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"One Thing I Ask"  
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I think I speak for all the elders when I say that it is a joy and a privilege to minister at Cornerstone and at the same time our hearts ache for the salvation of each and every one of you. In Hebrews 13:17 it states "Your leaders keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account". Thankfully we are only undershepherds of the GOOD SHEPHERD who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11) and who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood (Revelation 1:5), the word of God never ceases to amaze! That is why the truth is preached here each Sunday for it says in Hebrews 4:12 that the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and of spirit, of both joints and of marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. That is the same word that Romans 1:16 calls the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

I think you will agree that the world as we know it is rapidly changing before our eyes, the spiritual battle for the truth has never been more apparent.

Here's just one of countless examples: A young female student at Cal Poly recently wrote an opinion piece in the school paper about the Superbowl halftime show, which I saw about 10 seconds of and would like to wipe from my memory, she titled her story "A powerful exhibition of female sexuality", she concluded her article by saying "since the notion that women must remain pure in the public eye persists, an inspiring show is being tarnished... this was a moment for women from women and conservative America is attempting to destroy that."

Wow, I'm not sure how to even respond to that except with sadness and a very heavy heart. Ravi Zacharias describes this insanity in his book *Can Man Live Without God*, where he says "Unguarded by truth there is no limit to the depth of superstition and deception into which the human mind can descend, Unguarded by truth there is no limit to the depth of superstition and deception into which the human mind can descend". Unfortunately, this twisting of the truth is also affecting the church today and yet this is nothing new, over 2000 years ago the Apostle Paul warned Timothy to beware of false doctrine:

2 Timothy 4:3-5 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

This passage in Timothy is referring to the church, churches all around us are changing their theology to fit in with the culture. 2 Timothy 4 says that people won't put up with sound doctrine so they find teaching to suit their own passions, people can find a pastor who teaches that hell doesn't even exist, they can find a pastor who teaches that good people go to heaven, they can find a pastor that teaches God promises health, wealth and prosperity. We are in a battle for the truth and the only cure is God's Word, so please turn with me to the book of Matthew where we will be spending most of our time in Matthew 7, starting with verses 14-15, then looking at verses 21-24 and then swinging back to verses 7-8. I'm pretty sure I would get a failing grade for this reordering of the text in an Expository Preaching class but since I don't have a masters of divinity I can claim that I don't know any better! In Matthew 7 Jesus gives a similar warning to 2 Timothy 4 to beware of false teachers, particularly when it comes to salvation.

Matthew 7:14-15

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

## **I. The Way to life is narrow**

There is a wide gate that is easy, the way of the world is the easiest thing to do, however the most popular way leads to destruction, and you will be pressured into the wide road, you are being pressured into the wide road everyday! I heard a preacher recently say that of all the false teachings out there the most dangerous is the proclamation of the wide road, the broad way, that many roads lead to heaven. Jesus said that these roads lead to destruction, to death, to separation from God forever. Jesus is upfront with the truth that the narrow way is difficult, like climbing a steep mountain, but it's the best way. The broad way says as long as you believe it in your heart then it's true, it's the way that says do what feels best to you, follow your heart. Anyone have a verse that comes to mind when you hear follow your heart?

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

A recent article in the Guardian was titled "Why do we think we're nicer than we actually are? A study has found that 98% of people think they're among the nicest 50% of the population. This secular study concluded with the following: We unconsciously deceive ourselves so that we can gain confidence without knowingly lying to ourselves or each other.

The world says to trust yourself, do whatever feels good to you, that's the same lie Satan told Eve in the garden, you want it, take it, if you feel like it, eat it, it won't hurt you, that's the easy way, the broad way that leads to destruction. Jesus says deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me, to the point that the love of Christ controls us rather than the love of self, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 states For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Last Sunday during communion Pastor John Marc said that "sin causes us to focus on ourselves" John 8:34,36 says everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin... if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. The world denies this truth but ironically even secular research concludes that "we flatter and deceive ourselves"! The article about 98% of the people considering themselves good people, nice people, concluded by saying that "studies show that the best remedy for our inflated view of ourselves is simple: feedback."

Feedback? The feedback we all need is that the way is broad that leads to destruction and that the way is narrow that leads to life.

If you are here this morning I assume you would affirm that truth, that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and that no one comes to the Father but through Him, and that there is salvation in no

one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

But the question we all need to ask ourselves is posed in verses 21-24 of Matthew 7, do we know Jesus or simply know about Him.

## **II. Knowing Jesus is life**

Matthew 7:21-24 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

There is nothing sweeter in life than knowing you are secure in Christ and at the same time there is nothing more devastating than thinking you are secure and hearing Jesus say ‘I never knew you, depart from Me’. These people are self-deceived, they truly believe that they know Jesus. That is why we are called in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to “test yourselves to see if you are in the faith”. Fortunately for us the Bible talks a lot about knowing Jesus and Jesus knowing His sheep, let’s take a look at just a few verses, and of course that leads us to the book of John, I highly encourage you to read a few chapters from the book of John and 1 John everyday, in fact 1 John 5:13 says “these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life”, that’s how much God loves you, He not only wants you to know Him, He comes to you when you are unable to come to Him, He sends His only Son to die in your place, He sends His Spirit who is called the Helper, to help you and He gives you His Word so that you may know that you have eternal life! Don’t worry, we are not done being amazed by God’s Word this morning.

John 1:9-10 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

John 10:14-15 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Galatians 4:8-9 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God.

Wow, think about that for a moment, as believers we are known by God. That would be a great truth to meditate on this week, that is just one of countless reasons why God’s children we always have something to give thanks for.

1 John 2:3-4 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 3:24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Wow, think about that for a moment, God abides in believers. Based on that fact along there is never a reason for a Christian to have a bad day, bad circumstances may occur, but nothing can overshadowed an amazing truth like that, God abides in His people!

Before we move on I wanted to focus on verse 24, because there are 3 main categories of people here today, you either clearly do not know Jesus and if that is the case I beg you as it says in 2 Corinthians 5:20, I beg you on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God today, don't leave here without talking me, a friend, the prayer team after the service. The second type of people here today are confident that you know Jesus and are known by Him. Similar to your closest family and friends, you definitely know Jesus deeply. But there's a third group of people here today that are not so confident, and that can be very scary, I know, I've been there and there is a good reason why you are not confident, you spend very little time with Jesus. What do I mean by that? Imagine if I spent 4 minutes a day talking to my wife (a few jokes come to mind right now but I'm going to restrain myself), if I talk to my wife 4 minutes a day would I know her very well? I think it is safe to say that the answer is no, I would sort of know her but I wouldn't know her very well. Why did I pick 4 minutes? I read an article recently that took a survey and found that the average Christian prays less than 4 minutes a day. Wow, that's a scary thought, if we think of prayer like spiritual breathing then the average Christian is holding their spiritual breath all day long! That's why I was so excited to hear Pastor John Marc challenge all of us to start out our day praying for 10 minutes, with the hope that 10 will become 20 and 20 will become 30 and 30 will become an hour. Scottish Pastor Robert Murray M'Cheyne was known for praying hours a day. Even when pressed by duties, he kept by his rule, 'that he must first see the face of God before he could undertake any duty'. M'Cheyne said "a calm hour with God is worth a whole lifetime with man".

That leads us to our next point:

### **III. Dig deep to anchor to the Rock**

In Matthew 7:24 Jesus states "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock."

In a parallel account Luke 6:47-48 Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

Cornerstone, we need to dig deep! You all probably familiar with the Leaning Tower of Pisa, there's a photo on the screen here, the tower leans because of a weak foundation. Foundations are important, the other photo there is the new San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge which I worked on for my PhD, if you are from the Bay Area you know that the bay is full of mud and mud doesn't make for a solid foundation. In order to reach bedrock, the piles go just as deep in the mud as the tower goes to the sky.



So how do we dig deep and lay a foundation on the Rock? Let's look back at Matthew 7:7-8:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. For what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Asking, seeking, knocking is hard. Digging deep is hard but very satisfying in the end. Have you ever dug a hole in the ground? It's exhausting just to dig one 3 feet deep hole and it takes a long time, especially in the hard soil around here. But we need to remember that this is a promise from God, God will give you what you need when you ask (remember sometimes what we need is not what we want but God knows what is best for you and I), help you find when you seek and open doors when you knock. This promise is similar to James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all generously without reproach and it will be given to him. But in order to ask, seek and knock we need to spend time in God's Word and prayer daily. Pastor John Mac Arthur's commentary on Matthew 7:7-8 states:

God wants us to be in His Word, and without being in His Word we cannot pray wisely or rightly. But even beyond our being in His Word, He wants us to be in fellowship with Him as our Father. Along with His perfect and infallible Word, we need His Spirit to interpret and illumine, to encourage and to strengthen. The Bible is a limitless store of divine truth, which a lifetime of the most faithful and diligent study will not exhaust. But apart from God Himself we cannot even start to fathom its depths or mine its riches. In His Word God gives enough truth for us to be responsible, but enough mystery for us to be dependent. He gives us His Word not only to direct our lives but to draw our lives to Him.

Perseverance is also key, we need to keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking and notice the increasing intensity with each verb, ASK, SEEK KNOCK, this is not passive, this is active.

2 Peter 1:5-11 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly

kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

Perseverance and diligence lead to the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! We are going to need to make time for this so how do we incorporate knowing God into our busy days? That's a whole other sermon in itself. But one thing for sure, it won't happen on its own, Pastor John Piper says "we need to fight for joy", I know that may sound strange but we know it to be true, in the same way we need to fight for time with God and not let other distractions get in the way.

I mentioned earlier that the average Christian prays 4 minutes a day. I know we have some hunters here today and some of you are hikers, golfers, soccer players, swimmers, artists, travelers, shoppers... you have a passion for these things and that is great, you should. So imagine if I told you we are going hunting, hiking, playing a sport, traveling, shopping today and you have 4 minutes to do it. You would tell me I'm crazy. It's not even worth the time to get started if you can only spend 4 minutes.

In the end, knowing God needs to be our greatest passion. Michael Jordan spoke at Kobe Bryant's memorial service a few weeks ago describing Kobe Bryant's passion for being the best basketball player in the world, he "if you love something, you will go to the extreme to try to understand it or try to get it... whatever you have a love for if you have to walk miles for it, beg for it, you'll go get it." There's an advertisement that you may have heard on the local talk radio station for Woody's Butcher down in Santa Maria where he is asked about his specials and he starts describing a pork rib this way "they're meaty, delicious, marbled like crazy, they're fantastic on the grill" don't get me wrong, I enjoy eating ribs as much as anyone, but if Woody can describe a rib like that then what words should we be using daily to praise the God who created the tasty hog in the first place!

Lamentations 3:20-25 is one of my favorite passages for praising God.

Surely my soul remembers And is bowed down within me.

This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.

The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail.

They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.

"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him.

This reminds me of Matthew 6:33 Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 13:44-45 "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."

We will dig the deepest for what we are most passionate about, that leads us to our last point:

#### **IV. One thing I ask**

Let's review for a moment, we began with:

### **I. The Way to life is narrow**

The world's ways, the wide road, will be the easy way but it will lead to destruction. God's way, the narrow way, will be difficult, challenging, but it will lead to life eternal.

### **II. Knowing Jesus is life**

This life eternal is dependent on knowing Jesus, not just knowing about Jesus but knowing Him and Him knowing you.

### **III. Dig deep to anchor to the Rock**

Cornerstone, we need to dig deep! Let's encourage one another to dig deep together, it's a lot more fun when you are working together isn't it?

### **IV. One thing I ask**

Mark 10:21-22 And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "**One thing you lack**: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

Luke 10:41-42 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; **but only one thing is necessary**, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; **but one thing I do**: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 27:4 **One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek**: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.

I will wrap today with a challenge. 2 weeks ago Pastor John Marc challenged us to begin each day by praying for at least 10 minutes, last week Pastor John Marc challenged us to pray for 5 people 5 days a week for 5 months to pray for God to prepare their heart and pray for an opportunity to share your faith with them. Your next challenge is to make knowing God your greatest pursuit, your greatest passion. If Woody the butcher can describe a pork rib as meaty, delicious, and marbled like crazy, then how much more excited should we be to know God and make Him known!

Jesus tells us in John 15:5,7 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. Let's encourage and pray for one another to dig deep and move mountains as we depend on God through Jesus by the Holy Spirit this week! Please join me in prayer.