

Session Five: Paradox of Dying to Live

Core Truth: We must die to self in all dimensions of our being if we are to experience the full benefits of a transformed life.

Video review: Was there anything that stood out to you as you viewed the video?

1. To date Steve has touched on 3 core ideas in this series:

The Inevitability of Being Shaped

a. Everyone everywhere is being shaped. In life you do not get to choose to be a disciple or apprentices, We are all apprentice- disciples- Christian or not. It's just who we become apprentices of that determines how our life goes—be it a culture of anxiety, a drive for success, or the opinions of others.

The Better Invitation to Apprentices under Master Jesus

b. But we have a different Invitation. We are called to be apprentices of Jesus—the most loving, caring, and, as Willard loved to say, the most *relaxed* individual to ever live. He invites us to move out of our weary lives of worry and bitterness and into a life of "greater life with God".

Renovation of Heart

c. To be loving and joyful like Jesus, we must agree to be transformed in all six dimensions of our person.

2. Real-World Transformation

Discussion: Spiritual transformation isn't an illusion; it shows up in traffic and having to wait for others. Have the above three ideas (a, b, c), or other thoughts, feeling, behaviours, or experiences led you to reflect on your own spiritual formation in Christ? Have you experienced any change you want to share? Thinking back, where did it most reflect your "old self"?

3. The Definition of Self-Denial

Self-denial is often misunderstood as self-hatred or being a "doormat." Self-denial is *not* suppressing your personality or living a joyless life. It is "evicting" the old management so Christ can move in. According to Willard, it is the **tactical decision** to unseat the ego as the manager of your universe.

Read Proverbs 14:12: *"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death."* In what ways has your "best thinking" or "self-management" led you toward stress or brokenness rather than life?

4. Mapping the Self: The Six Dimensions

To renovate a house, you must inspect the plumbing and the wiring. To renovate a heart, we must see how the "self-will" manifests in these six areas:

Dimension	How the "Self-Will" Shows Up
1. Thoughts	Obsessive rumination; being the "hero" or "victim" in your head.
2. Feelings	Emotional slavery: your "internal weather" depends on your circumstances.
3. Will (Heart)	Willfulness over willingness; "My kingdom come" instead of "Thy kingdom come."
4. Body	Habitual indulgence; using the body for self-gratification (doomscrolling, fantasy, etc.).
5. Social	Image management: using people to bolster your ego or mediate rejection.
6. Soul	Fragmentation: feeling "all over the place" and disconnected from God.

Reviewing the table above, which of the six dimensions currently feels the most "disintegrated" or exhausted in your life?

5. The Great Exchange

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.'" — **Matthew 16:24-25**

Why is Matthew 16:24-25 a beautiful blueprint for a greater life? How could the paradoxical idea of dying to live transform us away from striving, fear, worry, anxiety, and toward joy and love.

Jesus asks, "*What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?*" (**Matt 16:26**). What "part of the world" (reputation, comfort, control) are you most afraid to lose in exchange for soul-rest?

Many of us have spent years trying to change our behaviour, without ever fully submitting our self-will to experience the change our character. No wonder we did not experience the joy and love of doing life on God's terms.

Self-Reflection (on our own): The "Unseating" of Management. Giving up control to our Lord.

Consider an area of your life or a dimension of it, where Jesus may not be in control. Which of these three statements is hardest for you to say today?

1. *"I am no longer the center of my own life."*
2. *"I no longer reserve the right to arrange reality around my comfort."*
3. *"I no longer treat God as my consultant."*

To experience greater love and joy, we need to turn over lives to God in that area. Here's a sample prayer right now, and a daily way to practice self-denial to counter self-denial:

"Self, I see you trying to take control of my thoughts, feelings, my spirit, my body, and my social relationships, and fragment my soul. I deny your right to rule. I hand the keys back to Jesus."

Wrap up: *What is one thing you take home with you that can be most helpful toward the path of becoming a loving and joyful person in Jesus?*