

Ruin To Renovation - Sermon #5 - *The Surgeon's Knife*
Study Questions for Groups & Individuals

1. Dallas Willard claims, *societies the world over, including America, are desperately trying to produce citizens who can simply cope with life in a nondestructive manner...that spiritually, all societies are third world.*
 1. Do you agree? Why, or why not?
 2. How do individual Christians, or the local church make a difference in that? In what ways? Think beyond projects, programs, and institutional initiatives.
2. In Matthew 5:14-16 it says, *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*
 1. How do these verses speak into the problem Dallas Willard brings up of spiritual poverty in the world?
 2. What does it mean to be 'light'?
 3. Does it feel arrogant to say, you're 'light'? Why should it *not feel* arrogant?
 4. What does it mean to you to have the responsibility & confidence to be put on display as 'light' to the rest of the house (the world)? Is it frightening? Is it a good challenge?
 5. In what practical ways do we become light?
3. What are some other verses which speak to this end of individual Christians or local churches making a difference in the spiritual poverty of the world? Can you come up with some & discuss them together?
4. Hebrews 13:8-9a says, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings."*
 1. Is it a comfort to you that Jesus does not change? And what does that mean? And how do we equate that with Mt 5:17-20?
 2. What does it mean to live in a society which constantly ebbs & flows with new & different teachings? How do you stay true to Christ in the midst of that? What are some of your spiritual practices/disciplines to do so?
5. Jesus always modeled the statement - 'love without truth lies, truth without love kills'.
 1. What does that statement mean to you? How can a person be truthful & loving?
 1. Jesus upheld the authority of the Scriptures & the truth of them. He was also very kind, gentle & merciful, and at other times straightforward & cutting in his speech towards some for good reason.
 2. How is he being loving even when he is being cutting?

3. How and why is it important that the two (love & truth) not be separated in our journey with others?
6. Read again Mt 5:17-20
 1. What does it mean for our righteousness to surpass that of the Pharisees?
 2. Describe the difference in self-righteousness, and Christ-righteousness?
 3. How are both attained? What is one concerned about as opposed to the other?
7. Discuss Dallas Willards statement here: *“The primary ‘learning’ here isn’t about how to act, just as the primary wrongness or problem in human life isn’t what we do. Often what human beings do is so horrible that we can be excused, perhaps, for thinking that all that matters is stopping it. But this is an evasion of the real horror: the heart from which the terrible actions come. In both cases, it’s who we are in our thoughts, feelings, dispositions & choices - the inner life - that counts. Profound transformation there is the only thing that can definitively conquer outward evil.”*
 1. How easy is it for you to move even good issues into the upper story of life above the pursuit of Jesus? Why is this so damaging & counter productive?
 2. How do we avoid that mistake?
 3. What does the slow discipleship process of ripening look like which will actually change hearts? Why is it so difficult to commit to this, but why is it so important to do so?
8. As you place yourself next to Jesus to spiritually ripen, who is on the other side benefitting from you becoming like Jesus? Who is ripening alongside of you, and how?
9. Pray through Psalm 86:11-13 (the passion translation) together - *“Teach me more about you, how you work & how you move, so that I can walk onward in your truth until everything within me brings honor to your name. With all my heart & passion I will thank you, my God! I will give glory to your name, always & forever! You love me so much & you placed your greatness upon me. You rescued me from the deepest place of darkness, and you have delivered me from a certain death.”*

