



Discipleship 101
New Believer Lesson #10
The Divine Conspiracy
Based on the Book,
The Divine Conspiracy,
by Dallas Willard



By Andy Madonio
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Introduction:

The divine conspiracy is breaking into human history. It comes not with an eardrum-splitting crash, but as a *gentle whisper*. The message is simple, but absolutely life changing. God's kingdom is not just coming . . . it is here, in our midst. If we listen closely and follow the invitation to be part of this work of God in the world, our lives will never be the same . . . God longs to entrust his presence and power in the lives of ordinary human beings. To do this, he must grow character within us and often this is forged in the fires of adversity, pain, and loss. Is God growing your character through the tough times of life? The kingdom is near! **Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy – Jesus Master Class for Life, participant's guide.***

The LORD said, "*Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.*" Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a *gentle whisper*. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "*What are you doing here, Elijah?*" [1 Kings 19:11-13](#) NIV

As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' [Matthew 10:7](#) NIV

The Conspiracy:

People involved in a conspiracy are close; so close that they can speak in whispers. When God spoke audibly to the prophet Elijah in the previous passage, he made it clear that he doesn't need dramatics and special effects to make his presence known. He merely needs someone willing to listen to a whisper.

Since conspiracies involve secrets, the divine conspiracy is not open and obvious to the world in general. When was the last time you saw TV news crews descending upon a church service to film a baptism, an altar call, or even miraculous healings for the evening news? A divine conspiracy is an operation that is not obvious to the world, but is going on in collaboration with God. As the scriptures indicate, God is working with some people to bring his kingdom to this world, but who they are and what they are doing is not always clear.

In a conspiracy, there is closeness, an intimacy of whispers. Intimacy requires that you be able to trust those involved with you, therefore their character is vital to the operation's

success. God’s kingdom is safely entrusted only to people of character – why? So he can trust them with his power! God is into power sharing with his children, but power makes tremendous demands on a person’s character.



What are some possible consequences when a person has power but does not have character shaped by God?

The Gospel & the Kingdom of God:

The main message of the divine conspiracy is the good news of the kingdom of God. What this means for an apprentice of Jesus today is incredibly important – let’s learn.

Consider the number of sermons and bible studies given on the topic of *the kingdom of God*. I have, and I can’t recall very many in my decades as a Christian. Why is this? I believe it is because we teachers of the Word of God have been ignorant of the meaning of the “gospel” (good news) of the kingdom of God. As apprentices (disciples) of Jesus, we need to remedy this shortfall.

Jesus plainly said in [Matthew 6:33](#):

“ . . . seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness . . . ”

Seek this kingdom **first**, Jesus said. That means don’t look for or fret over anything else you may have been told about discipleship, no matter how important you feel it is. The **first** thing you must do is seek the kingdom of God.

If Jesus thought it was so important, then it must be. Remember, this is a conspiracy that most people you work with, or go to school with, or ride the bus or train with, don’t really know much about; but you do! If Jesus said this two millennia ago, it must have been valid then, and the next year, and the next century, and the next millennium, and on and on, right up to today. It is still valid for us apprentices of Jesus today. Seek first God’s kingdom!



When you are really seeking God’s kingdom first, what kinds of attitudes and actions rise to the surface in your life?

The Kingdom's Closeness:

[The following is from an article by Lois Tverberg at the En-Gedi Resource Center.](#)

The actual words [for the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 6:33] that came out of Jesus' mouth were probably "Malchut shemayim" (mahl-KUT shuh-MAH-eem) which was a phrase common in rabbinic teaching in his day. The word malchut is related to the word "melekh" which means "king". Malchut is associated with the actions of a king - his reign and authority, and also anyone who is under his authority. Shemayim is Hebrew for "heavens". A simple way of translating it would be "God's reign", or "how God reigns" or "those God reigns over".

The primary understanding of the kingdom of heaven was God's reign over the lives of people who enthrone him as king.

The question of Jesus' time was when and how God would establish this kingdom. It was thought that when the Messiah came, the Kingdom of God would arrive all at once with great glory. But Jesus disagrees:

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." [Luke 17:20-21](#) NIV

Jesus meant that a person is brought into the kingdom of God when the person repents and decides to accept God as his King, and it is something that happens in a person's heart, not a political movement or visible display of God's power.

The gospel, the good news of God's kingdom, is simply that you can now, today, be involved in what God is doing in this universe. The statement, "***the kingdom of God is within you,***" applies right now, today, if you are his disciple or apprentice. This kingdom first arrived when Jesus arrived on earth, and it is here today in the presence of every apprentice of his. That is the divine conspiracy. But, like the ginsu knives on the TV infomercial, there is more.

This good news of God's kingdom is present in every aspect of your life, not just in things religious. It is in your school, your job, your chores, your thoughts, your play, it is everywhere. Imagine it as being all around you in the air, the kingdom of heaven invading human space. Old Testament passages reveal the Hebrew understanding of the heavens being present all around us: Hagar in the wilderness – [Genesis 21:17-19](#); Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac – [Genesis 22:9-18](#). The kingdom of God around us all the time is certainly good news.



What will be in your thoughts now, or how will you act as you go throughout the day, knowing the kingdom of heaven is all around you in the very air you breathe?

Dealing With Sin – Trusting In Jesus:

The church today has come up with a couple of typical scenarios for dealing with sin. One, the political left-wing version tries to address sin by attacking societal ills, like poverty, injustice, hunger, etc., while the political right-wing version teaches that a simple decision to ‘trust’ Jesus and get ‘saved’ will rescue you from sin and secure your future seat in heaven. Both scenarios are lacking because both neglect the present, close-at-hand kingdom. There is some good and some truth in both extremes, but separately they are divisive and incomplete.

Maybe, instead of endlessly trying to figure out how to cure all societal and personal sin with programs or formula-like words, we should be more concerned about what to do with the new life we have received! To do this, we need to recognize the tremendous amount of grace God has bestowed upon us.

def. of Grace: The action of God in our life to help us do what we cannot do on our own.



What comes to your mind when you think of grace?

It is said that saints (Jesus-believers) burn more grace than sinners (non-believers) ever could. Sinners need only forgiveness, but saints need grace 24/7. I don’t know if that is really true, but an apprentice of Jesus must learn to live by grace, constantly receiving power from the close and ever-present kingdom of heaven for his daily life – making decisions, solving family issues, doing his job, taking tests in school. God is working with us, supplying whatever we need (ref [Acts 17:28](#)). Often, we don’t even realize his help is present. That is part of the divine conspiracy – revealing our character – do we thank God, or pat ourselves on the back?

Trusting Jesus:

In our western culture today, the phrase, “Have you trusted Jesus?” almost exclusively means, “Have you trusted Jesus’ death on the cross to pay the price for your sins so you don’t have to, and so your future in heaven is assured?”

Consider how that compares to, “Have you trusted Jesus enough to do the things he taught?” What do the gospels really mean when they speak of trusting Jesus? Can you trust him for your salvation only, but not have him as lord?

Wouldn't that be like having salvation without a savior?
Wouldn't that be like having a kingdom without a king?
Would that even be salvation?

Is it possible to trust Jesus with your whole life – your job, your marriage, your family, your health, your future, your reputation, your money . . . your everything?



One of the keys to becoming an apprentice of Jesus is to think well enough of Jesus to trust him. How is trusting Jesus a one-time event as well as a daily discipline?

The New Testament teaches that “trusting Jesus” equates to “God with you” all the time. Then truly the kingdom of God is within you.

def. of the **kingdom of God**: The range of God’s effective will, or to use a previous phrase, “Those God reign over.”

Does God’s kingdom have a place within your life? Is his effective will partnered with yours, or are you fighting him for real estate, preventing his working in your life and everywhere your life has influence? He will not “push” you out of his way, nor will he force himself upon you. It is your free moral choice, and you can stop him from acting by your refusal to believe and acknowledge his kingship (ref [Matthew 13:58](#)).

Become a part of the divine conspiracy today. Trust Jesus in every aspect of your life today, and do it again every day. Listen constantly for the quiet whisper in your ear telling you what to do next. Begin to do what he taught, and look for your life to change.

See you in Lesson #11!

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]