

## We Must Decrease

Read John 3:22-36. It was early in Jesus' ministry and very late in the ministry of John the Baptist, who was about to be thrown into prison and executed. Jesus and His disciples had begun baptizing, and the crowds were going to them, not to John. John's numbers, and apparently his ministry, were decreasing.

It's easy to be philosophical about that, or perhaps point a finger at preachers for wanting to build their "numbers." But put yourself in John's situation. It hurts when our ministry seems to be going nowhere or even dwindling down to nothing.

John's disciples came to him and asked him about what was happening. Notice John's wonderful reply:

1. We can only do what God gives us to do, and do it faithfully (v. 27). "Lord, this is Your work. I am simply available to You." There's a great freedom in that.
2. Jesus is the Christ. He is to be glorified, not us (v. 28). We are only servants, sent to humbly obey and to do whatever little tasks we're asked.
3. Our joy should not be in accomplishment, but in Him (v. 29). His very presence is the fulfillment of God's purposes. Don't focus on your own little part in the work. Rejoice in Him. He himself is our assurance of victory.
4. He must become greater; I must become less (v. 30). How beautiful and to the point. To the extent that we let people be drawn to us personally, we deceive them. We are letting them chase yet one more human solution that is bound to disappoint them. To truly succeed in ministry, we must get out of the way. We must fade into the background, and even be willing to seem to fail at times, that Christ may be lifted up rather than us.

*We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. (2 Corinthians 4:7, NIV)*

If John had been determined to "succeed" in ministry, he would have failed. He would have foolishly upstaged Christ, the very person he was sent to exalt. We risk upstaging Christ when we draw attention to ourselves or to any greatness but Him.

Looking back, we don't pity John the Baptist. We see him as blessed to play such a key role in the mission of Christ. We admire him for his toughness, for his unswerving faithfulness, for his willingness to speak God's words even when they didn't mesh with the ideas of the day.

That is our task as well. He doesn't ask us to "succeed." He wants us willing to be humbled, to simply be a servant available to Him, that Christ be exalted.

For Him to increase, we must decrease.

Hymn: [Fruitful in You](#)

© 2001 by Ken Bible, c/o LNWhymns.com