

Session 4 | Confronting Deception: On the Path to a Renovated Heart

The Goal: To move beyond a distant relationship with God, religious knowledge, and "religious effort" to flourish into people defined by the love and joy of Jesus through living the with-God life.

1. Opening the Circle

After watching the video, take a moment of quiet.

- **Reflect:** What single word or image from the video stayed with you?
- **Share:** How did the video make you feel about your own spiritual journey this week?

2. Finding Ourselves in the Story

In Jesus' day, people often got stuck in two "spiritual ruts":

- **The Pharisees:** Thought the "good life" was about perfect external behavior and rules.
- **The Sadducees:** Thought religion was just a side-hustle to gaining power and comfort in the "real world."

Jesus looked at both and pointed toward the **interior life**.

Read Matthew 7:19–23

Steve mentioned three common "misconceptions" we often fall into today:

1. **Christian Insurance:** "I'm safe for the afterlife, so it doesn't matter how I live now."
2. **Knowledge-Based:** "If I know the right facts about God, I am growing."
3. **Self-Striving:** "If I just try harder and do more, I'll finally be 'good enough.'"

- **Discussion:** Which of these "ruts" do you find yourself leaning toward? How does that mindset affect your joy?

3. Who is Shaping You?

"We don't have a choice of being discipled in this world—only who we allow to shape us."

- **Reflection:** If you didn't intentionally follow Jesus, who or what would be the primary "teacher" shaping your values and reactions right now? (e.g., Social media, career pressure, family expectations?)

4. The Six Dimensions of You

Steve describes discipleship as a "personal invitation to become a cherished apprentice of Jesus." It is a move from a **malformed** life to a **with-God** life.

To understand how we are malformed, we have to look at how the world "disciples" the six areas of our personhood.

The Six Dimensions:

- **Mind (Thoughts):** The images and concepts we dwell on.
- **Mind (Feelings):** The emotions that flow from our thoughts.
- **Spirit (Will/Choice):** Our "power center" where we make decisions.
- **Body:** Our physical habits, reflexes, and cravings.
- **Social:** Our relationships and how we react to others.
- **Soul:** The "integrator" that tries to keep all these parts working together.

Read Romans 1:19–25

- **Group Reflection:** Looking at these six areas, where do you feel the "manual of the world" has had the strongest influence on you? For example, has the world taught your *Body* to crave constant comfort, or your *Social* dimension to be driven by the fear of man?

5. Facing the Center

"Without God, we become the center." Willard notes that when we aren't interactive with God, our **Body** becomes our primary source of pleasure and identity. This can lead to "self-worship" through things like body-image fixation, gluttony, or dependencies.

- **Vulnerability Check:** In what ways do you see your physical wants or habits acting as a "substitute" for the peace and satisfaction only God provides?

6. The Beauty of Being "Broken"

Willard writes: "*The ruined soul must be willing to hear of and recognize its own ruin before it can find how to enter a different path.*" * **Read Jeremiah 17:9 and Isaiah 6:5.** * **Discussion:** Why is it actually **good news** to admit we are "fragmented" or "ruined" on our own? How does admitting our inability to change by "willpower" open the door for the Holy Spirit to move?

7. Closing: A Prayer of Surrender

We end in silence. If you feel ready to invite the Holy Spirit into these six areas of your life, use the prayer below as your own.

A Prayer for the Renovation of the Heart *Heavenly Father, I admit that I cannot think, feel, or will my way into Christlikeness on my own strength. I stand in need of a renovation that only Your Spirit can lead. Today, I open the doors:*

- **My Mind (Thoughts):** I surrender my patterns of thinking. Inhabit my thoughts; teach me to fix my mind on whatever is true.
- **My Mind (Feelings):** I turn over my emotions. Align my feelings with Your reality rather than my fears.
- **My Spirit (Will):** I give You my "want-to." Move my heart to desire what You desire.
- **My Body:** I offer You this physical vessel. May my habits and reflexes work in harmony with Your Spirit.
- **My Social Dimension:** I surrender my reputation. Help me move with the same grace Jesus showed.
- **My Soul:** I present the depths of my being. Restore my soul and weave these pieces into a unified whole. *I am here, Lord, and I am willing. Have Your way in me. Amen.*