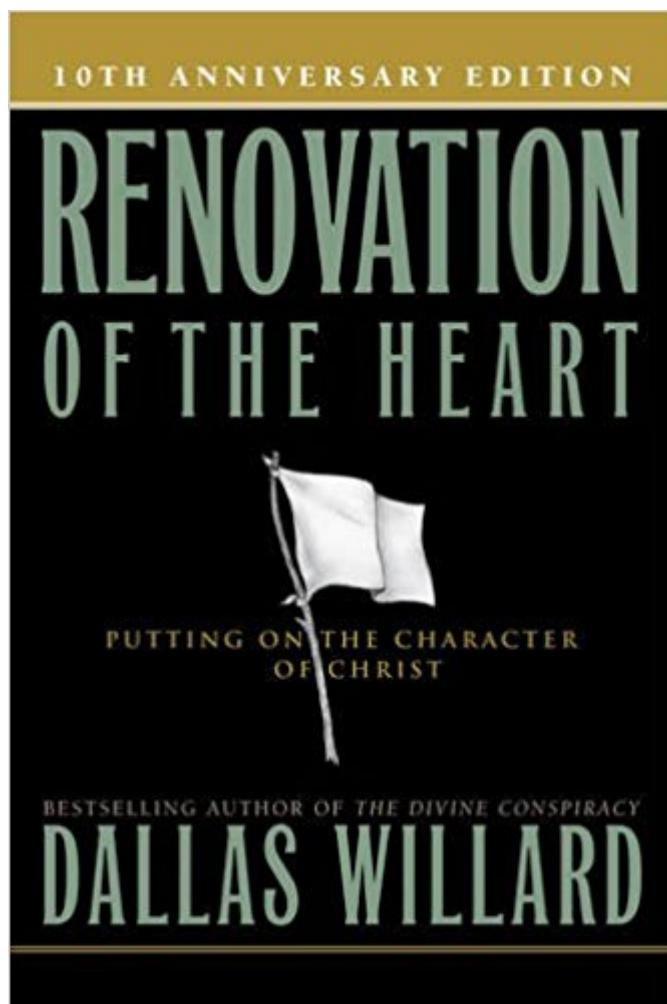


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# Renovation Of The Heart: Putting On The Character Of Christ



## Synopsis

As Christians, we know that we are new creations in Jesus. So we try to act differently, hoping this will make us more like Him. But changing our outward behavior doesn't change our hearts. Only by God's grace can we be transformed internally. Renovation of the Heart lays a biblical foundation for understanding what best-selling author Dallas Willard calls the "transformation of the spirit" — a divine process that "brings every element in our being, working from inside out, into harmony with the will of God." This fresh approach to spiritual growth explains the biblical reasons why Christians need to undergo change in six aspects of life: thought, feeling, will, body, social context, and soul. Willard also outlines a general pattern of transformation in each area, not as a sterile formula but as a practical process that you can follow without the guilt or perfectionism so many Christians wrestle with. Don't settle for complacency. Accept the challenge Renovation of the Heart offers to become an intentional apprentice of Jesus Christ, changing daily as you walk with Him.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As Christians, we know that we are new creations in Jesus, so we try to act differently, hoping this will make us more like Him. But changing our outward behavior doesn't change our hearts. Only by God's grace can we be transformed internally. Renovation of the Heart lays a biblical foundation for understanding what best-selling author Dallas Willard calls the "transformation of the spirit" — a divine process that "brings every element in our being, working from inside out, into harmony with the will of

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DALLAS WILLARD is a professor and former director of the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California. He received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin and is the best-selling author of more than thirty publications, including *The Divine Conspiracy*, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, and *Hearing God*.

Let me start out by saying this is a tough read. John Ortberg once described Dallas's writing as being "dense." Well, this book is certainly "dense." It took me just over a month to finish it, and I will read it again, even more slowly, right after I finish my re-reading of *Practice Resurrection*, by Eugene H. Peterson. In this book, Willard introduces the concept of "spiritual formation," and goes through all of the various parts of the human being that need to be renovated, or transformed: the mind, the will, the body, the soul, and even the social dimension of the person. He tackles each of these dimensions individually in one or two chapters each. He finishes the work with talking about how we need to be children of light, and then goes into a final chapter about how this all should play out in the local congregation. There are many moments in this book that caused me to stop and think about what he had written, most especially what he wrote concerning being and making disciples, from Matthew 28:18-20. I'll end this with a quote from Ray Stedman, that Dallas quoted in the last chapter. "God's first concern is not what the church does, it is what the church is. Being must always precede doing, for what we do will be according to what we are. To understand the moral character of God's people is a primary essential in understanding the nature of the church. As Christians we are to be a moral example to the world, reflecting the character of Jesus Christ." (From Ray Stedman's book, *Body Life: The Church Comes Alive*) For anyone interested in spiritual formation, this is a must read.

How can I possibly do justice to this book in a brief review? This is easily one of my favorite Christian books. The reading is demanding but rewarding. The Renovation of the Heart will be a

renovation of the mind for many Christians. Hitting on the problem of why we don't grow as we should as Christians, Willard uses the breadth of his knowledge in philosophy, psychology and theology to sharpen our understanding. In the end, we have gotten occupied with other things and we need to come back to the simple but profound truth of discipleship. Get it and read it carefully.

While not as enthralling as his "Divine Conspiracy" book, I found much to highlight and ponder in this excellent book. There are sections that get a bit bogged down in too much peripheral detail but there are also others that are extraordinarily informative and inspiring. In particular his discussion of the soul is fascinating and well worth the cost of the book by itself. I would recommend this to anyone who sincerely desires to become, as Willard said, an "apprentice of Christ."

I am 100% lay person with ZERO minister type training of any kind. Consequently, 90% of the time this book is a very difficult and ethereal read for me. I do pick up good nuggets here and there, but most of the time..... yowza.

Willard, Dallas, 2002. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress. Dallas Willard (1935-2013) was a professor and former Director of the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles where he taught since 1965. Willard lived out his personal philosophy within his teaching, writing and in his strategy for his life: "I know what good work is. I'm going to do it, and I expect God to help me. I will give my life to it. Of course, I will be a prisoner of Christ; that's what I am."<sup>[i]</sup> This philosophy is very much evidenced in his writing and in his commitment to allowing the Spirit to reign and provide direction in his life. Although not setting out to teach in a secular university, he was led to do so subsequent to his graduate work. Willard stated that he never self-promoted himself - not seeking a position or a raise - but considers himself a "literalist in terms of the Bible,"<sup>[ii]</sup> as it relates to advancement coming from God. The thesis of this book is that in the process of realizing the character of Christ, one may "remove or master" each impediment to gaining that character (:10-11); and that process should be orderly - not haphazard or mysterious - to those wanting to overcome human (sinful) nature. Willard presents five chapters of introductory, foundation-building elements which examines mankind's frailty in the human existence, and provides support for the development of spiritual formation; including why people often fall short of the ideal of Christ-like character. An "Interlude" chapter reflects on the reality of seeking this transformation. It is Willard's perspective that our own effort falls short; we are in need of God's grace. He states that those who are "the greatest saints are not

those who need less grace, but those who consume the most grace;" God's grace sustains them (:93-94). Willard then lays out through six chapters a process of transformation of: (1) Mind/ Thought; (2) Mind/Feeling; (3) Will; (4) Body; (5) Social Dimension; and (6) Soul. These areas of one's self are outlined earlier in chapter two as distinct areas in which we must allow the Spirit to work through for our transformation (:38). In the two concluding chapters Willard examines how this process of transformation interfaces with the world and within the local church. In the world, a contrast of light and darkness presents a picture of the outcome of personal sanctification, and its effect upon us and the world we are in (:224). Willard then presents God's plan for spiritual formation within the congregation of the people of God with a focus on being rather than doing. This book makes me recall Richard J. Foster's Celebration of Discipline. While I read Foster's book in 1978 during a period of discipleship, I find Willard's book is timely to this era of my life. Through this book I am able to more fully recognize my shortcomings and how I may have diverted from disciplines in my life, which were a critical and primary element of my new life in Christ. I am not surprised that Foster provides an endorsement for this book.[iii] Willard puts flesh on the teaching of sanctification in a way I need to reconsider within my life and leadership ministry, and grasp that the transforming work of the Spirit ". . . brings every element in (my) being, working from inside out, into harmony with the will of God . . . "[iv] C.S. Lewis' The Great Divorce also comes to mind, as the landscape on the way to the Kingdom feels unbearably unreachable until one repents through an act of the will. Notes:[i] Dallas Willard, "My Journey To and Beyond Tenure in a Secular University" (Remarks given at the Faculty Forum Luncheon of the C.S. Lewis Foundation Summer Conference, University of San Diego, 21 June 2003), available at <http://www.dwillard.org/biography/tenure.asp>, Internet.[ii] Ibid.[iii] Richard Foster states, "No one has thought more carefully than Dallas Willard about the human personality and how it can be transformed into Christlikeness." This endorsement is found on the back cover of the hardcover version of Renovation of the Heart.[iv] A summary which quotes the author is found on the back cover of the hardcover version of Renovation of the Heart.

Over the years I've read hundreds of books on spiritual formation. I remember being touched by a meeting years ago with Dr. Bill Bright founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. When I asked him about the ministry of Crusade (CRU) during a two hour interview he simply talked about his love for Jesus and wept. Use later I had the privilege of working closely with him for 8 years and I saw his words fleshed out. That marked my life as has this work and others by Dallas Willard. I love the integration of thoughtfulness, practical wisdom, compassion, and living from the inside out. His words and spirit have deeply impacted my life like few others.

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