

- **Main Passage:** John 3:25-30
 - **Purpose:** To understand that our lives should point others toward the glory of Christ instead of our own fame.
 - **Session Snapshot:** It's no secret that many people desire to make a name for themselves or to achieve some level of fame and notoriety. As Christ-followers, we are called to set aside that temptation and instead make much of the only one worthy of such fame, worship, and praise: the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a man of God is to put His glory above our own. When we begin to live like this, we will find true joy in living for Him, who is worthy of our praise, instead of striving to make a name for ourselves.
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GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together with a quick connection time or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, remind your group that this is week 4 of their video series on John the Baptist and that it's part of a larger study looking at the real men of the Bible.

THEN, if you want to start with asking men for prayer requests, checking in on how their weeks have gone, or any other housekeeping tasks, do so.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

THEN, when the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **In what different ways do people in our culture attempt to build a following or make a name for themselves? (Hint: Don't forget social media!)**
- **It's not wrong to have a following, but what are some of the dangers that can come with building a following if we're not careful? Can you think of some "wrong reasons" to build a following?**
- **Instead, according to Rick, what should be our goal with any followers that we have? Can you think of Christians who have done this well?**
- **On the flip side, without being judgmental, can you think of Christians who have not used their platform well? In what ways were they increasing while Christ was decreasing?**

- Can you think of any Bible stories where people attempted to “make a name for themselves?” How did God view that? (Hint: The Tower of Babel is a great example that didn’t end too well.)
- Why do you think God is concerned about His name and His glory increasing, and not our own? Do you think it’s selfish or a little questionable that God feels this way? Why or why not?
- How is this whole conversation relevant even for those who don’t have a large following, but maybe just a few people in their circle of influence?

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **Whether we have thousands of followers on social media or just a few close friends, our lives are meant to magnify the name of Jesus while setting aside our glory. We're going to spend a few minutes reflecting on how this played out in John's ministry.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you’re going to take a more in-depth look at John 3:25-30. As Rick stated in the video, John had a large following and was somewhat of a “big deal.” In this study, we’re going to how John willingly gave up his following and his opportunity for fame to point his followers to the Lord and make much of Christ.

Remind your group that you’re still in the book of John. See if anyone can provide the context for the book based on your last couple of sessions. If you need help, use the bullet points below:

- **Author:** The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation and the three letters in the New Testament that bear his name.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- **Purpose:** John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's goal seems to have been to communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Son of God.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read John 3:25-27. When the volunteer has finished, direct your group in a brief discussion of these verses. Say something like:

- **John's disciples seem concerned that “all” are going to Jesus. But how does John see it? What does his response in verse 27 mean?**
 - *Answer:* John knows that his followers—even those he has patiently recruited and taught for years— are not truly his possession. He knew that his followers were given to him "from heaven" or by the hand of God. And he held to them loosely because he also knew that by God's hand they were now going to Jesus, where they belonged!
- **If all of our “followers” (i.e., any influence we have at work, in the classroom, or the family) are ordained “from heaven,” how should that reshape the way we view those people?**
 - Answers will vary. If those under our influence are placed there by God, then we should not take that lightly! We have a God-given purpose with those people and a responsibility to use our influence well.

Before transitioning to the next question, say something like:

- **Hopefully, each of us knows that we are not Jesus. (LOL!) But sometimes, we forget that our lives are meant to point others to something (or Someone) beyond ourselves. John never lost sight of that. He knew God had sent him these disciples so that he could point them to Jesus when the time came. We have the same calling on our lives to ensure that all within our influence are pointed toward Christ.**

NEXT, direct your group's attention back to John 3:28-29 and have a volunteer read these two verses. Then, ask:

- **John's confession of "I am not the Christ" sure seems obvious, but what are some of the practical implications of such a truth, both for John and all of us?**
 - Answers will vary, but you can point out some of the following. If we are not the Christ, then...
 - Our plan is not the most important agenda.
 - Our name is not the most worthy of honor and recognition.
 - Our opinions or viewpoints are not the most valid or wise.
 - Our desires and dreams are not the most important things for us to pursue.
 - Our lives should reflect that we are joyfully indebted to a gracious Savior who is also our Lord and King!
- **Rick talked about the importance of John understanding his role. He was to go “before” the Christ, or he was like a “friend” of the bridegroom and not the groom himself. Why is it so important to understand our role in relationship to Christ?**
 - Answers will vary. We are in danger of two extremes here. One is thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought and taking some of the glory that belongs to Christ for ourselves. The other is thinking we are of no significance and have no role to play, thus failing to serve and honor Christ appropriately. We must understand our role to point others to him.
- **Why are believers expected to play this role? Can't God just do it without us?**
 - Answers will vary. God certainly doesn't need our help, but in His grace, He has chosen to use us. We have the joyful privilege of serving the all-powerful Creator of the universe who has saved us from our sin. We get to be involved with His incredible redemptive work of reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19). And when we do this, we will find joy at Christ getting the honor and glory he deserves (v. 29).

Point out to your group the incredible truth that John's joy is complete whenever the bridegroom (Christ) gets all the attention. Instead of finding his role burdensome or feeling like the task is beneath him, he experiences the fullness of joy and abundant life—because this is the role we were all created for. We will never be more satisfied or complete than when we fulfill our God-given purpose of glorifying Him. THEN, read the final verse in this section, John 3:30, and explain that John is about to make his summary statement in verse 30. After reading the verse, ask:

- **First of all, what does it look like when a person is “increased” too much? Is this an internal or external quality?**
 - Answers will vary, but it can certainly be both. Sometimes we are living outwardly in a way that brings glory to ourselves instead of to God. And sometimes, we are living inwardly in a way that is consumed with selfishness instead of a God-honoring attitude.
- **Why is it problematic when a Christian is increased like this?**
 - Answers will vary. It shows a fundamental flaw in that Christian's life; they have misunderstood their God-given role that John has helped us understand here: that we are meant to glorify our Creator and not ourselves. A Christian who constantly seeks their own increase has a disproportionately low view of God and a high view of self.

- **What happens when things go according to John's appeal here, and believers start to decrease while Christ increases?**
 - Answers will vary. When Christians truly live in this way, the glory of God will be on full display for the entire world to see. People will no longer look at the church and question its purpose or motives. Instead, they will see humble, grateful, joyful people laying down their lives for their glorious Savior King. Our lives will testify to the world that Jesus is Lord!

FINALLY, have a volunteer read these last two sentences again, the very end of John 3:29, and then verse 30. After reading, say something like:

- **Think about this incredible truth. Instead of going along with worldly wisdom and selfish desires that want to make much of us, John knew the key to true joy was making much of Christ. If we as men of God want to live out our faith joyfully and serve God faithfully, we must begin to decrease and make Christ increase. When we do this, we will not only experience joy ourselves, but we will begin to win a lost world to Christ.**

Ask if there are any questions. If there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **After listening to Rick and studying John's teaching, some of us may need to wrestle with the simple question, "Do I truly believe that my life is not about me, but about Christ?"**
 - We may need to ask ourselves whether we are willing to start minimizing ourselves and making much of Christ.
- **Others have known intellectually that we need to do that but have failed to do so practically.**
 - We need to ask, "In what areas of my life am I seeking my glory or the elevation of my name? How can I transform those areas to become Christ-exalting instead?"
- **Some of us need to consider where we are seeking to find joy in our lives.**
 - We need to consider, "Do I really believe that joy comes from serving God as I was intended to, or have I been searching for joy in different places—wrong places?"

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves on this spectrum of evaluation. If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.