

We Are Grace

2: Relational Discipleship

John 8:31-44; Mark 2:1-12

Dr. Jeremiah Ebeling ---- May 4, 2025

Well, good morning, Grace. I get to follow that, so I don't know whom I made angry, but it's great to be with you this morning.

In 1972, over fifty years ago, a book hit the bookshelves called *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. And this book was the most popular book written by a Christian apologist named Josh McDowell. A later version of that book would have this subtitle: *Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World*. And that subtitle encapsulates McDowell's approach to how you change a life—through truth. And he would spend the next four decades plus defending the Christian faith by writing and talking about truth and the power of truth.

Fast forward forty years to 2011, and I was youth pastor here at Grace, and Joshua McDowell was in town. He was speaking at a lunch for youth pastors here in Austin. And I was a youth pastor, and it was just around the corner at Great Hills Baptist Church. I was interested in what he had to say, and they were serving free Chick-Fil-A, and I hadn't eaten lunch yet. So, I decided to go and listen to McDowell's talk. And I was stunned by the fact that this Christian apologist who had spent, again, decades elevating and speaking about truth spent very little time on that topic, that subject. He didn't talk much about truth. It was kind of in his intro, but then he spent the next hour and a half saying, "If you want to change a life, you're going to need truth." But he said, "You're going to need something else too. You're going to need a relationship." If you want to change a life, you're going to have to be in relationship with somebody where you're caring deeply for them, where you are warm and loving and helping them see the ways in which God wants to be growing them." You don't just need truth. He said that you're going to need relationship. He spent that entire talk discussing this. And he had this definition that he had come up with. He said: Truth + Relationship = Life Change. So, when he presented it, I wrote it down in my notes and still have it to this day: Truth + Relationship = Life Change. The truth is an important part of the story, no doubt. But there's this other super important part, and that is

the need for a relationship, a godly person who loves you and cares for you deeply. He added that to his definition of how you change a life.

If you fast forward again another six years, something like that, to 2017, here on the Grace staff we were thinking about how to change a life. How is it that the miracle of God transforming the very soul of a human being---how does that take place? What is the process? What are the elements? What are the ingredients involved in that recipe? And we said, *You know what? Josh McDowell was right.* It's truth, 100 percent, you've got to have truth. You have to be communicating that what God is saying is right and real and true in the world. You've got to understand that and believe that and know that. But it's 100 percent relationships. You've got to have a godly person or people in your life who are going to help you, mentor you, encourage you, and support you in your walk with God. But we said, *You know, it's not quite complete. It's awesome, but there's something missing.* We think it's this: Truth + Relationship + What? What was it? The Spirit of God.

We said that it's Truth and Relationship and the Spirit of God. It's those three ingredients that are necessary if you want to change a life, if you want to transform a soul. You've got to have all three of those.

And actually, when we stopped to think about it, maybe it's not Truth + Relationship + Spirit. Maybe it's Truth times Relationship times the Spirit of God. It's not addition, it's multiplication. Because when you combine the Spirit of God with the Lord's truth with relationships with a godly person, they have an exponential impact on our lives. They go far beyond what they could otherwise do on their own when you bring those three together. If you want to experience or see in someone else's life soul change or heart change or life change, all three of those are going to be involved. It is Truth times Relationship times Spirit.

And that's what we at Grace Covenant Church call relational discipleship. It's the definition that we've come to for relational discipleship.

So, if you're perfectionistic and you believe that you always have to get it right and you don't have much grace for yourself, and, as is often the case, you don't have very much grace for other people, then you are looking for rest. You're looking for the peace of God in your life.

Or maybe it's not perfectionism. Maybe it's that you're just tired of being selfish and self-centered. And you're realizing that maybe you're the common denominator in the numerous tough relationships that are happening in your life, even all at once, perhaps. Wherever you are,

however you want to grow, however you want to change, to get there you're going to need those three things. You're going to need God's truth; you're going to need His Spirit; and you're going to need a godly person or godly people in your life.

See, God's mission statement for the church, what He has given to the body of Christ to do, is to make disciples. That's what Jesus said. That's the Great Commission. In Matthew 28, verse 19, God wants to grow you as His disciple, and He wants to use you to make disciples of others. He's not left that unclear, He's not left that vague for us.

And so, what does it mean to be a disciple? You heard it on the stage just a little bit ago. What does it mean to be a disciple? It means to become like Christ in all of life. That's how we say it here at Grace Covenant Church. It's to become like Christ in all of life. God's goal for your life, my life, for every life, is that we would be conformed to the image of His Son. Romans 8:29: that we would be "conformed into Christ's image," that we would become who Jesus would be if He were us; that you would become who He would be if He were living your life, in your circumstances, in your home, with your job. That's what that means.

To become like Christ in all of life, like Diana said, is in every sense. And of course, it's internally that we become like Christ, because it starts inside of us and works its way out. So, it's internal, it's in our soul, in our mind, in our emotions, our intellect, that we're being conformed to the image of the Son of God; that we're beginning to learn and to think and to feel and to act as Jesus would if He were us.

But it's not just internal. It's also external. It works its way out. There is fruit from that internal change that's happening. Our Christ-likeness is not just something that we bring here to church. It shows up in meaningful ways in our living room or in the board room or in the cubicle or in your neighborhood, maybe, in this city especially, behind the wheel. It shows up there too.

But there's this external expression of Christ-likeness that's working its way out in our lives. Because God's purpose for our lives is that we would become like Christ in all of life. That's the destination. And the road to that destination travels through Truth, Relationship, and Spirit.

We're taking four weeks in this series called *We Are Grace*. We are looking at the anchors, the core beliefs, here at Grace Covenant Church that keep us as a church tethered to what we believe God has given us to do—tethered to the place, the role in God's kingdom that we feel that He's asked us to fulfill. They're right out of Scripture.

And what we're going to be talking about today, the anchor, the core belief that we're discussing today, is this relational discipleship. And this sermon flows nicely from last Sunday's sermon, "Every Believer is a Minister." It flows right out of that. What we're going to be talking about today is that those people whom God has brought into your life—your children at home, a neighbor across the street, a coworker, the people in your Bible study—the people whom God has brought into your life to disciple and to mentor and to lead—this is what God is going to be doing through you in their life—bringing the truth of God through that relationship, and the Spirit of God lights it on fire. He's the one who drives it home and makes it so much more than it could be on its own.

This is the process of every believer a minister. Every believer is a minister, and this works its way out in discipleship, in relationships for God's good, God's purpose.

Truth

I want us to start with the first one. Let's talk about truth, this first step, this first part of relational discipleship. Let's talk about the truth that God has given us. Because at Grace we say that we are in pursuit of what is right and real and true. We love the truth because God is the author of truth. Truth flows from Him, because He is the author of it. And He has created within us, within our very souls, this thirst for truth. He has created and designed us to be pursuers of the truth. He's made us that way. We can fight it, but that's who God has made us to be.

So, why is truth so important? What is it about truth that makes it so pivotal in this recipe? Why is it a key ingredient in this recipe for life change? Well, we don't have to guess. Jesus answers that question too in **John 8:31-32**. Open your Bibles if you have them to verses 31 and 32 of John chapter 8. Jesus is teaching His disciples, those Jews who have chosen to follow Him. He is teaching them, and this is what He says in verse 1. John sets it up and says, **"To the Jews who had believed in Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"**

He asks His followers, He asks us, "Do you want to be free? Because if you want to be free, you have to know the truth." He says that you have to know the truth if you want to be free. What does He mean by the truth? He means that we have to hold to His teachings. "You have to believe the words that I'm saying to you, that I'm teaching you, obeying the Word of God, the commands of God." That's how you know and follow the truth, and what the Word of God has

to say about who He is, about who we are, about this world that He's given us to live in, and what we're supposed to do with that; how we're supposed to live. That's how you know the truth.

And Jesus said that the Bible is the Word of God and reveals to us what is right and real and true. And if you want to be free, you know that truth, you believe that truth, and you enjoy the freedom that comes from knowing that truth, from holding onto that truth like it's a life preserver.

But Jesus isn't done. He's still going, because after this, just a few verses later, He turns from talking to His disciples. He turns and looks at the Pharisees. You guys aren't Pharisees out here, but He looks at the Pharisees, these men who don't know anything about freedom. And they barely know the truth. And He says, *You know what? Do you know why you're captive? Do you know why you're enslaved?*

In verse 44 of John chapter 8, He said this is why. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Jesus calls the devil the Father of Lies. He says, *He's not just your father, Pharisees. He is the Father of Lies. He gives birth to lies.* So, when you think about the way the enemy is going to come after you, what's he going to tempt you with most often? It's probably not going to be a temptation to some atrocious act. The enemy is going to come after you by just planting a little lie in your mind. He's going to come after you with this small, insidious lie, maybe something like:

"You'd better be perfect, or no one will love and respect you." Not God, not anyone.

Or a small little lie like this one:

"You know, it's never your fault. Everything that's wrong in your life is your spouse's fault, your boss's fault. It's someone else, but it's not you."

And that's what he does with us. That's how he gets to us. That's one of his primary ways of getting to believers and to nonbelievers both.

Think about how many of us are walking around with lies flying past us, all these small little lies that Satan planted maybe forty years ago through a parent or a coach, or maybe a recent lie. It's just swirling around in our minds. I want you to think about this. Of all the thoughts that

you think in a day, how many of them are true? How many of them reflect reality? Do they correspond with what the Word of God has told us is absolutely true and what we need to believe? And how many of them are lies from the father of lies that enslave us, that have taken us captive?

There's a foundation called the National Science Foundation. And they did a study in order to find out how many thoughts in a day does the average thinker have. What is the average number of thoughts in a person's day? The National Science Foundation—I know it sounds made up, but it's not. It's a real organization. You can look it up. How do you find out the average number of thoughts in a day that a person has? I have no idea. I don't know how you start to figure that out. But apparently, they have figured that out. Thank goodness. They say it's 12,000 thoughts. Other organizations say that it's more like 50,000 to 60,000 thoughts. Wow, okay, that's a pretty big chasm. They say that's especially for deeper thinkers.

I don't know about you, for me personally, sometimes I'll be silent for a little while at home, and Dayna will say, "Hey, what are you thinking about?"

And I'll say, "Oh, it's nothing."

And she'll say, "No, it's okay, you can tell me."

"No, literally, honey, I am thinking about nothing. There is nothing happening up here right now."

So, maybe for the sake of me or people like me, let's go with 12,000 thoughts. We'll go with that average—12,000 thoughts in a day that the average thinker thinks. Let's just say that you're an A student in your thought life. Ninety-five percent of your 12,000 thoughts are true, right and real, and correspond with what God has said to be true, about Him, about you, about the world. That means that 5 percent of your thoughts are wrong. They're evil. They're off-base. How many is that? Any mathematicians in the room? That's 600 thoughts in a day if you're an A student in your thought life. There are 600 thoughts in a day that are wrong or sinful. They're from the father of lies, perhaps.

Again, the 12,000 thoughts is probably low. Ninety-five percent of our thoughts being right and real and true is probably too high. So, we're kind of curving up here, and it's still a pretty tough scenario when you think about how many of us are being held captive by lies from the enemy himself, by Satan himself. How many of are being held captive throughout the course of our day, 600 lies that would be from him and not from God?

And that will help you understand why that Apostle Paul, when he talks about our thought life, says this in 2 Corinthians 10:5. It will be on the screen here. He says, “Take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ.” Take every thought captive---how do you do that? This is how you do it. Any time you find any one of those 600 thoughts in your day that are wrong or evil or sinful or maybe from the father of lies himself, here’s what you do. You slap some handcuffs on it, you grab it by the collar, and you drag it into the courtroom where Jesus sits as judge. And you say, “Jesus, Judge Jesus, what about this thought? Is this thought from You? Is this thought obedient to what You have said is true about me, what You have said is true about You, and what You have said is true about the world? Or is it not?” And you open your Bible. You flip through the pages of God’s Word. And you say, “Does this thought correspond with what I see here?” And if it doesn’t, what do you do with that? You take that thought and you tell it to go back to the hell that it came from. Because that’s what God says about that lie. He says that is from the pit of hell. It’s not just a lie—it’s satanic. It’s from the one who births lies, because he only has one language, his first language, and that’s deception. That’s where that’s from. So, you tell it, “You can’t stay here any longer. Jesus told me, the Word of God has told me, that you are wrong. You’re sinful, you’re evil. Get out of my heart and my mind.” That’s what it means to take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ.

So, instead of: “I’d better be perfect to be loved”—again, it’s not just a lie, it’s satanic—now it’s **2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

So, you take that thought, no, you take that lie, no, you take that satanic lie, and you say, *Look, Jesus is the only one who is perfect. Jesus is the only one who is righteous. So, I don’t need to be. I can’t be. It’s Him and Him alone. And second of all, I want you to know that Jesus loved me so much that He told me He was going to give me His righteousness in place of my sin, His perfection, and call me His child. He’s done that for me. So, I don’t have to live by this. I don’t have to be captive to this idea that I’ve got to earn His love, that I’ve got to win His approval, that I have to perform, that I have to do what it takes to get Him to love me. I don’t have to do that anymore. In fact, I can’t do that. All I do is receive that righteousness as a gift.* And you replace that satanic lie with that truth from God’s Word. That’s what it means to take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ. You tell that lie to go back to where it came from.

When you know the truth, the truth will set you free. Anybody want to be free today? Because here's the reality. Someone's going to be captive. Is it going to be you, or is it going to be that lie that's been hanging around for months, years, maybe decades? You get to choose. St. Paul and Jesus himself would say that you get to choose what you're going to hold onto. Who's going to be captive? Is it you or is it going to be the lie?

Relationship

And when there are so many lies that we believe and live by, we can't fight that fight alone. We need each other. And that's where the power of relationships comes in, these other believers that are in our lives. And I want you to know that one of the reasons we call this not just discipleship, but relational discipleship, is because most of us tend to think of our spiritual lives, our growth in Christ, as this private matter; that *it's just between God and me. I'm just practicing the spiritual disciplines and practices, and all I need is me. I don't really need anybody else.* And that couldn't be further from the truth. Speaking of lies, that couldn't be absolutely further from the truth. It's relational discipleship. Because the reality is that God designed growth in Christ, abiding in Christ, to be communal. He designed it so that it would be something that we would do together. We need each other in order to be able to pursue Christ, and to be able to do that successfully in this life. In addition to that, think about the significant changes that have happened in your life over the past few years. The reality is that I bet there was always one person, if not multiple people, who were involved in that process. And so, whether it's your CG group or your AA group, or your life group, this is the reality that God uses us in such pivotal ways in each other's lives to help us to grow in Christ-likeness. We get to serve in that role in the lives of other people, helping them grow to become like Christ in all of life.

In the Gospel of Mark, there's a story he tells where he's trying to make that point. He's trying to help us see how pivotal relationships are to the spiritual life, to spiritual growth, to maturity in Christ. So, Mark tells this story where Jesus is in Capernaum. It's kind of His home base for ministry. It's up in Galilee. He's in Capernaum in a living room. And He is teaching and having a little house church. And people are coming and flocking to this house, and they're surrounding Him, sitting around Him in this living room. But they're also outside the front door, they're at every corner of the house. They're outside the windows. Everybody is trying to listen for the eternal truths that He has indicated. Meanwhile there are five friends, and these five

friends say, “Hey, Jesus is here.” And that is important, because one of those five friends was paralyzed. He lived on a mat, and that mat was his past, his present, and it will be his future. And so, these four friends say to their fifth friend, “Jesus is here. And He’s healed others. What if He heals you too? Let’s get you to Jesus.” So, they do that. They pick up this man on his mat and start carrying him to this home in Capernaum where the town has gathered. They try to get him in the front door, and they can’t do it. It’s too full. So, they say, “I know what we’ll do. Let’s get him to the roof.” So, they climb up the stairs. They get him up to the roof. And the roof is made out of this straw and dried mud. “We’re going to get our friend to Jesus. It doesn’t matter what it takes.” So, they find everything they can—a stick, a sharp rock—they’ll dig with their hands, they’ll find tools nearby. They’re going to dig through this roof because they’re going to get their friend to Jesus. Meanwhile, Jesus is teaching, and debris is falling on Him. And this little house church is full of eager listeners as He’s preaching. So, everyone’s looking up to see what is happening up there. And then they make a hole big enough to lower their friend down into the center of this living room at the feet of Jesus.

And this is what we find out in verse 5. **“When Jesus saw their faith,”** Mark said, **“He said to the paralyzed man, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”**

Isn’t that remarkable? You see, Jesus doesn’t just see the faith of the man sitting in front of Him. He sees the faith of his friends too. He sees their faith. And He looks at the man and says, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” He forgives him. And then in verses 8 through 11 we find out that there are some teachers of the law there, and they’re thinking to themselves, “Well, this is blasphemy. Who is this teacher to think that He could forgive sins?”

Jesus knows that, so in verse 8 it says, **“Immediately Jesus knew in His spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and He said to them, ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’?”**” (And of course, what’s harder to say is “Get up, take your mat and walk,” because they will know immediately whether it worked or not. Get up! Does he not?)

But Jesus says, **“But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”** So he said to the man, **“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”**

So, he does. The man stands up, takes his mat and goes home. Jesus sees their faith, not just this man's faith, but the faith of his four friends. He sees their faith, and then He heals the man's heart, and He heals his body.

I wonder ... when God looks at you, when Jesus looks at you, does He see you surrounded by people of faith? When He sees your faith, does He also see their faith? I wonder if, like this man whose life was on a mat, you have some roof diggers in your life—men or women who love the Lord and love you. And you know what? They would do whatever they had to do to get you to the feet of Jesus when that's what you need, when you're lying face down on a mat and you can't get up and there's nothing you can do about it. I wonder if you have some roof diggers in your life who would do that for you.

You see, I've got some friends, some very long friendships, and these men and I have said to each other many times over the years, "I want to be friends for life. Let's stay friends for the rest of our lives, and let's do whatever it takes to stay friends." And we've dug a few roofs for each other. We've done that for one another over the years.

I tell you, this is a church that's full of roof diggers. If you want to find men and women like this, who love the Lord and love you dearly and would do whatever it took to get you to the feet of Jesus, whether you want to be there or not—if you want some friends like that, this is a church where you can find men and women like that. Men's Quest, Women's Bible studies, our Sunday morning communities—it's all over the place. Just look. I tell you, if you're in your twenties and you're looking for a place to find a few people like this, a couple of roof diggers in your life, we have a Young Adults community. It hasn't been going for very long, but it's a group where you can find that. If it's been a few years, maybe since college, that you've had somebody in your life that would do this for you, who would get you on that mat to Jesus, even if they had to dig up a roof, find a friend in that Young Adults community. They're going to be doing a Bible study all this summer every Thursday evening, starting in June. Show up there. Find some friends. Ask God, "Would you bring a couple of roof diggers into my life and a couple of people that I could do that for as well?" Consider our Young Adults community, ya@grace360.org. E-mail them and they'll get back to you and tell you what's going on and how you get involved.

Look, if you're in a marriage that has grown cold or maybe is way off the rails, I want you to know, you're going to need a couple of roof diggers in your life. You're going to need a

couple of people who love you enough to save you, if this is the case, who will say to you, “You know what? I hear you talk a lot about your spouse and all the problems in your marriage because of your spouse.” They love you enough to say, “You can’t get better, your marriage can’t get better, until you say, ‘This is about me too. This is only about me, as far as God is concerned and what He wants me to be doing in my life.’ Your marriage can’t get better until you say, ‘I have to own all of my part in why my marriage is where it is.’ And if that’s 70 percent—if you have 70 percent responsibility, then you have to take 100 percent responsibility for that 70 percent. If it’s just 30 percent, you’ve got to take 100 percent responsibility for that 30 percent. That’s the first step. And when you have a bad marriage where two people are willing to do that, to take 100 percent responsibility for whatever their part is and are willing to own that and apologize for it and ask for forgiveness, you’re looking at a marriage that is about to go on a second honeymoon. You’re looking at a marriage that is about to be a second marriage married to the same person. We’ve seen it here. We’ve seen those kinds of turnarounds in marriages. It can happen in your life too if that’s where your marriage is. You need a couple of roof diggers.

Parents, I want to tell you that you can be a roof digger for your son or daughter. Because as a parent, what you’re doing is what you do when your kids are younger. You are cultivating the kind of warm and trusting relationship with your child, so that when they’re a teen or they’re twenty-three, they can come to you and say, “Mom and Dad, I’m stuck on a mat, and I need some help. I need you to dig up a roof for me. There’s something that has happened to me, or something going on in my life, and I need you. I need you to be with me. I need you to pray for me. I need you to get me to the feet of Jesus.” Parents, we can do that for our kids. We could be roof diggers for them, well into their adulthood. And if you’re a mom or a dad and you say, “You know, I haven’t done that. I missed out on those years. I haven’t cultivated that kind of relationship like you’re describing,” I’ll just say this. It’s never too late to start. What if you said, “Today is the first day of the rest of my relationship with my son or my daughter, no matter how old they are. I’m going to invest in that kind of relationship, because one day I want to be a roof digger for them, and maybe they’ll do that for me.” Parents, we can do that.

Do you want to be like Christ in all of life? Do you want to be a disciple? Do you want God to use you in someone else’s life? You’re going to need truth. Someone’s going to be captive. It’s going to be you, it’s going to be them, or it’s going to be the lie. Take those lies

captive. You're going to need relationships. You're going to need a roof digger, someone who's willing to get in there with their bare hands and dig up a roof for you, and you for them.

The Spirit

And finally, you're going to need the Spirit of God. You're going to need the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, because real change is an absolute miracle of God. There is no doubt about it.

That's a C. S. Lewis belief. He said, **"After the first few steps in the Christian life, we realize that everything that really needs to be done in our souls can only be done by God."** And that's a truth to believe. It's absolutely true. But don't take his word for it. He's just borrowing from the divinely inspired second letter to the Corinthians, where St. Paul says, *Transformation into Christ-likeness? You can't do that on your own. That's something only the Spirit of God can do.*

Look at 2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we all ... are being transformed into His image [the image of Jesus, the Son of God] with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

See, the first step towards the most important changes that need to happen in your life is for you to ask the Spirit of God to get in there, to root out some sin, to do a miracle, to do what only He can do.

Because the Spirit provides the supernatural power. Again, He ignites on fire that truth, that relationship that is in your life, so that they become so much more than they are on their own, or that they would be combined, just the two of them. He turbo charges that truth, those relationships, to effect change in your life.

But I want to be very clear about something, and that's this. The Holy Spirit is not an "it." The Holy Spirit is not some impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is a person. He's the third person of the Trinity. And as a person, we need to know and remember that He is exceedingly respectful; that He is not going to bully you into changing. He's not going to twist your arm and try to force you to do what He knows needs to happen in your life. He doesn't do that to us. He is respectful, and He respects our choices. So, He waits to be invited in.

So, what does that invitation sound like? What does it sound like and look like to invite the Spirit of God in to do what only He can do? It sounds like this.

I give up.

I can't fix me.

Please help me, God.

I surrender.

Lord, do whatever you have to do to change this part of me.

Maybe His four favorite words: **Your will be done.**

He loves to hear those words. He's waiting for that invitation to come in and do what only the Spirit of God can do, to bring that supernatural power that we don't have on our own, not even with truth, not even with relationships involved. We've got to have the Spirit, and He brings explosive change that we all need.

Because it's truth multiplied by relationship, multiplied by the Spirit. That's relational discipleship.

One of my heroes in the faith was a saint I never met, but whose books I read and heard speak. His name was Dallas Willard. Dallas Willard was a phenomenal Christian apologist and philosopher and theologian. But what he was most known for was his humility. It was his graciousness. Back in late summer of 2012, Dallas Willard was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He would only live nine more months, and he passed away in 2013. But soon after his diagnosis, he was talking with a close friend of his, and this is what he said to this friend. He said, "I think that when I die, it might be some time until I know it."

Dallas Willard was a man who abided with Christ. He was a man committed to becoming like Christ in all of life. His relationship with Jesus in this life was so real, so close, that he truly believed that when he got to heaven, when he passed from this life to the next, it might take some time before he realized he was in the actual presence of Jesus.

You see, how amazing would it be to become so much like Christ in this life, that when we pass from this life to the next, it takes us a little while to realize we're with our Savior, that we're home. We're in the presence of Jesus Christ Himself. I want that. I'll bet you want that too. Let's ask God to do that work in our lives.

Let's go to Him in prayer now.

Holy Father, thank You for loving us so much that You never stop working on us; that You never get tired, You don't slumber or sleep, You don't get frustrated and sick of us and write us off. No, Lord, You are committed to making us like yourself, making us like Your Son, and committed to doing that in all of life, not just part.

Thank You that have shown us that You'd do that for the truth that You have given us, You revealed to us; that You'd use these roof diggers, these men and women who will draw us closer to You, who will do whatever they have to do and we have to do, to draw a friend to Your feet, to place him there.

Thank You that You've implanted Your Spirit in us, not only as a guarantee of our salvation, but also as one who powerfully works to do what we can't do on our own. Lord, we thank You and we love You that You have chosen to do that. In Jesus' name. Amen.