

He Must Increase, But I Must Decrease

John 3:16-21. We don't know if these are the words of Jesus or the Apostle John. It's why some translations moved away from the "red letter" format. I tend to think it's John because it sounds awkward if it came from Jesus. Either way, it's not a big deal. Getting the picture is what's important. Would Nicodemus see Jesus for who He really is? Do we see God for who He truly is? Do we see ourselves? Do we come to the light or hide in the darkness?

Let's continue in **John 3**. I want to share my favorite Bible passage with you. Read vs. **22-30**. "***He must increase, but I must decrease.***" It leaves the impression that John's disciples were concerned as if he were losing a popularity contest. "Rabbi, He who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness - look, He is baptizing, all are going to Him." Maybe I'm reading this wrong. Maybe they're excited for Jesus as well? Seems like everyone I read has the same impression as me: it feels competitive. Either way, John makes it clear how he views Jesus's success. Honestly, John feels blessed to have the honor of standing by the bridegroom's side. He's thankful he's even in the picture! All John can do is celebrate and rejoice in Jesus' ministry. Indeed, as far as John sees it, it's time for his light to dim so Jesus can shine brighter.

Reflecting on the little we know about John, we see a man who:

- **Had a childlike heart.** In particular, I see this in his *humility towards Jesus* and a genuine ability to *rejoice at Jesus' victories*. Let's face it - we struggle with this.
 - Concerning humility: Children have the sweetest lens, but there's something special about an adult who practices a child-like humility. I've seen this among individuals here at North Collin, and it's a true blessing. Quite frankly, you don't expect it as a general rule. Over time, people tend to forget who blessed us with our abilities or who allowed us to build on our talents and traits. When this isn't checked, we begin to overestimate our roles. We want others to see us as teachers, not students. Honestly, we don't like being the bridesmaid or best man. We want to be THE MAN. But John was blessed to be at the wedding, brethren.
 - I continue to take note and learn from Jesus as best I can, as well as from those in the flesh. Yes, there are several who have a John-like humility. I'm not talking about a false humility (though I guess it could be - I can't read hearts), but from individuals who genuinely seem to value what others bring to the table. They believe there's always something to learn. They have so much knowledge and experience, yet no matter your age, they will listen to you because they understand they don't know everything. Truly listen. It's wisdom, because they've learned that truth can come from many sources. You see this humility in the way they talk and listen. The way they carry themselves and behave. It's not one particular thing - it's a complete package. You can be bold and gentle. Competent and humble. Equipped while seeking further abilities. I think it's this trait of John, in particular, that Jesus claimed there was no greater man born to a woman than John (**Matthew 11:11**).

- Concerning rejoicing: Because of this humility, John also lacked entitlement. What did God owe him? What did he owe God? It's this humility that robbed John of his self-centeredness and gets in the way of celebrating others' victories. Can you imagine what this world would be like if we could put away our own desires to be seen, praised, grow in position, insecurities, and competitiveness, and rejoice with our brethren? To celebrate with your peers when their child succeeds, rather than comparing your child to theirs? Congratulating someone on their growth without pointing out their weaknesses? Praise someone for their godliness at the workplace, which leads to a promotion, instead of thinking about everything that went wrong when you exercised the same? Rejoicing at the success of someone else's marriage when yours is struggling? Shed happy tears with a brother whose prodigal son returned home when yours is still out there. Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for a sister who is with child after losing yours. Just remember - Jesus' role as King ended on a cross. His crown was made of thorns. Yet He devoted His life to saving others, and men like John (though they didn't understand the plan) had the wisdom and humility to see it. Yes, John was just honored to be at the wedding, brethren. And I'm just honored to be sharing God with you (though I forget that from time to time and think too highly of myself). How about you? Do the pages of your life tell of humility towards God and others?
- **Consumed with Jesus**. Do you think God chose John because he would be wholly devoted, or was he wholly devoted because he was chosen? There's no doubt that God chose and used John. His own father, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways." [Luke 1:76](#). But do you ever think about why God used individuals like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Mary, or Paul? I believe God chose John because He knew John would be an honorable vessel. I love reading about John. Whether it was the way he would drop what He's doing to praise and acknowledge Jesus ([John 1:29, 35](#)), or how he was wholly devoted to God's word ([John 1:31-34](#)). John loved Jesus because He loved God. He accepted the Lord's word and found it fulfilled in Jesus. He was wholly devoted, brethren. He was obedient.
 - Obedience: Read [31-36](#). It's debated whether these are the words of John the Baptist or the Apostle John. The reality is they would both agree. Take note of verse [36](#). I know that both men followed this principle. As far as John the Baptist, sharing the truth would cost him his life. We want to make sure that our teaching on grace doesn't conflict with the message of obedience. It's not a dirty word. A lack of obedience stems from a lack of love and belief. Do you see how important this is? What will it take for us to be as committed as John? Would you have to be pressured into a role as a deacon, shepherd, or preacher? Will it take losing a job and brethren stepping in that you'll say, "Oh, this faith thing is really important?" What would it take for us to finally have skin in the spiritual game? This year, if we focused solely on humility and obedience, it would lead to eternal life and away from the wrath of God.