

## Crux

John 17:1-26

Key Verse: 17:3

“Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

People are social creatures. We like being around others and having conversations and doing things together. Even the most anti-social person on the planet still knows people and even longs for friendship and companionship. We know lots of people at various levels. There are people that we know about like celebrities, sports stars, politicians, and the person who the rumors are all about. There are also people we have had relationships in the past, but have drifted apart over time. You may have known them in school (grade school, high school, college), but your life took a little different direction and you only see them on Facebook now. Then, there are the friends you are in contact with. You are around them frequently and feel like you know them for the most part. Then there are the relationships that you know the person so well that, just by looking at them, you know what is going on. You are so in tune that your minds are on the same wavelength. Those are your really close friends and you don't have many of those. My wife is the person that I know the best. We've been married for less than three years, but I know her better than I have known anyone else, ever. I know her to the point that I tell by just looking that something is troubling her. Sometimes, she won't tell me what's wrong, but I still know that something is bothering her. I've come to know that it is usually something that I did or didn't do, but I can tell because I know her. That level of knowledge only came to me because I spent time with and came to know my wife. I saw who she is and what inspires her and bothers her. I have seen her in her pain, and I have seen her in her joy. It is the deepest relationship that I have ever experienced, but it pales in comparison to the relationship that God wants for me to have with him.

Today's passage is Jesus' longest recorded prayer and Jesus says many things in this prayer, and there is a lot that we can gain from it. If we go verse by verse, we can see a lot of detail and it can actually get a little confusing, but if we step back and come out of the passage, we'll notice that the topic of Jesus' prayer is very simple, and yet, one of the most important things that we will ever know. In Jesus' prayer, he reveals, in his own words, why he came to this earth, why God entered his own creation. Let's look at the first paragraph of his prayer. “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” (1-5) In this section of the prayer the word “glory” or “glorify” is repeated five times, and you would think that that is the most important concept in this section. Your Bible might even have a section header that talks about glory, but glory is secondary to what is written in verse 3, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Everything that Jesus did is secondary in purpose to what is written in verse 3. Everything that Jesus did was so that we might come to know God.

Look, Christianity is not a religion of rules and regulations. Christianity is not about what we can do to be right with God. Christianity is about a person, God. God is a person, not a force nor a state of being, but God is a person, remember that. So when Jesus prayed to be glorified so that God would be glorified he was praying for God to be made known. Why else would someone be glorified, except to be made known? If you have been glorified, then people know who you are. You are made known, and your greatness is made known to others. So

when Jesus prayed to be glorified, he was praying that all people would know the greatness of God. The glory that Jesus was referring to is his imminent crucifixion and death. By the next morning, Jesus would be falsely accused and sentenced to death on the cross. Not long after that, Jesus would carry that cross outside the city and be nailed to it. He would be raised up for all to see and mocked and shamed. He would die a criminal's death, although he was innocent. This is the glory that Jesus prayed about. Jesus was praying that, in his death, God would be made known. People had stepped away from God and even decided that they didn't need him. People thought that they could do everything on their own, but denying God and not treating him as God separates us from him. That is what the Bible calls sin. When we go against God we are sinning, and the Bible says that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). We deserve death when we sin. Jesus, however, came to take our place. He died in our place, and he did that so that we could have that eternal life that he prayed about. The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." By our belief in Jesus and what he did for us, we would not die but have eternal life. Jesus' death gives us a way to come back to God to reestablish a relationship with him. We don't have to be separated anymore, but we can be with him. Based on verse 3, that's what eternal life is: to know God.

The remainder of Jesus' prayer is all about knowing God. In verse 2, Jesus says that God had granted Jesus the authority to grant eternal life. Jesus was given the authority to help people to know God. Jesus says in verse 6, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word." Jesus revealed the nature of God to his disciples. He opened their minds so that they could meet God. Through the miracles that Jesus performed, he showed them the power and authority of God over sickness, nature and death itself. Jesus taught them the loving nature of God through stories and tales. Jesus opened their minds to Scripture so that they could understand what God was saying. Through what Jesus showed and taught, the disciples understood that everything that Jesus had was given to him by the Father (7), because Jesus gave them God's words (8). Jesus knew God intimately, so intimately that they knew each other's hearts and their hearts were as one. It is such a close relationship that Jesus refers to it as he is in the Father and the Father is in him. When you look at one, you can't help but see the other. It is because of this strong relationship, as the perfect Father and the perfect Son, that Jesus is able to reintroduce us to God. Think about it, when a really close friend introduces you to someone, you trust that person's opinion and you begin to become friends with that other person. I was actually introduced to my wife through a really good friend of mine. When he said that I should pray about her and meet her, I trusted him because I knew him. My wife and I had our first date, and many more after that. Then later, I proposed and we married, all because of a recommendation, and I have never been happier about a decision. Likewise, through Jesus' sacrifice and blood on the cross, we are introduced to God and are able to start a relationship with him.

You can see this in the prayer in verses 20-23. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." Our relationship with each other and with God really shows the world who God is. Since Christians are supposed to have a relationship with God, we act as ambassadors of God to the world.

When the world sees us, they are to see God in us just like when we see Jesus, we see the Father. That knowledge of God is to be spread among us, shared with the world so the world may know God.

Jesus concludes his prayer, "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (25-26) In those two verses, you can really see the main point of why Jesus came here. You see that the crux, the main purpose, of his mission is so that God's love would be in us and God himself would be in us. Jesus came to this earth so that we could have a relationship with God. That's just amazing! The creator of the universe wants to have a relationship with each of us and he was willing to give up his own son to do so. Despite all the muck in our lives, despite all the sin that we have dragged up by not following God's way, God still wants to have a relationship with us. This wasn't something that was done on a whim. God has been planning this since the beginning. God's plan of creation was not destroyed by our sin and Jesus is not Plan B. The history of the world is the story of how our creator God was able to get us to willingly and lovingly to come to know him. It is ever so important for us to know God's story and ever so important for us live our lives with the knowledge of his story. God doesn't want to force us into a relationship with him and hear his story. Have you ever been forced to spend time with someone? It's never a good time. It's usually pretty awkward because you don't want to be there. Jesus says in Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." God waits for us to respond and has been waiting for a long time for us to do so.

When most people think of God, and maybe even you think this way too, they think of him as someone who can give them something, like a vending machine. You put in the right amount of money, press the right buttons, and the candy or chips come down and you can grab them. Many people see God as a means to get wealth, fame or power. Other people see God as a great therapist. God is there to help us through our problems and lead us through our issues. Both these points of view place us at the center of everything and they actually miss the point. God says in Jeremiah 9:23-24, "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this; that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight." We want to have wisdom, strength, and wealth because we want to be better than someone else. We want to boast about it, but what God really wants to see is that we have a desire to know him. That's not a strange concept. God is a person and think about every other person that you know, including yourself. Don't you want people to come to you to know you? You don't like to be used and then discarded. If that happens you feel betrayed and discouraged. The same can be said of when we want God to be our therapist. If someone were to come to you all the time complaining about everything that was going on and never once care to get to know you, how would you react? You would be pretty annoyed by that person, I know that I would. How would you think that God would feel about this? Now, don't get me wrong. God wants for you to unload all your burdens on him. God wants to help you and bless you, but he wants for you to know him even more.

Some of this makes God sound kind of narcissistic, but there is a very good reason why God wants for us to know him. Look back at verse 3 again, "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Knowing God and

knowing Jesus is the very definition of eternal life. Eternal life is to know God. God wants for you to know him so that you may not die. God wants for you to live. Jesus said in two different places in John that he was life (John 11:25, John 14:6). God is the very source of all life and he loves you to the point that he wants for you to remain alive. You see, we were meant to be plugged into God. We were meant to know God and have a relationship with him. At the beginning of creation, the first man Adam walked and talked with God face to face. There was no strife, no pain and no tears. When sin came, we began to live a dysfunctional, and destructive life. It's like filling your car's fuel tank with alcohol. It's combustible and looks like it could get the car going, but it really doesn't work and will destroy the engine. However, when we come to know God, it's like filling up our tank with premium gasoline. The car runs perfectly, and the engine might even get cleaned by the fuel. Our relationship with God undoes that damage that our sin created. Our relationship with God is the reward that we look forward to. God told Abraham in Genesis 15:1 "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward." Abraham was feeling down. He had won a great victory in battle, but his nephew who was like a son, seemed ungrateful and returned to live a life apart from him. Abraham was looking at the situation feeling sorry for himself, but God told him that he was Abraham's very great reward. Abraham didn't need to be bummed about his nephew because he had a relationship with God. God himself was Abraham's reward.

Now, having a relationship with God is in many ways similar to our relationships with one another because God is a person. We have many different types of relationships with other people. There are people that we just know about, like President Obama and celebrities and sports stars, but the relationship that God wants to have with us not like that. Knowing about God is not something special. The Bible says, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." (James 2:19) Even God's enemies know about him, but they don't know who he is. So many people are content with coming to church on Sundays and kind of waving at God from afar. They come and study the Bible and hear God's word to learn things about God, but then they stop there. Our relationship with God is to be deeper than any relationship that we have or will have with another man or woman. Think about the deepest relationship that you have right now. It might be with your spouse or a best friend or even a parent. I doubt that your relationship with that person is like you are in them and they are in you, but that is the depth of the relationship that God wants to have with you. Your relationship with God isn't supposed to be like the relationships that you have with the people you stalk on Facebook where you read a lot about them but keep your distance and never comment; your relationship is to be like you are one with God.

This relationship and oneness is developed over time. So many people want to have a quick relationship with God. They want to know him fast, so that he doesn't interfere with their lives. It's easier for people to come to God out of duty and turn Christianity into a set of rules to follow. Developing a relationship with another person is really hard and takes a lot of work, but when you love them and want to know them, you do what it takes to get to know them. The strongest relationship that I have is the one with my wife. I know her the best, but that relationship was not cultivated because I grudgingly and superficially came to know her. I love her and desire to spend time with her and get to know who she is as a person. God wants for us to have a similar desire when we come to him. God wants for us to love him and spend time with him. He wants for us to listen to him and get to know him. Why do you come to church or Bible study? Do you come grudgingly like someone is forcing you? Do you come for the people who are here? Or do you come to simply know God and spend time with him? Do you read the Bible because you are trying to finish reading it this year? Do you read it because you feel like

you have to read it everyday? Or do you read it searching to know God more? The Bible is God's word and it is the only source we have to know him more. We should read the Bible with joy and urgent desire to know God more.

Even how we read the Bible is important. A lot of people like reading a few verses and then analyzing and meditating on what they read. They want to know the meaning behind each word and phrase. We can gain a lot of information, but many times, we miss things about God. Instead, sometimes read a large chunk at a time and you will see something about God. You might have been wondering why we've been taking larger chunks on Sunday since we've been studying 1 Samuel a while ago. We get these big passages and it is hard to comprehend because there is so much going on in the passage. With so much going on, the only common thread in the passage becomes God and you get to know more about our loving and gracious God. We have a limited time to stand up here and talk, so the only thing that we can talk about is the nature of our God so that you may strengthen your relationship with him.

When your relationship with God deepens, a lot of people won't like it. When we start having a relationship with God, we become sanctified or purified or set apart from the world. Jesus prayed, "I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world." (14) A couple of chapters ago, Jesus said something very similar to his words in verse 14. The world will hate believers because believers are different from them. Believers desire different things than the rest of the world and it is natural human tendency to hate something that is different. Because, this hatred will exist, Jesus prayed that God would protect them and not take them out of the situation. Jesus wants his believers to be further purified before coming fully to him. (17,19)

You might be wondering, "If God so wants to have a relationship with me, why doesn't he just bring me to him right now?" There are a few reasons why. One reason is that God wants for us to joyfully and willingly come to him. He doesn't force a relationship with us and that takes time to develop. Another reason that he doesn't just take us right now is that he wants for us to share our relationship with God with other people. When you have a really good friend, don't you want to bring that friend into your other friendships? Don't you want to have other people to know that friend too? God wants for us to bring people to him so that they can have a relationship too. We become that credible friend making a recommendation to other people saying, "Hey, you should really come to know God. He's really great and you should get to know him personally." It's probably the second most important thing you can do besides actually entering a deep relationship with God.

God really wants to have a relationship with you. It is the whole point of why Jesus came to earth. It is the point of his crucifixion and death. It is the point of his resurrection, and it is also the point of Jesus' longest recorded prayer. God doesn't have to have a relationship with us. God is still God even if we don't have a relationship with him. When we sinned, we chose to cut our relationship with him, but God sent Jesus to reestablish a relationship with us because, without God, we will die. Knowing about God doesn't help; God really wants to have a close relationship, like we are one. God is a person who wants for us to joyfully and willingly to get to know him. He already knows everything about you. God knows your inner most thoughts and desires and he wants for you to know his, despite knowing your thoughts and desires. That is truly amazing! The Bible says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) Let the light of God fill you up with knowledge of who he is.