* Announcements
  + Leadership team – Moved to Sept 14th.
  + Pray for the Constitution team
  + Selected Topics Wednesday
* John 20:31

# He Must Increase, I Must Decrease – John 3:22-36

The secret service protects many people. Its first and foremost assignment is protecting the President of the United States. They also protect the Vice President, presidential candidates, former presidents, foreign heads of state visiting the US and the families of all these people.

Preparing for a protection detail is an in-depth activity. The planning begins months in advance as they meet with local law enforcement, plan motorcade routes and clear the airspace to ensure the protectee’s travel is safe. They also examine all the nearby buildings to determine where to place their officers and where attackers could stage their attack.

The Secret Service then identifies people who are a potential threat, including those who have made hostile posts on social media, who have associations with certain groups, and who have past histories of violence. They warn these people that they are being watched to discourage any kind of trouble.

On the day of the event the agents use dogs to search for bombs in buildings and along the motorcade routes. Some people are stationed to inspect people who may come near the person being protected. Other agents form a bodyguard around the VIP to make sure that no one can approach unauthorized and, if necessary, to protect the person from attack.

The secret service agents do months of work for what may be only an hour or two of visiting a location. Of course, some trips have less planning as sometimes the decision takes place only hours before the trip, but even then, hundreds of people do hours of work to keep one or two people safe.

Imagine that the lead secret service agent comes home to find his son is upset. He says, “You do weeks of work and risk your life for some politician’s chance to do a publicity stunt. You should be the one on the TV, you deserve the attention because you got everything ready.” With a loving chuckle, the father would explain to his son that this was not his purpose. His purpose was there to prepare the way, not to be the focus of attention.

This parallels with what happened to John the Baptist as Jesus started His ministry. John spent at least 6 months preparing for the arrival of Jesus. John had faithful disciples that loved him and were loyal to him. When Jesus started His ministry, some of John’s disciples followed Christ, others were jealous that Jesus was getting the attention instead of John. From the events as the focus passes from John to Jesus we learn four (4) ways that we can bring glory to God: by continuing our tasks, by staying humble, by knowing our place, and by exalting God.

## We glorify God by continuing our tasks John 3:22-24

**22** ¶ After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. **23** Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized. **24** (This was before John was put in prison.)

The location where Jesus and John are is not really significant in this passage, suffice it to say they are not near to each other. John had earlier baptized Jesus and knew that Jesus was the coming messiah. Many people would believe that he had accomplished his mission of preparing the way for the Lord. But John did not think along those lines, instead John continues baptizing people and people were continually coming to be baptized.

From Acts 19:4, we know that John’s baptism was an act of repentance, but not an act of salvation. So why did John keep baptizing if he knew he wasn’t the messiah and knew that he wasn’t bringing people to salvation? He was doing what God had told him to do and God had not told him to stop. While I cannot back this with scripture, I believe that after his encounter with Jesus, each time people came for baptism, John followed it up with telling them that if their repentance was genuine they should seek out Jesus.

Apparently, John continued baptizing until he was put in prison…he continued as long as he was able to do what God called him to do. It is possible that God will call someone and tell them to change tasks, but in the absence of this, we should glorify God by continuing to do what we are doing (1 Corinthians 7:20-24), but as we are called by God, we are doing our tasks for the glory of God (Colossians 3:23).

Imagine our secret service agent watches the president’s plane land and then decides, he has done his part and can sit around with his feet up for a few hours. If something happened to the president, the agent would be charged with treason. Even if nothing bad happened, when this agent was discovered he would be fired and possibly charged with a crime.

There are obvious times that you should not continue what you were doing, if you were a mafia don or a drug pusher before God called you, obviously you would need to quit because these things are contrary to scripture, but the key is to stay where you are until God tells you to go somewhere else. If the place you are is uncomfortable, lean on God for support, if it is enjoyable, give the glory to God.

As you transfer control of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by continuing to do what He has asked until He tells you otherwise?

## We glorify God through humble perspective John 3:25-28

**25** An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. **26** They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan— the one you testified about— well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." **27** To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. **28** You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’

John was comfortable with transferring the focus to Jesus, but his disciples were not. The root of their discontent had nothing to do with the relationship between John and Jesus. They got into an argument with a certain person about principles of ceremonial washing and suddenly instead of talking about that issue, they are talking about Jesus.

Maybe one person said you need to ceremonially wash before you eat and the other said they heard something about Jesus turning ceremonial water into wine. Maybe one was saying that when you baptize you just need to get the person totally wet while the other said you need to hold the person under for 5 seconds, then someone pipes up that they saw Jesus do it for three seconds. Who knows why it happened? The argument with this other person is perceived by John’s followers to threaten his position. They run to John and tell him that the one he testified about is now baptizing and becoming more popular than him.

There is a car commercial today that illustrates this. A woman is talking to her boss who is telling her why he can’t promote her this quarter. While disappointed, the woman accepts this until a person drives up and tells her to get in the car. After showing her how the car doesn’t compromise, the employee demands her rights to a promotion because now she is unwilling to compromise. We often do not get offended when something happens until someone tells us we should be offended. Were you fine with the company hiring someone else for the job, until a coworker said, “the only reason you didn’t get it is because you are too old.”?

John does not take the bait, he humbly respects the plans that God has. Ηe would not have any ministry if God had not given it to him. He holds on to what God has given with an open hand, his attitude corresponds to Job who said, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21). The ministry came from God, God can move it to someone else when He desires.

John also adds a subtle jab at his disciples. He reminds them, “You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’” The irony here is that they way they referred to Jesus was by calling him the one that you testified about. They had heard the words of why John was fine with the focus transferring from him to Jesus, but they had not understood the significance of them.

You may be fine working around the church and doing the “menial” tasks that are so necessary, but then someone comes up to you and asks, “why are you mopping the bathroom, shouldn’t someone else be doing that?” It is your opportunity to be humble and remind them how you are not working for yourself but for God (Colossians 3:23).

As you transfer control of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by being humble about yourself?

## We glorify God by knowing our place John 3:29-30

**29** The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. **30** He must become greater; I must become less.

Imagine a wedding where the pastor looks at the groom and says, you may now kiss your bride. As the groom smiles and leans in toward his bride, the best man grabs her, spins her around and plants a kiss on her. It would be scandalous. The videos people were taking on their phones would all be posted to the internet in seconds. Within a day a million people would see the video of how the best man had become the worst. They would see how the bride, the groom and the congregation responded to the affront.

John, by implication, asks why his disciples expect him to be the center of attention. His whole purpose was to support the ministry of Jesus. It was not only proper for Jesus to be center of attention, it was exciting to make Jesus the center of attention. I was a groomsman in a few different weddings. I was excited and even honored to stand in the background and do whatever I could to make their marriages smoother. We should do the same for God.

Consider how you look to other people. It is not your place to make yourself look good, it is your place to make Jesus look good. When someone asks how you kept your cool during a heated meeting, don’t give credit to your calm nature or the anger management class you took. Instead, admit that you don’t know how you kept control, but God gave you the grace not to explode. Point to Jesus. He is the bridegroom.

Helping people to look at Jesus instead of you embodies the idea that “He must become greater, I must become less.” You don’t become less by devaluing yourself or telling people how terrible you are. You become less by making Jesus greater.

On one of my trips to Belarus, we attended Церковь "Голгофа" (Golgotha church). Their church building was made from a small house and they had outgrown the facility, but the law only allowed them to own one property, so to expand their church, they were building a new building around the existing building, with the existing building being in the middle of the new sanctuary. Once the new building was able to be occupied, they would tear down the old building and finish off the sanctuary. While we were visiting, they were painting the original building, even though the new building was 80% complete. When asked why, they said that it made the new building look better if the old one didn’t look shabby. They knew that building was meaningless and would be destroyed, but they maintained it because they knew that it was their place to do so, while making the new building even greater.

As you transfer control of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by showing you know your place and maintaining it to the best of his ability?

## We glorify God by exalting Him John 3:31-36

**31** "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. **32** He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. **33** The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. **34** For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. **35** The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. **36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him."

John describes Jesus as above all, from heaven, testifying about what He has seen about God, truthful, sent by God, filled with God’s Spirit and loved by the Father. What a great way to glorify God! What a great testimony about the Trinity. Here we have God sending the son. We have God the Father giving the Sprit to the son without limit. We have God the Father loving the Son and delegating everything to Him.

John exalts God, but he also contrasts others who exalt God and those who deny Him. Those who believe in the Son have eternal life and certify that God is truthful. In contrast, those who do not accept Jesus’s testimony about God reject Him and will see God’s wrath.

Transferring the focus from himself to God took more than stepping back into his proper place., more than staying humble and more than keeping up with our tasks. To glorify God, we must tell others what makes God great. We must increase His fame.

As you transfer control of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by exalting Him?

At the funeral this week, I had an interesting conversation. This young man, whose grandmother had died, was raised in a bible believing church, but had rejected the church and was attending a church that is part of a cult. His reason for rejecting the church was that Christians made it too easy. He said, “All you have to do is say a prayer once and then you are saved and can do anything you want.” Because he saw people rely on walking an aisle for their faith, he was disillusioned and sought people who were instead trying to earn their salvation.

The Bible has never taught that you are saved by saying a prayer and walking an aisle. It has never said that you can be saved and still live like the devil. The Bible also specifically says that you cannot earn your salvation. You can never be good enough! Rather, the Bible says if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. We need to understand that calling Him Lord means that you are putting Him in charge of your life. You will not earn salvation by doing good work, but if you have been saved, you will obey God’s commands and that will result in you doing good works. Good works is the result of true salvation, not the cause of it.

Some of us had an experience of an emotional prayer. I myself prayed as a child to be a Christian because I did not want to be His enemy, but I did not understand what that meant. When I was older, God caused me to understand that out of gratitude for salvation, I must live a life that honors and exalts Him. Are you living this kind of life? You can right now.

# He Must Increase, I Must Decrease – John 3:22-36

## We glorify God by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ our tasks John 3:22-24

John’s baptism was for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, but not for salvation Acts 19:4,

We should glorify God by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1 Corinthians 7:20-24

We are doing our tasks \_\_\_\_\_\_ the glory of God Colossians 3:23

As you transfer \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by continuing?

## We glorify God through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ perspective John 3:25-28

John humbly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the plans that God has.

“The LORD gives and the LORD takes away; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ be the name of the LORD” Job 1:21

Be humble and remind them how you are not working for yourself but \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ Colossians 3:23

As you transfer control of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ humble?

## We glorify God by knowing our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ John 3:29-30

It is your place to make \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ look good.

You become less by making Jesus \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

As you transfer control of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by knowing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ place?

## We glorify God by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Him John 3:31-36

Τestimony about the Trinity:

* God the Father \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Son
* God the Father \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Sprit to the Son without limit
* God the Father \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Son and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ everything to Him.

Those who do not accept Jesus’s testimony will see God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

We must increase \_\_\_\_\_\_ fame.

As you transfer control of your life to Christ, are you glorifying God by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Him?