



Dallas Willard was resurrected last week. His journey began in rural poverty in Missouri where electricity was unavailable until he neared adulthood, and it led eventually to the University of Southern California, where he taught philosophy for nearly fifty years. Dallas is on the short list of authors who have profoundly affected how I understand life and faith.

Dallas had a unique way of experiencing life and faith, a way evident even in childhood and that began to become evident in the 60's when he frequently opined, "If you could find a better way, Jesus would be the first one to tell you to take it. And if you don't believe that about Him, you don't have faith in Him, because what you're really saying is that He would encourage you to believe something that is false." In recent years, that affirmation has typically be stated as "**I'm sure Jesus is the kind of person who would be the first to say you must ruthlessly follow the truth wherever it leads.**"

Beginning from such a presupposition freed Dallas "from trying to avoid issues raised against the content of the teachings of Jesus. . . . It made it possible to do honest inquiry in any area and to meet those of different persuasions on the field of common inquiry, not on that of assumptions to be protected at all costs."

According to his good friend, pastor John Ortberg, Dallas believed that the four great questions humans must answer are these:

1. **What is reality?**
2. **What is the good life?**
3. **Who is a good person?**
4. **How do you became a good person?**

Dallas was concerned to answer those questions and then to live those answers, and he was convinced that no one has ever answered them as well as Jesus did.¹

Ortberg noted that Willard was always very precise in his use of language, citing definitions such as these:

- *Spirit* is dis-embodied personal power.
- *Beauty* is goodness made manifest to the senses.
- A *disciple* is anyone whose ultimate goal is to live as Jesus would live if He were in their place.
- *Dignity* is a value that creates irreplaceability.
- *Joy* is a pervasive sense of well-being.
- *Work* is the creation of value.
- *Play* is the creation of value that is not necessary.

Dallas was an unhurried, humble man who lived so deeply "in the genuine awareness of kingdom reality" that someone said of him, "I'd like to live in his time zone." He gave himself unstintingly to "**helping spiritually hungry people pursue their life with God,**" and he helped me in that way, too.

¹ www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/may-web-only/man-from-another-time-zone.html see also www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/september/27.45.html

Among dozens of other ideas that could be mentioned, Dallas thought about the nature of heaven in ways that linger. Ortberg noted that Dallas's definition of "heaven" went like this: **"Our destiny is to be part of a tremendously creative team effort, under unimaginably splendid leadership, on an inconceivably vast plane of activity, with ever more comprehensive cycles of productivity and enjoyment."**

Ortberg reflected that Dallas frequently commented that "God will certainly let everyone into heaven that can possibly stand it," noting that "this is another one of those statements that becomes more daunting and frightening and wonderful the more you think about it."

When Dallas was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in late summer of 2012, one of his reflections to his friends was: "I think that, when I die, it might be some time until I know it." Ortberg interpreted this to mean that for the one who trusts and follows Jesus, death itself has no power to interrupt this eternal kind of life He gives.

For such a worthy guide as Dallas Willard, for such a Savior as our Lord Christ, for such an Eternal Life as lies before us, I give hearty thanks to God!

Dave

Postscripts:

1. I hope you'll join me in making welcome **Marilyn Dobyns**, who moved her membership to CBF on Sunday. Marilyn has been worshipping with us for some time, and we rejoice at this new and deeper relationship!
2. Please go to http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/site/TR?fr_id=16396&pg=entry to register for or to donate to this year's **Greater Howard County CROP Walk for Hunger**. The walk begins at OMI at 2 p.m. on Sunday, June 2!
3. There will be a "**Community Shred Day**" this Saturday at The Columbia Bank here in the Oakland Mills Village Center. Documents will be shredded for free from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

