

## Pacesetters Devotional Matthew 13:12

*Matthew 13:12* “For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

At first glance, the second half of this statement by Jesus sounds self-contradictory. How can Jesus describe someone as “not having,” yet then refer to what “he has?” If someone has nothing, how can this nothing be taken away from him?

One possible explanation is that what people “have” or do “not have” is different from what is added to them or taken away from them. For example, you may be frugal, while I may be a spend-thrift. Because you are frugal, the amount of money you have grows. But because I am a spend-thrift, the little money I possess gradually vanishes.

When we examine the immediate context of this verse, we find that it confirms this explanation of Jesus’ seemingly self-contradictory statement. Jesus has just taught a parable – a story about Palestinian agriculture with which His audience would have been familiar. A man sows seed, but it falls on different soils, and therefore differences in germination and fruition occur. Jesus disciples ask Him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” They know that Jesus intends to reveal new truths about God’s kingdom. Why doesn’t He just teach these truths straightforwardly?

Jesus’ answer is that many people in His audience do not have a *willingness to receive His instruction*. They see Him teaching, but they don’t open the eyes of their hearts to acknowledge who He is. They hear



His words, but they don't understand His teaching because they aren't really willing to listen. They fulfill Isaiah's prediction of this hard-hearted generation:

MATTHEW 13:14 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND;  
YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;  
15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,  
WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,  
AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES,  
OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES,  
HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,  
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN,  
AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'

So what Jesus is saying in Matthews 13:12 is: "To those who have the *willingness to respond to what I teach*, I will give them more revelation from God, and they will eventually have an abundance of it. But to those who are *unwilling to respond to what I teach*, even the little knowledge about God that they have will be taken away."

When it comes to a personal understanding of God and His ways, the crucial factor is not our IQ, or a theological degree, or how many biblical commentaries we own. Rather, the crucial factor is whether we adopt a child-like willingness to be instructed by God and respond to what He tells us. This attitude, Jesus promises, will always be rewarded with greater revelation from God. Conversely, God refuses to reveal Himself to those who have no genuine interest in following Him. Their arrogance results only in becoming more and more ignorant concerning the things of God – unless they acknowledge their arrogance and humble themselves before Him. Then God will gladly and graciously disclose Himself to them.

Jesus' healing of the man born blind (John 9) teaches this same spiritual principle. The blind man could not see, but he was willing to respond to Jesus' claim: "I am the Light of the world; he who follows



me will not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of spiritual life.” As a result of his willingness, Jesus healed his physical sight *and* gave him increasing spiritual perception. His understanding of Jesus grew until Jesus enabled him to realize that He was the promised Messiah.

On the other hand, the religious leaders who investigated this healing were predisposed to reject Jesus as from God because He did not fit into their chosen misbeliefs about God. As a result, they became more and more blind to the evidence of Jesus’ Messiahship. Finally, Jesus told them: “To provoke a crisis I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” Rather than admit that they might be spiritually blind, the religious leaders responded defensively: “Are you saying that we’re blind?” So Jesus left them with these words: “If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty, but you remain guilty because you claim you can see.”

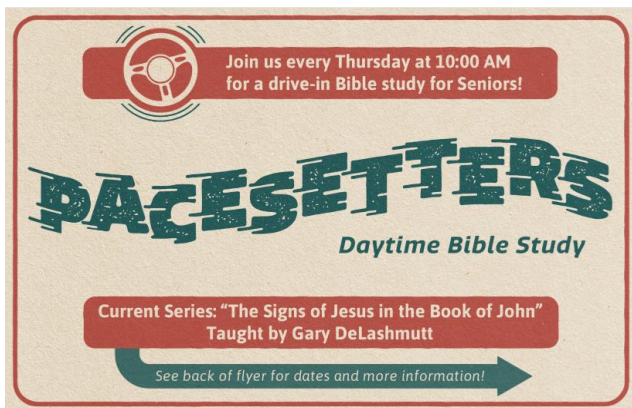
Jesus relates this same principle to our intimacy with Him and His Father. In John 14:21,23, Jesus said to His disciples: “Those who accept My commandments and obey them are the ones who love Me. And because they love Me, My Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal Myself to each of them . . . All who love Me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and We will come and make Our home with each of them.” Jesus and His Father do not play favorites. They love each of us, and want to be increasingly intimate with all of us. Why then do so many Christians grow closer and closer to God, while others remain virtual strangers to Him? Jesus says that our chosen heart-attitude is the critical variable. If we adopt a posture of humble willingness to respond to Him, we will become more intimate with Him. This is why Oswald Sanders said that “We are as intimate with God as we habitually choose to be.”

*Lord Jesus, how wonderful it is that You want to reveal Your ways to me! How wonderful it is that You want me to be intimate with You! Thank You that You hold no grudge against my years of arrogant hard-*



*heartedness. Thank You for bearing with my recent lapses into pride and stubbornness. Teach me to relate to You with childlike humility – ready to trust and follow what You say to me. Make me wise in Your ways, and enable me to know You better and better.*

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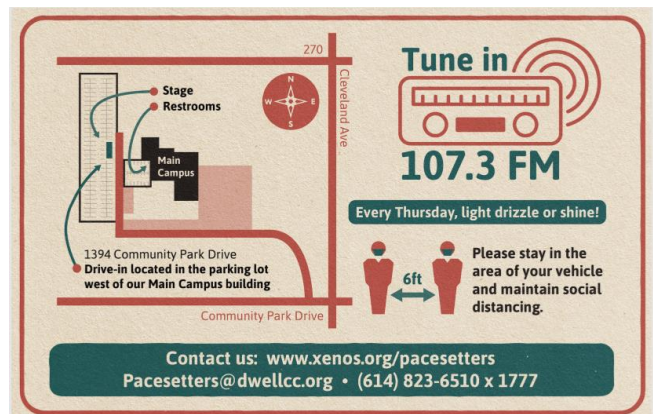


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Every Thursday, light drizzle or shine!

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Map details: Stage, Restrooms, Main Campus, 1394 Community Park Drive, Drive-in located in the parking lot west of our Main Campus building, Cleveland Ave, 270, Community Park Drive.

