



2024 1Q Psalms Lesson 8 Wisdom for Righteous Living

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

What is wisdom? Is it the same as IQ? Is it the same as knowledge?

Wisdom is the ability to discern, differentiate, prioritize, and choose what is actually, in reality, healthy, right, true, and good—what is the best conclusion, course, action in any given situation.

Can wisdom be achieved by following a list of rules? Even if those rules are good ones? Why or why not? Because wisdom requires understanding of the reasons—rule-keeping impairs growth in understanding! So legal religions actually interfere with growing in godly wisdom, because they keep believers functioning as children, on spiritual milk—we are not suggesting the babes in Christ are not saved, or don't love Jesus, we are simply describing reality—if one needs the rules one is still immature and therefore not yet wise.

What is required for wisdom? Understanding of reality—understanding God's character, God's design laws, God's purposes; understanding the problem, the circumstances, the situation, and then applying God's methods, God's design laws, God's principles to the problem in its setting or situation.

If one follows a list of rules, applying those rules in all circumstances, without understanding the design laws of God, the principles of God, the purposes of God, without understanding the real cause of the problem and the situation then such a person will follow rules seeking to do good, but will instead harm, instead of being wise, they will be foolish. This is what all legal religions and legal theologies do, though they claim to be wise they are fools. They have a form of godliness but without power to save. For example:

- The religious leaders who persecuted and crucified Christ—they criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath and His disciples for pulling heads of grain on the Sabbath—why? Because they had a rule—a rule that they wanted to apply without regard to God's design law and thus thinking they were wise in legal law keeping of God's commandments, they were fools and rejected the Creator and Lord of the Sabbath

This is what happens with all human governments; this is what happened during COVID, all kinds of harmful and provably destructive actions enforced upon people, and some are still doing them, because of following rules rather than thinking and applying wisdom. For example:

- People driving alone in their cars wearing masks.

- Law enforcement giving tickets to people who sit in their car in a parking lot listening to a sermon over a PA system or arresting people walking alone in a park for not wearing a mask.
- Or people at sporting events required to wear a mask but the athletes in the event were not required to wear a mask.
- One of the primary goals of all of that was to condition people to stop thinking, to, based on fear, revert to childlike functioning, accept voices of authority without question. To become mindless pawns easily manipulated by the powerful elites. Sadly, throughout much of church history various church leaders have functioned exactly the same way.

Paul wrote:

- “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles” (Romans 1:21-23 NIV84).

Are images made to look like mortal man restricted to statues? No, this would include creating a god of self, of evolutionary theology claiming humans are the highest evolved life form and working to create humans 2.0 by genetic and cybernetic manipulation. It would include the legal theologies in which it is taught that God functions like a mortal man, He makes up laws like mortal man does, and He uses external coercion like mortal man does to inflict legal penalties on people for rule breaking, and His justice is the same justice as mortal man’s, the punishing of the law breaker. Thus, the glory of the immortal God is exchanged and people worship a mortal man in the place of God in their penal substitutionary theology, and because of the law of worship, they will become like that false god, and it will seem right and good to them to use the power of their office, of the state, to coerce the consciences of others for a good goal—such as “to save lives” or protect the environment etc.

What wisdom have you gleaned from God’s Word that has helped you live righteously?

I love this paragraph from the book *Education*, do you see wisdom in this paragraph, and if so, what wisdom?

- The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. (Education 190).

Tell me the wisdom of the following from this paragraph:

- Approaching the study of the Bible as a student
 - If we go to the Bible as an expert, as the teacher of the Bible, or as a cynic, critic, doubter, or as someone who already knows what the Bible teaches and is looking to support preconceived ideas, such as the idea that God’s law functions like human law and God is the source of punishment etc.,—then our hearts and minds are closed to truth and we cannot learn. But if we have the heart and mind of a student, recognizing we are finite, and we have much to learn and the Bible is a source of God’s inspired revelation to us, and we approach its study humbly, with eager desire to be instructed and learn, then the Bible becomes the bread of heaven to us.
- Viewing the word as a whole
 - If we take a little here and a little there we can make the Bible say anything and this is one of the reasons there are so many denominations. Wisdom is in recognizing that there is one God, one human race, one sin problem, one solution to the sin problem and the Bible teaches this reality and must be taken as a whole.
- Recognizing how various parts relate
 - Wisdom understands the various parts are teaching the same truth and applying the same principles, but if we confuse the parts and misconstrue the setting, for instance misunderstand that the theme of the OT is the coming Messiah, the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15, and instead think it is about a legal relationship with a specific branch of the human family, then some teach that in OT times God saved people through animal sacrifices, or if we misconstrue first and second death, or misconstrue God’s design laws with God setting up a civil government that did NOT represent His kingdom, but merely kept open the avenue for the Messiah while teaching in object lesson the truth of His kingdom, then one will misread the Bible, and come to foolish, legal, human-law based beliefs that work against God, all the while claiming wisdom. But if we understand the principles then we can examine the various parts and realize that God is always apply the same principles, just like a parent who loves their child in one situation they hug and kiss, in another situation they yell out in warning, even with threats to stop their child from running in the street, and in another situation they set up rules with temporary made up inflicted punishments designed to discipline and protect, not set up a legal government.
- Gaining a knowledge of its grand central theme
 - The grand central theme is the Great Controversy over God’s character and government, and humanity is caught up in this larger war and the theme is God working to eradicate sin from the universe through the outworking of His design laws—truth, love, and freedom, which expose the liar and win us to trust, while at the same time providing Jesus to restore humanity back to sinless perfection—to fix what Adam’s sin did to humanity.
- God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption.
 - What is God’s original purpose? What was happening in the universe when God made this planet with all its life, and the Sabbath—when God created it and what was its purpose?

- Understanding the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy
 - It is wisdom to recognize that God’s divine nature is seen in what He has made so that men are without excuse—design laws that all reality are built upon, but also to recognize that all nature groans under the weight of sin, that the law of sin and death is at work in nature and the world. In other words, two antagonistic principles the law of life versus the law sin and death. Do we understand these two principles?
- Learning to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation.
 - Can we see that through all human history these two powers, God versus Satan, Love, Truth, Freedom versus fear/selfishness, lies/deception, and coercion have been warring for hearts and minds? Do we see that these principles are coming to a head in world events leading up to the second coming? Do we see how they played out during the COVID crisis and how many so-called saints were duped into accepting and applying the methods of Satan under the guise of doing good—some were just babes in Christ and like good and obedient children followed the voices of authority, but others who were in leadership in the church demonstrated true foolishness while they claimed to be wise?
- Seeing how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience
 - Do we understand that it is not primarily about the behavior, but the motive of heart that leads to the behavior. Are we motivated by truth, love, and the respect for the freedom of others, or are we motivated by fear, insecurity, the need to protect self, a willingness to coerce others to advance what we believe is right?
- Applying all of this to learn how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.
 - Do we recognize that we are infected with fear and selfishness that our spirits are sick and that we must be reborn with new hearts and right spirits that love God and others more than self and that new spiritual vitality of love leads us to do what is right, healthy, and reasonable because it is so, not because a rule says it?

SUNDAY

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 119 and in the commentary seems to equate the use of the word “law” in this psalm with the Ten Commandments, for instance, the second to the last paragraph states,

- God’s commandments are a revelation of God’s will for the world. They instruct people on how to become wise and to live in freedom and peace (Ps. 119:7-11, 133). The psalmist delights in the law because the law assures him of God’s faithfulness (Ps. 119:77, 174). (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 61).

When you hear “God’s commandments” what does that cause your mind to think? It is true the lesson doesn’t say “the Ten Commandments,” so maybe the authors don’t mean that and maybe it is just that I am so conditioned to equate commandments with the Ten Commandments.

If we do consider the commandments as the Ten Commandments, would the sentence, “God’s commandments are a revelation of God’s will for the world,” most accurately communicate the meaning of what psalm 119 is trying to tell us? Or, if we understand the law or commandments to mean the Ten Commandments then does this sentence create a framework that boxes in the psalm, an idea that ropes our thoughts into a legal way of thinking about God’s law that is actually contrary to what the psalmist was intending, and is contrary to what Jesus was teaching?

In other words, is the psalm restricted to, primarily about, intended to focus our attention upon the Ten Commandments, or is the psalm leading us to move way past the Ten Commandments and understand God’s law as design law and not a list of rules?

Jesus and the New Testament writers tried to teach us this:

- “The **entire law** is summed up in a single command: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:14, NIV84, emphasis mine)
- “If you really keep the **royal law** found in Scripture, ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right.” (James 2:8, NIV84 emphasis mine)
- “Jesus replied: ‘**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself.’ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**” (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV84, emphasis mine)

God’s design laws are not lists of rules, and in fact, all the written laws were added after sin, including the Ten Commandments. And they were added because we needed them, not because God’s government works on imposed written laws.

This was the controversy at the 1888 SDA General Conference, with the righteousness by faith message of the ongoing Reformation advancing the truth that the law in Galatians that was added was the Ten Commandments, and the legalist church leaders rejecting the advancing truth and declaring the Ten Commandments are eternal and not added, that God’s law is imposed, that sin is legal, and that righteousness by faith is legal trick when God declares people to be righteous while they remain unrighteous, rather than the truth of Scripture 2 Corinthians 5:21, that we become righteous.

We will never finish the Reformation, never fulfill our end-time mission to lighten the world for Christ’s return as long as we present God’s law as imposed for that penal legal message is not the Testimony that Jesus gave. The final message that we are to give is the Testimony of Jesus—that if we have seen Him we have seen the Father, that God’s laws are design laws and God is not the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death as punishment for sin. The Adventist Reformers, whose message was rejected by the Adventist legalists in 1888, taught that the idea that God must punish sin is Satan’s lie from the opening of the Great Controversy!

- In the **opening of the great controversy**, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan**; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. (The Desire of Ages 761, emphasis mine)

Psalm 119 is an incredible psalm that teaches the truth about God's law being design law, yet when people falsely believe that God's law is imposed they are vulnerable to read the psalm in legal ways, as rules enforced by external coercive force.

The lesson points our attention to the first 16 verses of psalm 119, let's contrast the first 8 verses from the NIV and REM:

- Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. (Psalm 119:1 NIV84)
- Happy and healthy are those whose characters have been healed, who live in harmony with God's design for life. (Psalm 119:1 REM)
- Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. (Psalm 119:2 NIV84)
- Happy and healthy are those who preserve God's principles in their characters and seek him with all their heart. (Psalm 119:2 REM)
- They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. (Psalm 119:3 NIV84)
- They do no wrong; they walk in the Lord's ways. (Psalm 119:3 REM)
- You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. (Psalm 119:4 NIV84)
- You have established the laws upon which life and health are built, and they are to be eagerly observed. (Psalm 119:4 REM)
- Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! (Psalm 119:5 NIV84)
- Oh, how I wish my nature was established to naturally live in harmony with your design protocols for life! (Psalm 119:5 REM)
- Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. (Psalm 119:6 NIV84)
- Then I would not feel ashamed when I compare my life to your perfect law of love. (Psalm 119:6 REM)
- I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. (Psalm 119:7 NIV84)
- When your living law of love is assimilated into my mind and character, then I will praise you with a heart that is right with you. (Psalm 119:7 REM)
- I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me. (Psalm 119:8 NIV84)

- I will live in harmony with your specifications for life; please don't let go of me. (Psalm 119:8 REM)

MONDAY

Read the third paragraph,

- God restrains His righteous wrath and extends His grace anew. The psalmist exclaims, “Who knows the power of Your anger?” (Ps. 90:11, NKJV), implying that no one has ever experienced the full effect of God’s anger against sin, and so, there is hope for people to repent and gain wisdom for righteous living. (Adult SS Guide 1st Q 2024, Psalms p. 62).

The lesson points our attention to Psalm 90:11, which, in the NIV, reads:

- Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. (Psalm 90:11 NIV84).

What do you think? Let’s read a little wider in psalm 90, verses 7-13 comparing the NIV with REM:

- We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. (Psalm 90:7 NIV84)
- Our sin-sickness comes to an end in your presence, therefore, it terrifies us to be abandoned by you. (Psalm 90:7 REM)
- You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. (Psalm 90:8 NIV84)
- Our terminal condition is laid out before you, the corruption most deeply hidden in our souls is exposed in your presence. (Psalm 90:8 REM)
- All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. (Psalm 90:9 NIV84)
- All of our days we struggle to turn away from the selfishness which you hate; our lives end in mournful meditation. (Psalm 90:9 REM)
- The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. (Psalm 90:10 NIV84)
- We live for seventy years, or eighty years if we are strong; but our selfishness causes life to be hard — a struggle filled with sorrow; time flies by so quickly and we pass away. (Psalm 90:10 REM)
- Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. (Psalm 90:11 NIV84)

- Who really knows how angry it makes you that this happened to us? Your wrath to destroy sin is awe-inspiring. (Psalm 90:11 REM)
- Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12 NIV84)
- Help us understand our terminal condition—how short life really is—so that we may have the wisdom to partake of your remedy and experience renewed hearts. (Psalm 90:12 REM)
- Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. (Psalm 90:13 NIV84)
- When will you turn to us, O Lord—turn and comfort your helpers? (Psalm 90:12 REM)

Do you see how the law lens one holds completely changes how one understands the Scripture, how the legal law lens twists and undermines the gospel? When the human law lens is used to interpret the Scriptures instead of reading the truth about God that removes our fear and restores us to trust in God, the Scriptures are twisted to be a cause of fear. This is why the Bible tells is in Revelation 14 that the final message that lightens the world is the message of the *eternal* gospel; the message that calls people back to worship God as Creator and calls people to stop worshiping Him as a Babylonian dictator, to finally make a right judgment about God, which means we must reject the human imposed law lie and return to design law understandings!

And this leads us to a proper understanding of wrath, the difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath.

How would you describe the difference between Satan's wrath and God's wrath?

Satan's wrath is the application of might, power, and force to inflict and cause pain, suffering, torment upon whomever the wrath is vented—it is the wrath of a creature, the wrath of imposed law, the infliction of punishment.

God's wrath is the exact opposite, it is letting go, the cessation or stopping of the use of God's divine power that He has been using to hold at bay the pain, suffering, and injury that comes from breaking the laws that He built reality to operate upon.

Sadly, however, far too many people, having accepted the Romanization of Christianity, the lie that God's law functions like human law, teach that God's wrath is the use of power to inflict punishment or pain—and they interpret that false understanding into how they read Scripture.

For instance, someone listening might say—"sure, right, I bet that is what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah—God just stopped using power, He didn't use any divine power there—right?" And they use the story of Sodom and others like it, where God did use power to try and prove that God's wrath functions the same way that Satan's does and they reject design law and the truth we are teaching.

Those who do this do so because the human law system is so deeply embedded into their thinking that they take a very superficial understanding of what they are seeing, they deny evidence that would

enlighten them, and conflate divergent issues. It would be like observing a surgeon using a scalpel to amputate a gangrenous leg and allege the surgeon's anger and wrath is the same as a pirate who uses a sword while marauding to cut off an enemy's leg—after all both situations have someone using a sharp instrument to cut off a leg.

This is what people who use examples like Sodom, the Flood, the 185,000 Assyrians, the 10 plagues of Egypt and God's actions in the OT do. They do not understand reality, they don't understand the situation, God's design laws and methods, and look only at the most superficial level of activity. For instance, they will claim those examples as God punishing sin—yet the punishment for sin is eternal death, not sleep death—and all of the deaths in OT times were sleep death, so they cannot be punishment for sin, yet they deny this very simple and obvious truth. Also, in their own false legal model, punishment comes after judgment and the judgment is future from the time of Sodom, so again it could not be punishment for sin.

So, if at Sodom, God wasn't acting in wrath, and clearly God was not just passively letting people go, or abandoning them to the consequences of their choices, and if God was not inflicting punishment for sin, then what?

God was fulfilling His promise of Genesis 3:15, to bring the Messiah, by working to preserve the line of the Messiah, to prevent Satan from destroying the avenue through whom the Messiah would be born. The entire OT is the outworking of the plan of salvation, which is the bringing of the Messiah. God, looking down the corridors of time, seeing the land where His helpers, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would live, saw that if Sodom and the other cities remained that they would be effective in seducing and destroying the branch of the human family from whom Jesus would be born. Even without those cities, only two tribes were still around by the time of Jesus, 10 tribes had been dispersed. So, we see God not acting in wrath against Sodom and Gomorrah, but in mercy, therapeutically, for without that action no human could be saved. And all of those people who died in Sodom and Gomorrah, died the sleep death, their life is not ended, just suspended, and they will arise in one of two resurrections to complete their life by their own free-will choices, for the wicked at the end of the 1000 years when they freely choose to join Satan and attack the city, rather than repent and submit to God. Thus demonstrating that God's actions in putting them to sleep in the grave in no way determined their destiny, for even with the New Jerusalem on the Earth, and the evidence of the saved inside the city, they still will not repent and be saved.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson title is *Deceitfulness of the Wicked Way* and the lesson focuses our attention on psalm 141, let's compare the NIV with the REM:

- LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me. Hear my voice when I call to you. May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.
(Psalm 141:1-2 NIV84)

- O Lord, I call for your help — come quickly to me. Respond kindly to my voice when I call to you. Make my prayers pure and sweet, like the most fragrant incense before you; I raise my hands, surrendering to your cleansing — just like the evening sacrifice depicts. (Psalm 141:1-2 REM)
- Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips. Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies. (Psalm 141:3-4 NIV84)
- Lord, empower me with the ability to control what I say; let me speak nothing that misrepresents you. Turn the desires of my heart away from fear and selfishness, away from evil activity; don't let me share the pleasures of those who do wrong. (Psalm 141:3-4 REM)
- Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it. Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers; their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs, and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken. They will say, “As one plows and breaks up the earth, so our bones have been scattered at the mouth of the grave.” (Psalm 141:5-7 NIV84)
- Let a godly person discipline me—it is a kindness; let the healthy person correct me—it is healing salve to my character. Don't allow the oil of selfishness to permeate my character; my constant prayer is to break the power of wickedness. When, at the judgment, they realize that choosing evil severs their connection to life—like falling off a cliff and expecting to live—they will learn that what I taught was true. They will admit, "As a plow cuts through the earth, so too our evil choices cut us off from life and we are consumed by the grave." (Psalm 141:5-7 REM)
- But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD; in you I take refuge—do not give me over to death. Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, from the traps set by evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety. (Psalm 141:8-10 NIV84)
- But I look to you and keep my trust in you, O Creator God; in you I seek healing—don't let me die. Keep me from the snares the selfish have laid for me—from the traps of the wicked. Those who persist in selfishness will be trapped by their own evil choices, while I pass by safely. (Psalm 141:8-10 REM)

How is it that wickedness deceives? How will the beast of Revelation deceive all but the very elect?

When the beast of Revelation rises, it will not rise to set up cult worship centers to worship some cartoonish depiction of Satan with hooves, a tail, and pitchfork. **Satan does NOT want to be worshipped as Satan—Satan has always coveted Jesus' power and position and Satan wants to be worshiped as Christ.** For a variety of reasons—for his own selfish ego sake, but also to spite Jesus, to say to Jesus, “Ha, ha, ha, they all claim to be worshiping you but they hate you; they prefer a god like me! They want you to be more like me. In fact, if you were more like me all these people would worship you just like they are worshiping me.”

Understand this, Satan's final deception upon the world is to impersonate Jesus Christ—and he can only successfully do this by getting the world, including the Christian world, to accept a version of Jesus **that he can impersonate**. And Satan leads false Christianity to do this replacing God's design law with human imposed law, and then the god of that system, in justice, must use power to inflict punishment for sin.

So, Satan, right now, is having his forces sow chaos, discord, anarchy, all of which are working to increase fear—men run to and fro their hearts failing them for fear. And into this chaos, Satan will appear impersonating Jesus, claiming to be our Savior who has come to set things right, to do justice. He speaks melodiously, He apparently heals the sick and raises the dead, and offers salvation for all who will worship him, but he states that justice requires that he must punish sinners if they refuse to repent and accept his payment for their sins and him as their savior. He doesn't want to punish them because he claims he has died for them, so rather than kill them immediately he directs those loyal to him, the beastly governments of this world, to enforce economic sanctions, no buying or selling, to imprison, to give time to get them to repent and worship him. But if they still refuse, in the end, with tears in his eyes, he will claim that he is required by law and justice to inflict the death sentence upon them. And this satanic god will be embraced and worshiped by all those who have sealed their hearts and minds into the lie that God's law functions like human law.

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on the blessings of the Lord, and asks us to read Psalm 112, and Psalm 111 and 112 are the two psalms in which in the Hebrew the psalmist started each line of the psalm with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and each subsequent line with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. I could not find a translation that did this, so in the Remedy paraphrase I brought this over—however the Hebrew only has 22 letters while we have 26 in English, so the psalm stops after 22 letters.

- All praise be to the Lord!

Altogether happy are people who live in harmony with the Lord,
Because they find eternal healing as they delight in his law.
Crowned victorious, their children will be mighty in love upon the earth;
Descendants, set right with God, will live in happiness.
Eternal prosperity and heavenly treasure is theirs;
Forever righteous they stay.
Glorious light shines through the darkness for those set right with God,
Healing descends from him for the merciful, kind and true.
Indeed, good comes to the generous who freely lend—
Just and honest they are in all their dealings.
Knowing God, they will not be corrupted with selfishness;
Loving others, the righteous will always be remembered.
Mastering themselves, they don't live in fear of bad news;

New hearts are theirs, fixed in trust of God.
Overcomers, their hearts are sealed to God so they have no fear,
Preserved in purity in the view of their enemies.
Quick to share, they give generously to the poor;
Renewed by God, their righteousness endures forever,
Sanctified character keeps them exalted and glorified.
The wicked will see and be infuriated;
Unhealed, they have no excuse and wither away to nothing;
Vain hope—all their dreams and plans will perish forever. (Psalm 112:1-10 REM).

TUESDAY

The lesson focuses our attention on when God tests us, what do you understand God's testing to mean?

- Is it like our schools when the teacher gives us a test—to find out how much we know?
- Is it to trip us up, to get tempt us to fall?

What about the Adam and Eve in Eden at the Tree of Knowledge, were they tested there? Was it placed there to get them to fall or for another purpose, what purpose?

When you think of God testing us, what law lens do you understand the testing through?

When the Lord puts someone to the test, what is He testing? **It is always the same ultimate reason behind the test: Do they trust God or not?** Do they have faith/ confidence in God or not? And does their faith/trust/confidence go beyond the belief of devils who tremble, to the faith that is a living faith that results in loyalty to God?

Such tests are necessary in this world of sin because we cannot grow in faith, in trust, unless we are placed in a position in which our faith is tried or tested and we choose to exercise our faith. We must choose to say no to the fear, the insecurity, the doubts, the temptations to act to save self and, instead, choose to apply the truth and do what we understand is right, what is God's will for us in that situation, and trust God with the outcome.

This is the issue; it has always been the issue—are we faithful, loyal friends of God who actually trust Him?

Jesus asked this very question about His second coming:

- When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8 NIV84).

When Jesus comes again, will He find people who trust Him, who will be faithful to Him, who have chosen to trust Him with their lives, futures, fortunes, and families? Or will He only find people who claim to believe in Him, who have their religion, but who have put their trust in their rules, rituals, ceremonies, blood payments, wealth, institutions, and the power they can wield over others—all in His “name,” of course?

Paul said, “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

God wants us to return to a living confidence, trust, and faith in Him, and He allows events to come upon us that will test our faith, put us in positions in which we have to decide whether we scheme, calculate, plot, plan, connive, manipulate, bend the rules, make excuses, cheat in order to save self, or whether we stand for what we know is right and trust God with how it turns out.

David, when he was dedicating materials and his son for the building of the temple, prayed:

- I know, my God, that you **test the heart and are pleased with integrity**. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and **keep their hearts loyal to you** (1 Chronicles 29:17, 18 NIV84, emphasis mine).

God doesn't test, as a human teacher would, to discover the answer—God already knows the answer. God tests so we can actively choose to trust and, thereby, grow, develop, advance, and mature. It is for our development that God tests.

What God wants cannot be created by Him nor chosen by Him. God wants our love, devotion, trust, friendship, and loyalty. He wants us to internalize into our hearts and live out His living laws and, thus, develop Christlike character. This requires us to be placed in circumstances and situations in which we have to choose to trust God or not. So God tests us, but He never allows the test to be more than we can handle at any given point in our development. He has promised:

- No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV).

God always provides everything necessary for our healing, salvation, and deliverance from fear and selfishness.

- He provides the truth that destroys lies and wins us to trust (John 8:32)
- He provides the love that casts out the fear (1 John 4:18)
- He provides the Savior, His Son, who became a real human and as a human, using only human abilities, chose to love and trust His Father in all things and received as a human the empowering of the Holy Spirit to succeed in all things. And as a human, Jesus developed a perfect righteous and mature human character and destroyed the infection of fear and

selfishness that Adam introduced into humanity when he broke trust with God. Thus, Jesus became the new head of humanity, the second Adam (Hebrews 2:14, 4:15, 5:9; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 3:8).

- He provides the Holy Spirit to bring the truth home to our hearts and minds, to convict of sin, to convict of duty, and then (John 14:16) ...
- He provides freedom, real freedom, to accept and choose the truth or reject it—and when we choose the truth (Joshua 24:15; Galatians 5:1) ...
- He provides the opportunity to test our faith, situations that require us to choose—do we trust God? Do we choose what we know is in harmony with His will, purposes, instructions, guidance, design laws for life and trust Him with outcomes, or do we choose to break trust with Him and seek to advance and save ourselves?
- When we choose to trust Him, He then provides divine power, the indwelling Holy Spirit, to give us the ability to carry out the truth, to stand firm in the face of fear, threat, selfish temptations with a peace that passes understanding, with love for our enemies, with a vision of eternity as we choose to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our hearts loyal to Him.

God brings people into circumstances that are beyond their ability so that they will choose to turn to Him, ask for His deliverance, and learn to trust Him; i.e., increase their faith in Him.