

3.2

THE MIGHTY GOD IN CHRIST

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God is fully revealed
in Jesus Christ.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will respond to my
place in Kingdom
building with
humility.



FOCUS VERSE: John 3:36

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

LESSON TEXT: John 3:22-36



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 3:22-36

John's Gospel is the only one that includes the iconic statement of faith and humility: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). It is probably appropriate that John's Gospel includes fewer details of John the Baptist's life than any of the four Gospels, most notably excluding any details of John the Baptist's arrest and execution. John the Baptist would not have been offended by this fact because John's focus was not on himself, but on Christ.

It might be appropriate to say John downplayed his ministry, but it would be more appropriate to say that John exalted Christ's ministry. John was not self-degrading; He was Christ-uplifting. When Christ is uplifted, humanity is not downgraded, but rather put back into proper perspective. Christ has always been "above all" (v. 31), but sometimes humanity can get caught up in the pettiness of human viewpoints and temporary arguments, like whatever made John's disciples anxious (v. 25). Because John had a proper understanding of Christ's greatness, he was not drawn into their discussions. John's disciples might have been preoccupied with debates over purification, but John was preoccupied with Christ's majesty. He knew that the more he focused on Christ, the less he would be worried about his own legacy, how many followers he had at any given moment, and temporary and unimportant debates. He was happy to magnify Christ while he faded into the background.

John used the analogy that he was like the friend of the groom at a wedding; he was just there to point everyone to Jesus. Christ's incarnation was the festival to which John considered himself privileged to bear witness. The friend at the wedding "rejoices greatly" (v. 29), and seeing the groom causes the friend's joy to be complete. Proper understanding of Christ's magnitude puts humanity back into perspective and should also fill us with great joy. John rejoiced at the opportunity just to bear witness to the majesty and splendor of Christ.

Verse 36 contains John the Baptist's last words recorded in John's Gospel and properly summarizes his focus: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." John knew his time on earth was temporary. He focused on glorifying the One with whom he would spend eternity in the life to come.

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DAY 1

John 3:22–24

²² After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

²³ And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

²⁴ For John was not yet cast into prison.

Biblical Insight

Even after Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist continued to preach, baptize, and make disciples of his own. He was not in competition with Christ for John already noted that he was not the Christ (John 1:20) and pointed his disciples toward Jesus as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). However, John’s ministry was short-lived. He was later thrown into prison where he was ultimately beheaded. Interestingly, while John’s Gospel mentions John the Baptist’s ministry and arrest, John’s Gospel is the only Gospel that does not record the details of John’s imprisonment and death.

Daily Devotion

On July 17, 1983, Douglas Corrigan took off from Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, New York, in his refurbished 1929 Curtiss Robin aircraft. Twenty-eight hours later, Corrigan landed in Dublin, Ireland. After stepping from his plane, he exclaimed, “Just got in from New York. Where am I?”

Corrigan found himself in Ireland even though he was supposed to land in California. He claimed he lost direction when his compass malfunctioned. Without a compass, he was disoriented enough to make a 180-degree turn from heading west to heading east.

The Irish authorities did not believe Corrigan’s story and suspended his license. By the time he returned to the United States by ship, Corrigan’s license suspension was lifted, and a mob of autograph seekers met him on the gangway. In America, “Wrong Way” Corrigan was a celebrity because his staged stunt amused them.

Today, many people are amused by people who live, talk, dress, and think the “wrong way.” Their focus is on themselves rather than on Jesus. Reflect on your focus: what amuses and entertains you? Does it bring you closer and point others to Jesus—the way, the truth, and the life? If not, you could be amused by the “wrong way.”

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

John 3:25-26

²⁵ Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

²⁶ And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

Biblical Insight

The details of this debate over purification are not spelled out in the Scripture. However, while the information was significant enough for John the Baptist's followers to alert him to Jesus' ministry, John's humble and nonplussed reaction indicated the arguments were superfluous and not too important. John certainly didn't think the details were worth writing down in his Gospel.

Verses 22 and 26 of John 3 seem to indicate that Jesus was baptizing people, but the language is not clear. John 4:2 specifically notes Jesus Himself baptized no one, only His disciples did. John 3, verses 22 and 26, are not in error. It is correct to say Jesus baptized because His disciples were baptizing at His behest and as an extension of Jesus' own ministry.

Daily Devotion

In September 2022, Eleanor Scholz was hiking through the French countryside when she heard sheep. She turned to see a woman running toward her followed by a flock of sheep. Scholz was confused. The woman was not dressed like a shepherdess, nor did she seem scared as though she was running in fear.

The woman with the flock of sheep running behind her stopped to talk to Scholz. She explained that the sheep were lost, and when they saw Scholz run by, they decided to follow her. Thankfully for the sheep, they found a considerate leader devoted to returning them home.

Like lost sheep, lost people are looking for someone to follow. They turn to social media influencers, political leaders, and celebrities hoping to be led to safety. Unfortunately, many of these people will only lead the lost onto dangerous paths.

John had the opportunity to lead followers away from Jesus and to himself, but he led them straight to Jesus. As Christians, we are called to lead the lost to Jesus. If people were to follow you, would you be leading them to Jesus or away from Him?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

John 3:27-30

²⁷ John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

²⁸ Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

²⁹ He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.

Biblical Insight

John the Baptist was not threatened by Jesus' ministry. John reminded his followers that he had been predicting this shift for a long time. He indicated he was nothing on his own but received everything from Heaven. John recognized the point of his ministry had been to point his followers toward Christ. When his disciples started following Christ, John's ministry was successful. Ministry done properly always magnifies Christ and minimizes pride, vanity, self-centeredness, and concern for accolades. Just like Christ will be magnified, our responsibility is to be humble and not self-seeking.

Daily Devotion

When someone provides feedback, how do you respond?

Before becoming an inventor, a scientist, a diplomat, and a founding father of the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin was convinced he was morally average. Frustrated by his lack of productivity, the disorder in his life, and his tendency toward excess, Franklin began a project called "moral perfection."

After developing a list of twelve areas of attitude and action that needed improvement, the twenty-seven-year-old Franklin asked a friend to look over his list. Franklin wrote in his autobiography, "a . . . friend . . . kindly informed me that I was generally thought proud, that my pride showed itself frequently in conversation."

Proverbs 27:6 warns us: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." While his friend's words hurt, Franklin chose not to become angry or resentful toward his friend. Instead of finding flaws in his friend to ease his embarrassment, Franklin took the advice to heart and decided humility had to be the thirteenth virtue in his project.

John exemplified humility. He was willing to decrease so Jesus could increase. May we have the same humility he had and lift Jesus higher for others to see.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

John 3:31-33

³¹ He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

³² And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

³³ He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

Biblical Insight

John the Baptist's testimony was an early recognition of Christ's divinity. John noted that Jesus was "from above" and "above all," similar to language the apostle Paul would later use when he wrote that Jesus was "the Christ, who is God over all" (Romans 9:5, ESV). Well before Paul wrote of Christ's divinity, John recognized Jesus' status as God incarnate in the early stages of Christ's ministry. John's Gospel later included this testimony from some of Jesus' followers: "John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true" (John 10:41). This testimony included Christ's status as above all.

Daily Devotion

From April 23 to May 14, 1789, the first session of the United States Congress consumed its time debating over what to call the president of the United States. The vice president, John Adams, feared that without a specific title reflecting dignity and preeminence, the nation's chief executive would be mistaken as a president of a cricket club.

Adams personally favored "His Highness the President of the United States and Protector of the Rights of the Same." The Senate preferred the title "His Highness," whereas the House of Representatives preferred "The President of the United States." By the end of the first session, the chief executive of the United States became known as "The President of the United States."

The next contentious debate between the House and the Senate was to decide what Senators and Representatives should be called. One title both houses of Congress agreed upon was calling John Adams "His Rotundity," though only in private.

Jesus Christ is over all. He is God blessed forever. Although He was John the Baptist's cousin, John saw Him as God in human flesh. How we refer to Jesus matters. Similarly, how we refer to our spiritual leaders matters as well. Do our words reflect dignity and respect, or do we view them only as peers? May we exalt Jesus and honor the leaders He has blessed us with.

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

John 3:34-36

³⁴ For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

³⁵ The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

³⁶ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Biblical Insight

Another significant aspect of John's testimony about Jesus was that Christ had received the Holy Spirit "without measure" (v. 34, ESV). In other words, there was no limit to the portion of the Spirit that indwelt Him. The obvious implication is that anyone who is not the Christ does not have the fullness of the Spirit indwelling because of the limitations due to our sin. Additionally, the Son of Man has been given "all things" (v. 35). The implication of this statement is that anyone who is not the Christ has a lesser portion than "all things."

Daily Devotion

The sinking of the RMS *Titanic* in the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean on a cold April night stunned the world, partly due to the immense loss of life. Of the estimated 2,224 people on board, more than 1,500 died.

The shock was profound because people had so much faith in the ship. The *Titanic* was the largest luxury liner of its time. It was designed to be the pinnacle of opulence and safety. Equipped with advanced safeguards, such as remotely activated watertight doors and watertight compartments, the *Titanic* was declared unsinkable by experts.

Unfortunately, people's faith was misplaced. On April 15, 1912, the *Titanic* struck an iceberg during her maiden voyage. No amount of safety precautions could keep the unsinkable ship from sinking.

We must have faith, and we must place our faith in the correct things. Wealth, riches, physical comfort, and worldly success are finite and easily sinkable in the storms of life. People can fail our expectations, but God is faithful. God and His Word are unsinkable and unchangeable.

In what or in whom do you place your faith?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
