peter 1:1-11, Col. 3:1-17)

• The dangerous diversion: Church as usual. An acceptable alternative to transformation into Christ-likeness? Non-transformational Christianity will get you to heaven? Then what?

Conversation between Dallas and John & Your Questions (time permitting).
Session Three: How to Step into The Kingdom and Live There.

Outline of Presentation:

• God’s part. (Eph. 2:1-10, John 3:1-8)

• Our part. (Matt. 5:20ff, 11:25 and 18:1-4)

• Our first priority: Seeking the kingdom and its righteousness. (Matt. 6:33)


• Our first step: Study Christ and his gospel of kingdom availability.

• Next step: venture on him and his teaching. The test of experience.

• The path of certifiable knowledge for the disciple. (John 8:31-32)

Conversation between Dallas and John & Your Questions (time permitting).
Knowing Christ Today: Session Four

Friday, February 22 | 2:00 pm | Santa Ynez Room

Session Four: Experiential Knowledge of The Trinity for Pastors and Ministry Leaders.

Outline of Presentation:

• Submersion “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

• In the community of love among disciples. The “new commandment.”
  (John 13:34, 1 John 2:8)

• A practical understanding of the members of the Trinity:
  
  • Father: Ultimate source of all.

  • Son: Creation, incarnation, visible presence.

  • Spirit: Invisible, non-localizable power.

• All of these are directly involved in the life of obedient disciples. (John 14:15-26)

• The pastor restfully and joyously serves in the midst of the Trinity in action, as Christ builds his church.

• The outcome is a growing community of supernatural love, in constant interaction with the members of the Trinity. (John 17: 21-24)

• The ultimate evangelization: the unity of disciples in love.

Conversation between Dallas and John & Your Questions (time permitting).
Session Five: Understanding the Person: Including the Invisible Parts.

Outline of Presentation:

- The Person as a spiritual—that is, a non-physical—being, defined by a body and its historical track.

- The manifold sources of life in the person: Fragmented and torn.
  - Heart (will, spirit)
  - Mind (thoughts, feelings)
  - Social context (relations to others)
  - Strength (bodily dispositions and habits)
  - Soul

- Where human failure and misery come from. (Mark 7:20-23)

- Understanding “The Great Commandment” of Mark 12:29-31. Every dimension under the governance of Jesus’ kind of love.

- How to get there? The redemptive community of disciples submerged in Trinitarian fellowship. What “church” can be.

- The doorway to disciplines.

Conversation between Dallas and John & Your Questions (time permitting).
Session Six: The Importance of Christian Disciplines in the Life of Pastors, Ministry Leaders and the Congregation.

Outline of Presentation:

• The basic nature of disciplines and why God placed them in our life: “Natural” disciplines and spiritual disciplines.

• The relationship between disciplines and grace: between our action and the actions of God.

• Exercising our responsibility for who we become. (Col. 3:5-14, 2 Peter 1:1-11)

• Spiritual disciplines and “the Fruit of the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:22-25)

• Some illustrations of disciplines and how they work: Solitude, Study, Service.

• How use of disciplines can save the pastor from being overwhelmed, and the church member from despair about progress in the spiritual life.

• Spiritual disciplines as an essential part of our strategy for “teaching them to do all that I commanded you.”

• The spiritual life as a domain of actual knowledge and reliable practice.

Conversation between Dallas and John & Your Questions (time permitting).
Session Seven: Blessing and Commitment.

Outline of Presentation:

• Understanding blessing: What is it and what it does.

• Putting our whole being into a blessing. Don’t rattle it off. It is a profoundly personal and powerful act.

• Study the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-26: “The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.”

• What does this mean? The depth of each phrase.

• Now an exercise:

  • Choose a partner.

  • One of you give this blessing to the other, paying full attention. Looking into their eyes if you can stand it. Slowly. Slowly. Think: what are you giving to the person receiving the blessing?

  • Now reverse roles and do the same thing.

• Give this blessing to those around you day by day. You don’t always have to say it aloud. But sometimes do so for those really close to you (e.g. your spouse).

• Imagine becoming a person of constant blessing to others. See the power.

Dallas and John:

Now: is there some one thing from these hours together that you would like to put into practice? What would that be? Nothing gigantic, please. Carefully consider it. Could you commit yourself to take that one thing and really learn how to do it routinely and easily? Now is the time, and, as you go from here, take the required steps. Learn as you go. God’s grace will go with you. You will see it.
The Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center is an ecumenical Christian outreach of Westmont College dedicated to placing an enduring emphasis on the intellectual legacy of Dallas Willard, including his focus on the possibility and path to authentic spiritual and moral transformation.

Our Mission:
• Creation of a new generation of individuals who will become thought leaders in articulating and experiencing an interactive relationship with Jesus Christ.
• Establishment of the field of Christian spiritual formation as a discipline of public knowledge that is open to research and pedagogy of the highest order.

Our Goals:

Academic Life:
• Creation of a library based upon the papers of Dallas Willard and other leading spiritual formation scholars.
  • Senior fellows program
  • Scholars-in-residence program
• Hosting of an annual summit of leading spiritual formation scholars
• Offering of Faculty Retreats
• Exploring academic curriculum needs
• Creation of a spiritual formation research center

Student Life:
• Liaison to Student Life/Campus Pastor’s office
  • Spiritual Formation Groups
  • Individual and group spiritual direction
• Spiritual oasis on campus
• Willard House
• Student Retreats

The Dallas Willard Center will support broader outreaches that include:
• Renovaré Institute
• Spiritual formation journal
• Development of new learning resources
• Programmatic research in the area of authentic transformation
• Creation of an interactive Christian spiritual formation web site
• Development of a network of academic and ecclesiastic consortium partners

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Developing Global Christians for the Academy, Church and World:

The Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center

By Gary W. Moon, Director of the Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center

The Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture was established in 2011 through the generosity of Eff and Patty Martin. The institute began its work with the establishment of the Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation. The Willard Center exists to emphasize the importance of creating a new generation of individuals able to articulate and experience an interactive relationship with Jesus Christ and to establish the field of Christian spiritual formation as a discipline of public knowledge open to research and pedagogy of the highest order. Future plans include the establishment of a center for world Christianity, a visiting fellows program, opportunities for undergraduates to participate in the institute, and an extra-curricular program that emphasizes spiritual formation and character development for all facets of the academy, church and world.

Newsweek ran an unexpected cover story Oct. 8, 2012: “Heaven is Real: A Doctor’s Experience of the Afterlife.” Some observers mused that the editors had death on their minds because they were about to take the print-and-mail version of the weekly magazine off life support. Irony aside, it’s an amazing story. Dr. Eben Alexander, a neurosurgeon who has taught at Harvard Medical School and other universities, had a near-death experience like few others. After seven days in a coma in 2008 with the human part of his brain, the neocortex, offline, he continued to experience consciousness. Moments before medical personnel were to pull the plug on his earthly life, he suddenly awakened. There
What is Spiritual?  
As human beings, we can do five things: think, behave, feel, relate and choose. The aspect of “choosing” or “willing” falls in the domain of our “executive center.” The Bible uses the terms “heart,” “will” and “spirit” interchangeably to describe this fifth aspect of humans: the central, disembodied source of energy and power, the “spirit.”

What is Spiritual Formation?  
Spiritual formation is the process that gives the human spirit or will a definite form or character. It happens to everyone, from Billy Graham to Chairman Mao. It is like an education; it is impossible to avoid getting one. The question is, “What kind of spirit is being formed?” The process simply means that over time the inner person, the will/heart/spirit, is molded and formed for better or worse.

What is Christian Spiritual Formation?  
Christian spiritual formation is the redemptive process of forming the inner human world to take on the character of Christ himself. If it succeeds, an individual’s outer life becomes a natural expression or outflow of the inner life, which reflects the character and teachings of Jesus. But the external manifestation of Christ-likeness cannot be the focus, or the process will fall into crushing legalism and parochialism.

Spiritual formation in Christ fulfills the Great Commission as the regenerate makes its highest intention to live according to the commandments of Christ and seeks to realize this goal through an adequate course of spiritual disciplines. The gospel, the “good news” of the entire New Testament, is that we can have a new life now in the Kingdom of God if we will trust Jesus Christ with our life and allow an inside-out change from a willful to a willing heart. Salvation is a life—a life lived in Christ.

What Would Calvin and Luther Say About Spiritual Formation?  
According to Julie Canlis, the 2007 Templeton Award winner for Theological Promise, John Calvin understood early that “religion was not only for the mind but also for the heart. For Calvin the gift of the gospel was not in correct doctrine but in its ability to penetrate to the heart and emotions—indeed, even to transform them.

In Calvin’s own words, “The gospel is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life. It is … received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart.”

Canlis suggests that the “systematic” Calvin who became so admired is an inadequate depiction, for he viewed doctrine not as the communication of beliefs about God but as a personal experience of the gospel, the good news of being adopted into Christ. We must always remember that Calvin was first and foremost a pastor who was intent on forming a people for and by union with Christ.

The term “evangelical” did not enter the stream of Christianity with Billy Graham—or even Billy Sunday. It originated in 16th-century Germany during the percolation of the Protestant Reformation. People became known as “evangelicals” because of their appeal to the “Evangel,” or Gospels of the New Testament rather than the power of the traditional Western church. Martin Luther suggested that the new churches call themselves “evangelical.”

Two things lie at the heart of Luther’s evangelicalism: the Bible as the ultimate source of authority; and personal experience of conversion to and practical communion with God. Perhaps the best example of Luther’s own communion with God appears in the 40-page answer he penned in response to a question from his barber, Peter Beskendorf, about how to pray. Luther’s beautiful answer was published in 1535 as “A Simple Way to Pray; for Master Peter the Barber,” and it presents Luther’s own rich use of spiritual disciplines, including solitude, silence, listening, meditation, obedience and journaling.

Early evangelicals were known for their experience of God. But over time, as so often happens, this focus on the experience of God lost its appeal. The Apostle Paul’s primary theme, the experience of “union with Christ,” was also the message Calvin and Luther proclaimed. But other, less demanding options began to replace it.

When nominal Christianity first became possible following the Edict of Milan, the tradition of the desert fathers and mothers (monasticism) soon developed. More than a thousand years later, during some of the darkest days of church history, the bright lights of the Reformation began to glow. Over the course of the last 500 years, in places where the lights of the founding saints began to flicker, groups emerged that craved communion with God and a transforming relationship with the Trinity. They share a desire for living life in the light of Jesus’ teaching (a present experience of life in the Kingdom) and Paul’s focus (living life in union with God, experiencing a religion not just of the head but also of heart, limb and relationship).

What Role Does Westmont Play?  
There are five key planks in Westmont’s mission statement: liberal arts, Christian, residential, undergraduate and global. More than a decade ago, Westmont established the Gaede Institute to promote the continued vitality of the liberal arts tradition in American higher education. The creation of the Martin Institute for Christianity and Culture and the Dallas Willard Center for Christian Spiritual Formation spotlights the second key word in Westmont’s mission statement: Christian.

The Martin Institute/Willard Center seeks to equip a new generation of individuals to articulate and experience an interactive relationship with Jesus Christ and to establish the field of Christian spiritual formation as a discipline of public knowledge open to research and pedagogy of the highest order. The institute and center will operate under guidance from Westmont’s president and provost, an advisory board that includes the president and a trustee, and a committee composed of faculty and staff.

Not only will the Martin Institute/Willard Center make a positive impact on both academic and student life at Westmont, but it will initiate broader conversations on Christianity and culture and develop a collection of materials accessible to researchers and other visitors.

Why the Close Ties to One Individual?  
An institute dedicated to such broad topics as Christianity and culture, Christian spiritual formation and college life cannot be based solely on the work or thought of a single individual. While the work of the Martin Institute/Willard Center will be historically and broadly based, there are many reasons for Dallas Willard to serve as a primary focal point at a center dedicated to spiritual formation.

Dallas has stood at the intersection of Christianity and culture throughout the last 50 years, and he has written on wide-ranging topics. His well-known works and distinguished career at the University of Southern California are compelling. His willingness to engage spiritual thought, academic achievement and Christian community is especially noteworthy. Most significantly, during the last 25 years, he has emerged as the most compelling voice shaping this important conversation.
Bridge to Early Church and to Early Evangelicalism

“Regression to the mean” is a phenomenon in statistics that describes how the mean or mathematical center of a distribution seems to take on a gravitational force, pulling outlying objects back toward the center. Church history reveals many times of great fervor and zeal, revival movements resulting in molten souls and transformed lives. But following most of these bursts, we witness a regression. Lives aflame with presence and love show a tendency to cool off, to fall back toward the norm.

There are many remarkable ages in Christian history, but two are especially important for our consideration. One is the first three centuries of the church, when the world looked on and said, “Look how they love.” The second is the Reformation. While great regression followed the fervor of the early church, Calvin, Luther and, to a lesser extent, Zwingli, fanned the flames again in the 16th century.

I believe that Dallas Willard’s theological work offers a bridge to both the early church, when the word “Christian” was born, and to the Reformation, when the word “evangelical” first came to life. His view of salvation, while inclusive of most prominent theories of atonement, reminds us that salvation is also a life, a journey toward union with God, and not merely a legal transaction. The early church also held this view. Willard writes with an appeal to scriptural authority (“The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God” contains more than 500 biblical references) and with a focus on the experience of conversion to and communion with God that defined “evangelicalism” as that important word was being introduced in the 16th century.

Bridge Across the Six Streams

Other authors have written beautifully about the “Six Great Traditions of Christian Faith” and “Seven Paths of Christian Devotion.”xiii These encouraging works and many others present the great traditions as a feast for the soul to experience and enjoy and as paths for all to explore rather than as denominational or tribal distinctives to be disputed and defended. Dallas Willard’s writings offer bridges to and across various traditions.

Bridge Across Academic Disciplines

Tom Plante presented his bio-psycho-social-spiritual model at a recent reception for the release of a book from InterVarsity Press, “Integrating Counseling and Psychology: Five Approaches.” He is past president of Division 36 of the American Psychological Association (APA), Augustin Cardinal Bea, S.J., University professor of psychology at Santa Clara University, and adjunct clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine. Willard’s model of the person is strikingly similar to Plante’s, which is included in numerous APA publications and is the focus of research by the Institute of Spirituality and Health. Collaborative work between Plante’s institute and the Martin Institute/Willard Center as well as partnerships with various institutes and centers around the world represent a keen interest and long-term goal of our center. This is one example of the many ways that Dallas Willard offers bridges across a variety of disciplines. In fields such as philosophy, religious studies and psychology, practitioners are willing to allow the teachings of Jesus to be a source not just of faith but also knowledge.

Bridge between Church and Academy

While I was completing my doctorate at Fuller, I had few theories with real-life applications. This distressed me and led to a lifelong fixation on the need to harness the energy of the academy in addressing the real-world needs of common people.

As an academic philosopher and former department chair at the University of Southern California, Dallas Willard understands how to bridge this divide. A renowned philosopher, he has articulated and defended various philosophical positions throughout his distinguished, 45-year academic career. An ordained minister who has taught in the Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller for more than 27 years, he has focused on practical implications. One of the most exciting aspects of the Martin Institute/Willard Center is the desire to build bridges and mutual respect between the academy and the church.

Bridge between John 3:16 and John 17:3

When speaking about Christian spiritual formation and the importance of classic Christian disciplines, I often ask, “What does salvation have to do with spiritual disciplines?” The correct answer is “nothing.”

Spiritual disciplines do not have anything to do with John 3:16. There is nothing we can do to make God love the world any more or any less. Spiritual practices do not have anything to do with the sending of Jesus or His sacrificial death on a cross. Salvation cannot be earned.

In John 17:3, Jesus defines eternal life (or eternal living) by noting, “This is eternal life, to know the Father and the Son, whom he sent.” Eternal living involves knowing— an embarrassingly intimate word—the Father and Son (with the Spirit implied). Eternal living, salvation as a life, involves an interactive and transforming relationship with the Trinity.

How do the spiritual disciplines relate to this relationship? In the context of John 17:3, the spiritual disciplines are akin to a flower turning to face the sun, opening petals and leaves to radiance. The spiritual disciplines are historical practices that help us become more aware of and available to the power and presence of God. Grace is diemetrically opposed to earning God’s favor but not to making an effort to move toward God.

Dallas Willard offers a bridge between John 3:16 and John 17:3 that stretches out over John 10:10. This passage explains the reason Jesus came: that we might have life and have it abundantly.

Serving at an institution like Westmont, which is dedicated to combining material and spiritual knowledge, is a great privilege. I hope that the Martin Institute and Willard Center will fulfill its broad goals: create a new generation of individuals able to articulate and experience an interactive relationship with Jesus Christ; and establish the field of Christian spiritual formation as a discipline of public knowledge open to research and pedagogy of the highest order.

iv Ibid. 76.
ivii Ibid. p. 17.
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