

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

**The Goal:** To move beyond a distance 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.*