

The Divine Conspiracy, Dallas Willard
Review by Keith McNamar
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Quick Summary

Jesus invites everyone to come and follow him in living the life of the Kingdom of God, but few choose to take his call to discipleship seriously. We tend to take Jesus' words and create commandments out of them, when instead he invites us to experience a true heart transformation that would truly make us like Christ and develop the kind of character he desires for us. A serious discipleship involves our apprenticeship to Jesus in his way of life.

Key Insights

- The Kingdom of God is the range of his effective will – the places which are governed by his principles
- There is a middle way between the emphasis on “atonement” and personal salvation and the “social gospel” – that way is to see Jesus as teacher and us as disciples whose lives are meant to conform to his pattern
- The beatitudes demonstrate the availability of the kingdom to all kinds of people – particularly those not considered significant by the kingdoms of this world
- Jesus' aim is to enable us to be good – he teaches the good life so we can enter into it, not just talk about it – he wants us to become the kind of person who naturally fulfills God's law
- We cannot live in community with one another having a different posture towards God than we have towards others – the right posture is one of “prayer”, of request, of asking rather than demanding
- You are somebody's disciple – to be Jesus' disciple we must consciously choose to take on his ways in order that we would be capable of what he does – that we would learn to live fully in God's kingdom like he does
- Discipleship does not just happen – it is a matter of personal intention to become a disciple, and a matter of church intention to make disciples
- To make disciples we teach others to truly love God and place him at the center of life, and secondly we teach them to replace old patterns of thinking and behavior with new, Kingdom-oriented patterns of thinking and behavior

Action Items

- Create an “intention” for discipleship in the church – a system that prioritizes it
- Establish a routine for personal discipleship
- Establish a routine for discipling my kids

Quotes

- “He knew that we cannot keep the law by trying to keep the law. To succeed in keeping the law one must aim at something other and something more. One must aim to become the *kind of person* from whom the deeds of the law naturally flow.” (p. 142)
- “Suppose I am a pastor. If, truly, God did nothing in my church service, or in response to my efforts in ministry, how much would it really matter if the people in attendance still thought and spoke well of things and returned for the next service and brought their friends. I may be tempted to think I have to attract people to hear me but could get by without God.” (p. 202)
- “Anyone who is not a continual student of Jesus, and who nevertheless reads the great promises of the Bible as if they were for him or her, is like someone trying to cash a check on another person’s account. At best, it succeeds only sporadically.” (p. 273)
- “Nondiscipleship is the elephant in the church...The fundamental negative reality among Christian believers now is their failure to be constantly learning how to live their lives in the Kingdom Among Us. And it is an *accepted* reality.” (p. 301)
- “...the intention of God is that we should each become the kind of person whom he can set free in his universe, empowered to do what *we* want to do.” (p. 379)