**MY LIFE’S GREATEST PURSUIT…AND JOY**

I’m not sure when it first dawned on me but for some reason I did a double-take many years ago when I read John 17:3. It is the true “Lord’s Prayer” and the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible. It has fascinated me for decades and I often use this prayer in home Bible studies to convert souls to Christ. It opens to us the very heart and soul of Jesus. It is the prayer of a true Savior. And right there at the very beginning of that famous prayer are these words:

*“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*

For some reason I cannot fully explain I latched onto this amazing verse and decided right then and there I would pursue this for the rest of my life. It should seem obvious to most of us that in that verse is found the very meaning and essence of human life. It is, at least to me, the entire Bible in a nutshell. It perfectly summarizes all that God is trying to say from Genesis to Revelation.

The life lost by Adam in the Garden of Eden in Genesis is found by saints in the Paradise of God in Revelation. Everything described between those two books is the pursuit of knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent.

That’s my life’s pursuit: *Knowing God* and *Knowing Christ* is *Eternal Life*.

So I’ll ask you what I asked myself many years ago when I read that verse. Do you “*know God*” and do you “*know Jesus Christ*?” If you are now pursuing that knowledge, then you are pursuing eternal life! Stop and think deeply about that for more than just a moment. Think about it. Read it out loud. Memorize it. Begin to tell others about it. Study it. Pray about it. Live it as if it were really true. It changed my life. I hope it will change yours too.

Do you know what I did after I read John 17:3? I began to read the Bible differently. I started noting every statement I could find about the many names and attributes of God, and the many names and attributes of Jesus Christ. I desperately wanted to gain eternal life, and Jesus promised: “***This is eternal life****, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*.” So if I spent my life getting to KNOW God and Christ, then I would make it to heaven!

Friends, that’s the deal of a lifetime. It’s the very “secret” to conquering Satan, sin, and the fear of death. This dark trinity (Satan, Sin, Death) were the three things I was afraid of that day as I read this text. It’s as if God was telling me, “Rick, here’s your answer. Here’s the way you can confidently say, *“Death is swallowed up in victory! O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”* (I Cor. 15:55). I decided I was not going to live in fear, but in victory. I was going to gain eternal life by KNOWING.

The word “*know*” that Jesus used is the Greek word *GINOSKO*. It means a knowledge or understanding that gives confidence. Adults can say with certainty that 2 + 2 = 4, while a two-year old would not have that assurance. Neil Armstrong is absolutely sure the moon is not made of cheese, while I have to take his and other astronauts and astronomers words for it (although I was hoping it was made of Pepper Jack, mmmm).

Jesus said in Mark 13:28 *“Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.”* How did they “know” summer was near? Experience had taught them a lesson from nature that fig trees blossom their leaves in spring, heralding the coming of summer.

That leads me (and hopefully you) to the question, “Do I ***know*** God, and Jesus, like an adult knows simple math, like Armstrong knows the moon, and like a naturalist knows when seasons are changing?” The truth of the matter is many folks don’t “know” God or Jesus intimately. My experience teaching the gospel to others has taught me that far too many see God as either some kind of doting grandfather who overlooks with a smile the mischievous behavior of his small grandchildren, or some kind of Scrooge who loves to play “Gotcha!” as He catches them in sin and puts them on the Naughty List for hell.

To make my point, let’s play a word exchange game. I’ll say a word about one of God’s, or Christ’s, attributes and you tell me what you *know* about Him. Ready?

Holiness … Faithfulness … Righteousness … Goodness … Kindness …
Grace … Mercy … Justice … Love … Patience … Wrath … Judgment …

How ya doin’? There are literally dozens (in some cases hundreds) of verses which describe the many magnificent qualities of God’s character. Just as I want to dwell with my wife with “*understanding*” (*GNOSIS* - I Pet. 3:7), getting to “know” her in every way possible in order to build a great relationship in our marriage, so too I desperately desire to “know” God, and His Son Jesus Christ, in every intimate detail.

One day when I finally get to see my heavenly Father, and my Lord Jesus, I want them to recognize me with a smile, and I want to recognize them with a shout! The first thing I want to hear is: “*Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of the Lord*” (Matt. 25:21,23). The very last thing I will want to hear is: “*I never knew you, depart from Me*” (Matt. 7:23).

Our life on earth is a time for all of us to get to know God, and Jesus Christ, and for them to get to know us. As Paul put it so eloquently, *“the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord* ***knows*** *those who are His”* (2 Tim. 2:19).

Does God *know* me? Isaiah answers it this way: *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands”* (49:15).

Better yet, do I know God? Eternal life is weighed in the balance of my answer. That, dear friends, is my life’s greatest pursuit, and it has given me joy beyond compare.

Until tomorrow… memorize John 17:3. It might just change your life forever!

I love God because He first loved me (I John 4:19). And I love you too.

Rick