

**John-7**  
**“Less of Me, More of Jesus”**  
**John 3:22-36 (NIV)**

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a moment and welcome our first-time guests and those joining us online...

If you're online, shout out where you're watching from! Come on, don't be shy!

We're walking verse by verse through John's Gospel and we're learning some things about Jesus that we really wouldn't know unless his best friend John told us...

They're not in the eye-witness testimonies of Matthew, Mark & Luke...

The wedding at Cana...

The clearing of the Temple in the beginning of His ministry...

The conversation with Nicodemus...

We wouldn't have these amazing facts if John didn't tell us! Why is John telling us? Why did he take the time to write all of this?

John wants the world to know Who Jesus is and that He is the only way to get to heaven...

### **Series Verse**

***31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Jn 20:30–31. (NIV)***

Today we're finishing up John chapter 3...

**John 3:22-36 (NIV)**

**Pray**

When I was younger my parents used to say to me all the time “You’ll understand when you’re older”

Did you ever notice that the only time we really want to be older is when we’re young? My father mailed this article to me years ago and it talks about that idea...

Age is a funny thing-George Carlin

*“Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like to get older is when we’re kids? If you’re less than 10 years old, you’re so excited about aging that you think in fractions:*

*How old are you? I’m four and a half.*

*You’re never 36 and a half, but you’re four and a half going on five! That’s the key.*

*You could be 12, but you’re gonna be 16.*

*And then the greatest day of your life happens: you become 21. Even the words sound like a ceremony-you BECOME 21! YES!!!*

*But then you turn 30. Ohhh, what happened? Makes you sound like bad milk. He TURNED. We had to throw him out. There's no fun now. What's wrong? What changed?*

*You BECOME 21, YOU turn 30 then you're PUSHING, 40 you REACH 50 you MAKE IT to 60 and by then you've built up so much speed you HIT 70!*

*After that, it's a day by day thing. You HIT Wednesday. You get into your 80's and you HIT lunch. I mean my grandmother won't even buy green bananas. "Well, it's an investment you know, and maybe a bad one."*

*And it doesn't end there... into the 90s you start going backward: I was JUST 92.*

*Then a strange thing happens, if you make it over 100 you become a little kid again: I'm 100 and a half!*

*Age is a funny thing.*

There's a big difference between physical maturity and spiritual maturity...

Aging is automatic...It's measured out by months and years...first in the our mothers womb and then after our birth until we die...Aging requires no effort other than breathing

Spiritual Maturity is different...

Spiritual maturity happens not after we are physically born...but after we are born-again...and it's not automatic

It requires cooperation with the Holy Spirit...

It requires surrender to the will of God...

Obedience to the Word of God...  
Consistency in walking with God...  
Perseverance while trusting God...

It requires discipline...  
It requires humility...  
It requires submission...

Spiritual maturity is a life-long process of becoming more like Jesus...we will never arrive but we should all have the attitude of the Apostle Paul...

***12 I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. 13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,***

***14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. -Php 3:12–14 (NLT)***

Now if you're wondering if you have what it takes to become spiritually mature...The answer is we don't, but God does!

The Apostle Peter writes...

***3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.***

(becoming spiritually mature) ***We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.*** 4

***And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises.***

***These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.***

**5 In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. 8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins (In other words...they are still self-centered and not God centered) **10 So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.-2 Pe 1:3-10 (NLT)****

Now, because spiritual maturity requires us to walk with the Holy Spirit and submit to God's Word and will...the reality is, not every born-again person becomes spiritually mature...

They don't grow in the things of God, even though God has given us everything we need...

He's given us the Holy Spirit as our personal trainer...His word to tell us what we need to do...and people stay babies because they refuse to put in the work...

And Peter warns that consistent rebellion on our part can lead to us falling away from God...

As Christians we should all want to become spiritually mature...so that we can be productive and useful in the Kingdom of God and finish our race well! Keep this in mind as we look at our text...

We're going to see four signs of spiritual maturity from John the Baptist...

In our text, we see that Jesus has left the city of Jerusalem where He cleansed the Temple and had the conversation with Nicodemus about being born-again...and He's spending time with His disciples...

Jesus likes to spend time with us...They're all doing life together...And John tells us that Jesus' disciples start baptizing people in water...

Now this isn't the same water baptism that we do after we get saved...That ordinance came after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus...Now after we are saved, we're going public with our faith...our old life is dead and buried...we are now alive with Jesus!

Jesus' disciples are performing the same baptism that John the Baptist was...It was a baptism of repentance...

It was meant to prepare people's hearts for what Jesus was going to do for us...

So you've got Jesus' disciples baptizing people and you've got John's disciples baptizing people...

And an argument breaks out over this...

***25 An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing.*** In other words

they're arguing about a doctrinal difference...**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—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him."-Jn 3:25–26 (NIV)***

*“Ultimately the issue is jealousy. Sometimes when you’re jealous of a church, a ministry or a person, you’ll look for a fault or a flaw and criticize them”-Mark Driscoll*

So what’s happening is that John’s disciples are getting a little territorial and a little jealous...Why? Because people are going to Jesus and not them...

They were upset that they weren’t the center of attention...that the spotlight wasn’t on them...that they weren’t getting the glory...

Pride, Jealousy, Critiquing, Competition between ministries...These are not only a sign of spiritual immaturity...They’re a trap that the enemy still uses today to weaken the Body of Christ...

John’s disciples are like John, what do you want to do?

Maybe we should tell Jesus to go somewhere else...this is our neighborhood...We were here first...We're first Baptist of Judea...

John didn't let pride or jealousy creep into his heart...He had to shift his focus back to God...and a sign of spiritual maturity

A proper **THEOLOGY**

***27 To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. -Jn 3:27 (NIV)***

So much that we can learn from this statement...but one of the things that we see is that John understood that God is sovereign...

He is large and in charge...

Everything belongs to Him...

And He gives to us as He sees fit...

We have nothing to brag about!

One of the problems with the church in Corinth was that they were full of spiritual pride...

**6 Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. 7 For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?-1 Co 4:6-7**

**(NLT)**

Everything you have...has been given to you by God...The spiritual gifts you have...they're not yours they belong to God

We need to guard our hearts from comparison, and competition, from jealousy and pride...

It's easy to fall into those temptations...

Pastors and ministry leaders especially...

I've got to regularly check my heart because it's easy to see what God is doing in another ministry and feel prideful, jealous or competitive...

### **Standing before Riverbay Board**

Turns out she was part of a local church here in Co-op City and she obviously felt threatened by the idea of us coming into the community...

### **Rebuked for posting salvation**

I was bragging on Jesus...

Look what Jesus has done...

Understanding that I only have what God has given to me...helps me remember it's not about me! It helps me have an attitude of gratitude, instead of a sense of entitlement...

It's not about me...

It's not because I'm such a great preacher...

Or I'm such a great teacher...

Or I'm such an amazing vocalist or musician...

May we never say... "Look what I've done" may we always have the heart that says look what the Lord has done!

What if your bible study never grows beyond those 4 to 5 people? Will you be jealous or thankful?

What if you don't have the same anointing or gifting that someone else has? Will you still be faithful to what God has called you too?

Now this doesn't mean that we shouldn't pursue excellence...it doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to reach people...We should absolutely do that...It just means that we need to have a proper theology...

John believed that God was sovereign over all things...do you?

Do you believe nothing escapes God's notice in your life? Do you believe nothing escapes God's notice in your brother or sister's life?

Can you rest in that? Can you let stuff go when you get caught up in your feels? Can you be content with what God has given you? If the answer is yes...you're growing spiritually!

John didn't just have a proper theology...

A proper **UNDERSTANDING**

***28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.'*-Jn 3:27-28 (NIV)**

John understood his role...He knew that he wasn't the Messiah...some of us need to be reminded of that...

We live in a celebrity culture...  
And unfortunately that culture is in the church...  
We have celebrity pastors and celebrity worship  
leaders...celebrity prophets...

What happens is people have a God given gift  
and everyone wants to see them, hear them,  
receive from them...

Have you ever heard of Henry Ward Beecher?  
Henry Ward Beecher was a pastor in Brooklyn  
in the mid 1800's who became famous for his  
preaching...

He was such a powerful preacher that people  
came from all over the world to hear him  
preach...

One Sunday morning Plymouth Church was  
packed as usual, everyone anticipating the  
sermon...

What they didn't know was that Henry was away that morning, and his brother Thomas Beecher was bringing the word...

As Thomas approached the pulpit there was an audible eeeeeeeh...Some people started to get up and leave...

At that Thomas famously said...

*"All of those who came here this morning to worship Henry Ward Beecher are excused at this time...However those of you who came to worship God, please remain seated"*

Sometimes we treat a preacher or a teacher, a prophet or a worship leader as if they are God...and that's a sign of spiritual immaturity...

If you're only going to receive God's Word if it's preached by a certain person, or enter into worship if a certain person is singing...you're not growing spiritually...

And what happens is sometimes all of that hype goes to that leader's head...and they start thinking they are a big deal...when they should be making Jesus a big deal!

You are not God...I am not God...

John knew who he wasn't...I'm not the Messiah...but he was content with what God called him to do... "I am sent ahead of him"

That's a sign of spiritual maturity...

Are you content with what God has called you to? Are you being faithful in where God has called you?

If you believe God called you to this church, are you being faithful in supporting the work of the ministry here? Are you serving, are you tithing, are you growing?

Some people don't grow because they can't stay at a church long enough to grow...I've met people who are members of two or three churches!

Others are church hoppers...

They hop from congregation to congregation this enables them to avoid accountability, avoid commitment, avoid community...that's spiritual immaturity

For others it's not so much about the church...it's more about the call...It's all about "The Call"...People get confused about their calling...some are afraid of it because they think being "called" means that you're going to be a pastor or a missionary...

Can I say something...Those are specific callings...But not for everyone! When you're called by God...God equips you for that call no matter what the assignment is...

So you're "calling" isn't necessarily something far off in the distant future... You have a calling right now in this season of life too...

If you're married with a family...

Your calling is to love God and love each other and to raise up your children to love Jesus... Be a light wherever you are...

Your family is your ministry right now... and that's okay... that's where God has you... be content in it!

If you're single...

Your calling is to love God, love others, and be a light in this world... in whatever season you're in... student, college, career, retirement...

Some people don't think where they are is enough... and they want bigger platforms... Why? For you or for God?

We all struggle with wanting more...We all want to be successful...and there's nothing wrong with being successful...but who's it for?

Do you want God to give you more?

Be faithful where you are, and God will give you more if He chooses too! Spiritual maturity is being faithful where you are...

Don't focus on what you can't do right now...ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what you can do right now for the glory of God!

This is where John was...

This is what God has called me to do! I'm going to be faithful to it, until he calls me to something else...

And you know what? God didn't call John to anything else...John was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb...

He was called to prepare the way of the Lord...He shamelessly preached repentance to everyone...and they eventually took his head for it!

### A Proper **ATTITUDE**

***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-Jn 3:29 (NIV)***

John's not prideful, he's not bitter, he's not jealous...he's joyful...he has an I get to do this attitude...

He uses the illustration of a Jewish wedding...He says he's not the bridegroom (that's Jesus) he's the friend who attends the bridegroom...In our culture that's the best man

In this culture, it was the friend of the bridegroom, who arranged the whole wedding...

Stop right there...

Ladies, can you imagine if your wedding was planned by your husband's best man?

In Jewish culture that's how it was...and the best man would be the go-between between the bride and the groom...on the day of the wedding it would be the best man who brings the bride to the bridegroom...

John the Baptist is saying, 'I'm the best man at the wedding and I'm so happy that my friend, my cousin, who is also my Lord, is getting the bride.'

Now sidenote...When John the Baptist says that Jesus is the Bridegroom...it's another way of saying that Jesus is God!

In the O.T. God's relationship with Israel was described as a husband and a wife...God was the Bridegroom...Israel the Bride

John's using the same illustration here...So what he's saying is Jesus is God...John the gospel writer tells us about this conversation because he wants us to know Who Jesus is!

I've had the honor of being the best man a few times in my life...and each time I was so happy for the groom!

I wasn't jealous of the groom...that would be sick and twisted of me...I wouldn't have the proper attitude...

John has the proper attitude...He's happy to be the best man...That needs to be our attitude towards anybody else who's blessed, anyone else who is used by God, anyone else who is successful.

To rejoice in their accomplishments just like a best man would rejoice at a wedding...

Now...It's not the same attitude if it's a cult that is growing...It's not the same attitude if it's another religion that's growing...

It shouldn't bring us joy that the Watchtower is building more Kingdom Halls...or if Islam is building more Mosques...

We're not on the same team...And that means that we have work to do as the Body of Christ to see people truly saved and set free by Jesus!

But If there's a life-giving church or ministry that is just blowing up...and expanding...we should rejoice with them! We shouldn't be jealous...or upset...That's a win for us too...because we're all part of the Body of Christ!

***26 If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.-1 Co 12:26 (NLT)***

Remember when Moses was going up to Mount Sinai with seventy elders?

When they're coming back down, there are two guys that start prophesying in the camp...Well Joshua doesn't like that...

He thinks, you know what? Moses is the guy that's supposed to be the spokesman around here...Not you two jokers....

So he goes to Moses and says, these two guys are prophesying in the camp—stop them. Even Joshua got caught up into this nonsense. I want you to listen to Moses' response....

**29 But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all!”-Nu 11:29 (NLT)**

That’s a spiritually mature response...That’s the response of John the Baptist. I’m just the friend of the bridegroom. I’m so happy that this is happening...

He had an “I get to attitude”

This is a great reminder to you if you’re a pastor or a leader or you serve on the Dream Team...Our primary task is to serve Jesus with Joy! To lead others to Jesus...Not to us!

We want to make Jesus famous, not ourselves!  
Having a good attitude...a humble attitude...that’s a sign of spiritual maturity

A Proper **RELATIONSHIP**

**30 He must become greater; I must become less.”-Jn 3:30 (NIV)**

Wow, what a powerful statement... You know what John's saying? There has to be more of Him and less of me...

That's the cure of this self-centered, self-serving, "what about me"..."don't I deserve"..."I'm entitled to" sin-sick world that we live in!

John's friends are like, bro you were here first... You started this thing... now nobody's buying our t-shirts... our video streams are down...

They were making it all about John... John's like you know what? He has to become greater... and I have to become less...

My job was to tell everyone the King is coming..

Now the King is here...I did my job...More of Him less of me...John had a proper relationship with Jesus...He chose to be humble...Humility is something we don't see a lot of in our culture

*"Humility is not thinking less of yourself but rather thinking of yourself less"-C.S. Lewis*

Imagine with me for one moment how this kind of humility would transform our world?

Jesus, I don't want to be the center of my life...I need You to be the center...so less of me and more of You...

Think about what that would do in your relationships...in your marriage...in your family...with your friends...with your co-workers...in your church...

You know what we would see less of?

Gossip...Unforgiveness...Offense...  
Quarreling...Outbursts of anger...Selfish  
ambition...Jealousy...Drunkenss...Cursing...  
Sexual Immoraltiy...Just to name a few...

If my life is filled with those things...it means  
that I'm still the center of it...Not Jesus...

I have to choose... am I going to increase or  
am I going to humble myself, and ask Jesus to  
increase...

When Jesus increases and I decrease...I  
actually start to mature spiritually...

I start to see more love, peace, patience,  
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness &  
self-control...

Now let me ask you a question...How would  
those things transform your relationships?  
In turn, how would that transform our world?

As we close today...

Is it possible that you're dealing with something similar to what John the Baptist was tempted with?

Maybe you're feeling overlooked...

Maybe you're offended...

Maybe you're struggling with pride...

How do we handle this in a way that is spiritually mature?

We realize there's a sovereign God who gives everybody whatever He thinks they should have...

Maybe I need to recognize the limitations of my own gifts and be content with what I get to do...

Maybe I need to ask the Holy Spirit to help me be grateful...to be joyful...to remind me that I get to be part of this God story!

Maybe I need to be reminded that it's not about me—more of Him. More of Him and much, much, much less of me...

### 'Dying to Self'-Anomynous

Now we've all heard that saying before...Here's what that means:

*“When you are forgotten or neglected or purposely set at naught and you sting and you hurt with insult or oversight but your heart is happy being counted worthy to suffer for Christ, that's dying to self...”*

*When you're good as evil is spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, when your advice is disregarded, when your opinions are ridiculed and you refuse to let anger in your heart or even defend yourself, but you take it in patient, loving silence, that is dying to self.*

*When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any annoyance, when you can stand face-to-face with waste extravagance, spiritual insensibility, and endure it as Jesus endured it, that is dying to self.*

*When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any attitude, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.*

*When you never care to refer to yourself in a conversation or record your own good works or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.*

*When you see your brother prosper and to have his needs met and you can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy or question God while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances, that is dying to self.*

*When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart, that is dying to self.”*

I think that this just proves that none of us have arrived...we are all a work in progress...And you know what?

God will help us grow if we allow Him...He is committed to us and patient with us...He won't give up on us...

So let's take a few minutes to ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts...

**What's the Holy Spirit saying to You?**

