

calls conspiracy.” It is the Lord you are to fear, not the so-called “conspiracies” of one political ideology against another. Honor the Lord as holy, fear him, and keep yourself in his place of rest.

*For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread...”*

- Isaiah 8:11-3

## #8 – UNDERSTANDING: THE ONE WHO HAS, WILL BE GIVEN MORE (Matthew 13:12)

*To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.*

- Matthew 13:11-13

If you have embraced the truth that has been revealed to you, then you are in a position to use your understanding to gain even more details about that truth. It is similar to learning the secrets of math.

If a student understands first grade math, then the second grade teacher can build on that knowledge to provide that student with more understanding. This process continues for as long as that student continues to add to his knowledge of mathematics. Eventually, the student will be able to use their understanding to resolve story problems, do equations, and even apply their math knowl-

edge to other fields of study, such as chemistry, economics, and statistical analysis.

However, as often happens, the first grade student who doesn't know their numbers from 1 to 100 will soon begin to struggle with even basic introductory math lessons. If the student fails to catch up academically and so never masters basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division there is very little hope of ever being able to process something as complex as a story problem. And as an adult that student may not even be able to understand their basic personal finances.

In Matthew 13:11-13, Jesus is saying that if you have received basic instruction concerning the kingdom of Heaven, then you have the foundation to hear and receive the “mysteries” or “secrets” of the kingdom of heaven as well. If you believe there is a God and you understand that God is good, you are ready to receive the next level of insight that God is revealing. You will then learn to see God in creation and in the written text of Scripture.

When Jesus spoke of these things he was building on the principles of theology that had already been built into the understanding of the Jewish people. Within that framework of understanding was the promise that the Messiah would come to Israel and to all mankind to deliver them. And Jesus was that Messiah.

If the people who heard Jesus speak understood his teaching about himself, they would be able to connect that knowledge to their previous understanding. They would then be ready to receive the next level of insight and be able to apply their new learning to their lives.

But, if they instead rejected it as false, then even the understanding they had would stop increasing, grow stagnant, and eventually become useless. And worse, their misunderstanding would be misap-

plied to their theology and then to their lives. Ultimately, even the lowest introductory levels of insight they had would be lost.

*In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*

- Hebrews 5:12

Even today these truths remain relevant. If we embrace them we will be able to add to our learning. If we have received the promises of God and entered God's rest by trusting the knowledge of God, then in this place of peace and trust we will be given more. We will find ourselves in a position to process "complicated equations" and apply the principles of faith-rest to all areas of our lives. Just like math is used in daily life and applied to multiple fields of study, so will our ever-growing understanding of God be applied in our daily lives in a multitude of ways.

If a person rejects the knowledge of God at the very beginning, or at any point along the path of growth, the process of applying God's rest to life begins to unravel. Soon, even the little peace of mind that person has in Christ and the faith-rest in their soul will be gone.

To keep growing,  
you need to  
keep hearing.

To keep growing, you need to keep hearing.

## #9 – WISDOM (James 1:5)

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

- James 1:5

Discernment is one of the necessities of life. Everyday we have to evaluate situations, relationships, products and information (including the mainstream media's non-stop news). There is a difference between knowing the hard facts and applying them. Life is not as easy as a true/false quiz. Life is more like a long rambling story problem in math class. In life, an answer to the question merely opens up the next level of the never-ending story problem. Still, there certainly are some absolute true or false answers in life, because truth, reality, and God are all absolutes. But if you can't pass the true/false quiz of God's reality then you are not going to be able to pass the test of life either. To pass the test of life you will need wisdom to apply your true/false answers correctly.

Even when we know the right answers, sometimes the application of what is right involves a variety of variables such as timing, presentation, intensity, personality, situation, background, experience, and so on. This is definitely not justification for the false theories of situational ethics or moral relativism, but is instead an appeal for wisdom when applying absolutes.

This wisdom is available to the child of God who is abiding in the place of God's rest. From this place of confidence, a believer can go to the Lord and ask God for wisdom and insight related to various situations, timing, personalities, options, etc. James tell us:

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.*

- James 1:5

Of course, James is assuming you already know the Lord and understand truth - and that what you are lacking is clear discernment in how to use that knowledge. What you need is wisdom.

Once again God is not hiding. In fact, Solomon wrote:

*Wisdom cries aloud in the street,  
in the markets she raises her voice;  
at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;  
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.*

- Proverbs 1:20-21

<p>If you need to understand reality, study Creation.</p> <p>If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures.</p> <p>If you need wisdom, ask God.</p>	<p>If you need to understand reality, study Creation.</p> <p>If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures.</p> <p>If you need wisdom, ask God.</p>
<p>If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures.</p> <p>If you need wisdom, ask God.</p>	<p>God's voice is in the streets, and his Spirit is in your heart.</p> <p><i>Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.</i></p> <p><i>The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.</i></p>

- 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

## 10 – EMPOWERED IN CONTENTMENT: THE QUADRANTS OF LIFE

(Philippians 4:11-13)

*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.  
I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.  
I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,  
whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.  
I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

- Philippians 4:11-13 (NIV)

Throughout the Scriptures we are told that God is good. Our definition of “good” could include synonyms like pleasant, pleasing, desirable, pain-free, or sought-after. However, when we study the verses that proclaim God as “good”, we see that part of God’s “good” activity toward us does not fall within our “pleasant and pleasing” definition. Things like testing, trying, examining, and sacrificing are also part of the goodness of God.

In Psalm 107, which begins and ends with statements attesting to the “goodness” of God, forty-three verses are laced with real life situations where the goodness of God has been manifested to people. Some of these people were lost and wandering, some had been subjected to bitter labor by God, others were caught in a storm sent by God, and some of them were suffering divine discipline for their rebellion against God. Although each group was in a different situation, and there for different reasons - some had rebelled, some had obeyed, some were guilty, some were innocent - they were all still living within the goodness of God.

The obvious truth is that God is doing something in our lives with the aim of changing us - and this is one of the things we must be taught. We were all at one time rebels and enemies of God, but were then saved by grace. Now that we have been delivered from death and sin, given eternal life, and seated in Christ in heavenly places, we are purposefully being transformed into his image.

The change is more than drastic. In fact, the radical nature of this change we are undergoing cannot be understated. We began as rebels against God who existed in a state of death - but are now being transformed into obedient sons who have been seated with Christ in constant fellowship with a holy God. A great transformation has begun, but it is far from over. We are all being changed even now.