

# The Most Important Thing in the World

## A Sermon by Dr. Calvin Warpula

Jesus said the greatest thing in the world is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Matthew 22:37-40). The knowledge of God is the greatest knowledge in the world. If a person knows everything that there is to know in the world, if he knew all the facts and events of all the encyclopedias in the world, if he understood all the mysteries of science, psychology, history, business, but he did not know God, he would die someday and lose it all. But if a person knew Christ, and was relatively unaware of all these interesting, intriguing sciences of the world, that person would die and live forever with God. A person can go to heaven without worldly wisdom but no one can go to heaven without Christ.

We are all interested in life—life with a capital L. We want to live-really live. One of Jesus' favorite words was the word "life." He spoke about it many times. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He said, "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." He spoke of entering into a relationship now with God that is called "eternal life." He said that "whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life." The Bible says, "In him was life and that life was the light of men." The Bible says, "These signs are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." Jesus said, "He that believes on me has crossed from death into life," and, "He that believes on me has eternal life and shall never perish."

What is this life that Jesus talks about?

He tells us in John 17, verse 3, "This is eternal life that they might know you God and your son whom you have sent."

Eternal life then is "knowing God." It is an intimate relationship with God. Could there be anything greater in the universe than to have an intimate, loving relationship with the God of the universe?

To know God, to be in love with God, and to walk with God is the greatest life in the world. It is the greatest passion that surpasses all other passions. There is a hole in our souls that only God can fill.

Freddie Mercury, who died at the age of 45 in November, 1991, several times was voted "one of rock music's greatest all-time entertainers" with "one of the greatest voices in all of music." He said before he died, "Here I am, I have all the money you could want,, world idolization, and yet I still don't have the one thing we all need, which is a deep relationship." A relationship with God is he

only one completely fulfilling relationship. The only perfect love is the love that God can give us.

Jesus spoke that this passion for God is far greater than a desire or appetite for anything else. We love our parents, our children, and our friends. We love living. We love this world and all the things that God has made in it. But none of these must ever replace our love for God or come between us and God. In fact, Jesus said that our love for God should be so great, so supreme, so ultimate that all other loves in comparison seem like hatred.

Jesus taught us that the one thing we should do in life is to seek God and his righteousness and if we do, all the other things of life will fall into their proper place and perspective, and that God will see that all our needs are supplied.

Our faith—our relationship with God—is more important than our lives. What would you die for? If you don't know what you would die for, you don't know what you are living for.

What is worth dying for? Is your faith more important than your life? It is better to die than to deny Christ. Our faith should transcend our lives. Do we really believe what we believe? Do we have a living, vital relationship with Christ? If there is not a God, nothing matters. If there is a God, nothing else matters.

The apostle Paul spoke of this relationship with Jesus. In Philippians chapter three, he spoke of his credentials and pedigree that were worthless before God. His ancestry, his ritual, his ceremony, his genealogy, and his religion were all like worthless trash compared to the life-transforming power of knowing Jesus Christ. He goes on to say that Jesus Christ was the one controlling passion of his life. Hear him in vs. 10-11: [read]. This knowledge of Christ was not academic but personal and experiential.

This means that for Paul the first thought of the morning was Christ. The last thought of the night was Christ. And all day long Paul made it his aim to please Christ, to give honor and obedience to Christ, and to love and serve Christ.

Someone asked a preacher/author/theologian I know of this question, "How much time do you spend with God each day?" The brother said, "Twenty-four hours a day—how much time do you?" "Oh no," the questioner responded, "I mean, how much time do you have for your quiet time—you know, where you read the Bible and pray—where you spend time with God?" "I know," the brother responded, "I try to spend some time every day reading the Bible and praying but sometimes I have missed but this does not mean that I am not spending time with God. Christ is with me all the time and I am with Christ all the time, even when I am not directly focused on him. He never ever leaves me or forsakes me. He is with me always.—all the time, every day. I am his and he is mine. We are never separated."

That's what it means to have a relationship with Christ. It's like being married. Some of us are married. I have been married for 45 years. My wife and I have had our ups and downs. Somebody asked her one time, "What is the hardest part of being a preacher's wife?" She answered, "The hardest part of being a preacher's wife is living with the preacher."

Living with Christ is like being married to Christ, in fact, the Bible uses that metaphor. The church is the bride of Christ. The Bible says that we are dead to the law so that we can be married to Christ. In our physical marriages, it takes two to tango. In most all problems there are two sides, and two people interacting. In every problem, most of the time, both partners contribute in some way to the problem. But in our relationship with Christ all the weaknesses, failure, and loss of passion is due to me, not to Christ. I am faithless—but Christ remains faithful. I am weak—but he is strong.

To live with Christ, we must focus on this relationship. We do this by building ourselves up in the most holy faith, as the Bible terms it. This comes through some very basic spiritual disciplines.

I have been to see my doctor for my annual physical. I remember one time the doctor said, "Calvin, you need to work on losing twenty pounds. Your blood pressure would be lowered, your stamina would increase, and you will probably live longer." I said, "OK, good idea. How do I do that?" He said, "It's very simple. Diet and exercise." I said, "That's it? Diet and exercise? I mean are there some drugs I could take, some medicines, some quick cures?" He said, "No, that's it. Diet and exercise." I kept going back to that doctor year after year. He kept telling me the same thing. It looks to me like he would learn something new from all his training and the medical research being done. Diet and exercise. Who ever heard? I think I am going to change doctors. Mine doesn't ever seem to learn anything new.

But he's right, isn't he? Simple. Two things. And living with Christ is simple—Bible study and meditation, prayer, Christian fellowship, worship, and ministry. The spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship, worship and ministry are five simple things to help us grow in the Lord.

The problem is that these are so simple sounding we think that they don't work—but they do. We read God's word. He speaks to our hearts. We meditate on his word day and night. He feeds our souls. I have been working in my garden this week. I have been reading quite a lot about how to have a successful garden. The most important thing the books say is soil preparation. And then, give the plants the nutrients they need: Nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash. That what those numbers like 15-5-10 on fertilizer and plant food mean. The same things work spiritually. We need our hearts prepared and spiritual food for our souls.

We want to be servants of Jesus. We want to help others come to know Christ. We want God to use us in his work. But we cannot lead where we will not

go, we cannot teach what we do not know, and we cannot give what we do not have.

Once two men were talking. One said, "I am feeling so weak spiritually. Everything is just going blah or routine for me. I have lost the joy and the wonder that I once had." The other man said, "I know what the problem is. Have you ever breathed out three times in a row?" The other one said, "I don't know." "Well try it," the second man encouraged. So the first man tried it. He couldn't do it. He said, "I can only breathe out once and then I must breathe in. I cannot breathe out three times unless I have breathed in three times." "Exactly," said the second man. "You must breathe in before you can breathe out. The same with God. You must breathe in before you can breathe out."

Today I am encouraging you more than anything else in this world to breathe in God, then you will be able to breathe out for God. You must take in before you can give out.

The most important thing in this world is to develop your relationship with God. Grow in that relationship. Become more and more intimate in knowing God. Not just to know about him, but to know him as your Lord and Savior, your friend.

Paul made it very personal in Gal. 2:20: [read]. Notice how personal he said his trust in Christ was. It was "For me. . . . for me."

The fact of God has tremendous applications and implications for my life. There is nothing more spiritually delightful and invigorating than to study about God. Theology is the queen of all the sciences. Bill Bright's book, Discover God and His Attributes, lists thirteen attributes or qualities of God. They are as follows: God is a personal Spirit, all-powerful, ever-present, knows everything, sovereign, holy, absolute truth, righteous, just, love, merciful, faithful, and never changes.

But does this have meaning for me, for you? Yes, absolutely yes. Every doctrine of the Bible has applications for my life. Does the doctrine of God have applications for my life? Yes! How is that?

Well, let's go back over Bill's list and note the application for us.

**Because God is a personal Spirit....**I will seek intimate fellowship with him."

**Because God is all-powerful...**He can help me with anything.

**Because God is ever-present...**He is always with me.

**Because God knows everything...**I will go to Him with all my questions and concerns.

**Because God is sovereign...**I will joyfully submit to His will.

**Because God is holy...**I will devote myself to Him in purity, worship and service.

**Because God is absolute truth...**I will believe what He says and live accordingly.

**Because God is righteous...**I will live by His standards.

**Because God is just ...**He will always treat me fairly.

**Because God is love...**He is unconditionally committed to my well-being.

**Because God is merciful...**He forgives me of my sins when I sincerely confess them.

**Because God is faithful...**I will trust Him to always keep His promises.

**Because God never changes...**My future is secure and eternal.

Is there anything in this world that can be greater than knowing God and living in a loving, obedient relationship with him? Absolutely not!

Today, I want to give each of you a card with all these attributes and their applications. Please carry this with you. Read it every day.

The thoughts of God will change your life. Remember this great promise, "They that lean upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

The doctrine of God is so practical. When we sin, it is because we really do not believe what we believe. For example, I heard the speaker on "The Truth Project," a series of thirteen one-hour DVDs produced by Focus on the Family, tell the story about a man who was having trouble with pornography. The man confessed that when he was most prone to look at porn on the internet was when he was all alone and his family had left the house. He said he felt lonely, disconnected, and that he needed a warm, live connection so that's when he looked at pornography. The speaker asked the man, "Do you believe in God?" "Yes, of course," he answered. The speaker then asked, "Do you believe that God is present all the time?" "Yes," the man responded. The speaker said, "No, you really don't believe what you say you believe because if you did you would know that God is with you and that he never leaves you and that he is always there for you. You are not ever alone or disconnected from him and he can meet all your needs for intimacy." He's right, isn't he? We cannot think about God and sin at the same time. It's impossible. When we believe in God many of our fears will fade away, our joys will increase, our purpose and meaning will be clearer and sharper, and our love will grow. We will become more and more like Jesus our Lord.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, an early American author, wrote the short story of "The Old Man and the Mountain." He said that years ago in the mountains of New England there was a village at the foot of a mountain that had a promontory point that looked like the shape of a man's face. The legend was that someday a man would come to the village that matched the shape of the face in the mountain. A little boy named Earnest went every day to meet the stage coach when it stopped in town. Earnest would look at the strangers' faces to see if any of them matched the

face in the mountain. Earnest did this for years and he grew into manhood. He thought about that face in the mountain every day. He yearned to find the man that matched that face. Years went by, but no one ever came to town with that particular shape and face. When Earnest was an old man he was walking down the street and someone said, “Earnest, your face is the one in the mountain. You look just like that stone face. You are the face in the mountain.”

It is a fact of life that we become what we think about all day long. Earnest thought all the time about that face and he became like that face. When we think about Christ we become like Christ. That’s our goal in life—to know Christ, to become like Christ. The Bible says that’s the goal of God to make us like Jesus (read Rom. 8:29 and 2 Cor. 3:18).

All of us have as much of God as we want. The Bible says, ‘Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.’ The only limit on God working in our life is our willingness to let him.

I find it interesting to read the prayers of the apostle Paul for the church. What would Paul pray for a church? We have his prayers in Philipians, Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians. His prayers never mention more members, more money, more buildings, bigger crowds, more popularity, or more missionaries. They all mention one thing essentially---more of Christ, more of Christ, more of Christ. Here’s Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians in chapter 1:17-19 [read the verses]. Paul prayed most of all that the church might “know God better.” In chapter 3, verses 14-19, he prayed that they would know god’s love and heart better and better [read the verses]. These prayers will change our lives. I believe if you will pray these prayers every morning and night for seven days they will change your life.

My prayer for you is that Christ dwells in your heart, that the Spirit controls your life, and that you come to know God and his love more and more and more. And when you do, you’ll come to see that truly is the most important thing in the world. Amen? Amen.

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