

PASTORAL PRAYER

Almighty God,

We come to honor you this day. We come to acknowledge that you are the only one who can rightly lead and guide our country.

Lord, we lift up prayer for our country.

We ask that you bless our country with your wisdom, your love, and your compassion. May we be a people who are pursuing you and your plans for us - individually and corporately.

Lord, we lift up prayer for our leaders.

Lord, we ask for blessings on our leaders. May these servants who are in positions of authority take that responsibility seriously and do their very best each day. May they realize their need for you and for your direction. May they hear your voice as they make their decisions, and may they follow your guidance. May they have a passion for people, for truth, and for righteousness.

Lord, we lift up prayer for our troops.

Lord, we ask for blessings on our service men and women. We ask protection for all our men and women in uniform both here and around

the world. We are grateful for their service and their dedication to keeping our nation safe. We pray that you would keep them safe. We thank you for our blessings of life and liberty. May our country continually show love and honor to you. May our dedication to you cause us to reach out to all the other nations and people groups with a strong desire for peace and harmony to be displayed whenever possible. Amen.

Life

John 17:1-11

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Adapted from "This Is Eternal Life" by Dr. David Winkle

Some would argue, the greatest question that one can ever ask is, "What must I do to be saved?" If you ask that question of ten different Christians, you likely will get at least five different answers. Some will tell you that you must be "born again" in a religious conversion experience. Another answer might have to do with being baptized and making a profession of faith. There are some who will lay out a step-by-step plan or a sequence of events that one must follow, to be saved: hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized and remain faithful. No doubt that someone would say, "You must accept Jesus Christ as your personal

Lord and Savior.” Yet another group might say, “follow the teachings of Jesus and live a good life.”

With each answer that you receive from the various groups defining salvation, there will be supporting scriptural quotes. Some use scriptural passages wisely and in context, and others will use them as “proof texts,” pulling a verse from here and there to “prove” their view to be right and true.

(Slowly) Which group is right? Which group is wrong? Are some of them, partially right? Is it a blend of every answer? It is not my intention to have you select one answer over another, or to construct another definition for you. I will leave that to your own discernment and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. (pause)

This question and variations of it are asked several times in scripture. In the synoptic gospels, specifically, Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-31, and Luke 10:25-28, a lawyer asks Jesus “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” The answer given is that “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. Love your neighbor as yourself.” In

Luke 18:18 the same question is asked by the “Rich Young Ruler.” To his answer of keeping the commandments Jesus adds, “Sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

Another place where this question is asked is in the book of Acts. In the second chapter of Acts after Peter delivers his Pentecost sermon, people in the crowd ask, “What must we do.” Peter tells them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” (Acts 2:38) Later in chapter sixteen, when asked by a jailer what he must do to be saved, Paul and Silas answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16:31) The answers given in scripture have to do with loving God and neighbor, keeping the commandments, giving to the poor, following Jesus, believing in the Lord Jesus, repentance and baptism. All of these are obviously important, but here in our text today we find that there is something that lies behind each answer. Eternal life. (pause)

The understanding of “eternal life” is very important in John’s gospel. John uses the phrase eighteen times. When this is compared to Matthew’s three times, Mark’s two times and Luke’s three times the significance of the phrase in John becomes more dramatic. In our text today, Jesus gives the definition and meaning of eternal life. In so doing, he indirectly answers the question, “What must I do to be saved.” Jesus says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

The Greek word translated as “know” is: gin-nos-ko (ginóskó), which means “to come to know or understand, to become familiar with through a relationship, or known in an intimate relationship.” This is not the knowledge of intellectual assent. It is experiential knowledge gained through a relationship. In our case, it is the relationship with God. It is our relationship with the living Lord, Jesus Christ. Eternal life comes through a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Eternal life **IS** the relationship.

Christians may differ on how the relationship begins, or how the relationship progresses, but Jesus makes it clear that eternal life is found

in relationship to him. How you got into your relationship with Jesus is not important for us here. What is important is the health and strength of that relationship. All relationships need to be nurtured by spending quality time together. They are nurtured by listening and talking and getting to know each other more intimately. With that in mind the question I leave you with today is: How is your relationship with Jesus?

(Pause)