

Adonai, Yahweh, Jehovah, The One True God, The God of Israel, The Lord of Hosts, The King of Israel, The One and Only True God, The Righteous Word of God Almighty, The Sacrificial Lamb, The Lion of the

**The Life and Times of**  
**Jesus Christ**

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of  
the beginning and the ending, the first and the last,  
The Only Real, Living and Breathing God, He Who Is, He Who Was, and He Who Will Be Forever, Abba Father, Our Creator, Our God, Our Soul's Beloved, God

# **Part 16**

**Christ Must Increase  
and We Must Decrease**

**Matthew**

**Mark**

**Luke**

**John**

**John 3:22-36**

# **John 3:22 - NLT**

**Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.**

# John 3:23

At this time John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, because there was plenty of water there; and people kept coming to him for baptism.

# John 3:24

(This was before John was thrown  
into prison.)

# John 3:25

A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew over ceremonial cleansing.



# John 3:26a

So John's disciples came to him and said, "Rabbi, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan River, the one you identified as the Messiah, is also baptizing people."

# John 3:26b

And everybody is going to him  
instead of coming to us.”

# John 3:27

John replied, “No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven.

# John 3:28

You yourselves know how plainly  
I told you, 'I am not the Messiah.  
I am only here to prepare the way  
for him.'

# John 3:29

It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success.

# John 3:30

He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

# John 3:31

**“He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else.**

# John 3:32

He testifies about what he has seen  
and heard, but how few believe  
what he tells them!



# John 3:33

Anyone who accepts his testimony  
can affirm that God is true.

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For he is sent by God. He speaks  
God's words, for God gives him  
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The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands.

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And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."

# **Part 16**

**Christ Must Increase  
and We Must Decrease**

# Principle #1

**When Christ invited you to believe in Him and to become His disciple (to follow Him), He invited you to come to Him and die, so that you could be born again.**

# John 3:3

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."

# John 3:22

Then Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went into the Judean countryside. Jesus spent some time with them there, baptizing people.



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# Principle #1

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# **Romans 6:3**

**...have you forgotten that when  
we were joined with Christ Jesus  
in baptism, we joined him  
in his death?**

# **Romans 6:4**

**For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.**

# **Romans 6:5**

**Since we have been united with him  
in his death, we will also be raised  
to life as he was.**

# **Romans 6:6**

**We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives.**

**We are no longer slaves to sin.**

# **Romans 6:7**

**For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.**



# Principle #1

**When Christ invited you to believe in Him and to become His disciple (to follow Him), He invited you to come to Him and die, so that you could be born again.**

# **Matthew 16:24**

**Then Jesus said to his disciples,  
“If any of you wants to be my  
follower, you must give up your  
own way, take up your cross,  
and follow me.**

# **Matthew 16:25**

**If you try to hang on to your life,  
you will lose it. But if you give up  
your life for my sake, you will  
save it.**

# **Matthew 16:26**

**And what do you benefit if you gain  
the whole world but lose your own  
soul? Is anything worth more than  
your soul?**

# Principle #1

**When Christ invited you to believe in Him and to become His disciple (to follow Him), He invited you to come to Him and die, so that you could be born again.**

# Principle #2

**God's profound truths are usually hard to understand and even harder to obey because they descend from Heaven. And because they are usually not what we want to hear, we are always tempted to reject them.**

# John 3:9

**“How are these things possible?”  
Nicodemus asked.**

# John 3:10

Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, and yet you don’t understand these things?”



# John 3:11

I assure you, we tell you what we know and have seen, and yet you won't believe our testimony.

# John 3:12

**But if you don't believe me when  
I tell you about earthly things,  
how can you possibly believe if I tell  
you about heavenly things?**

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# Principle #2

**God's profound truths are usually hard to understand and even harder to obey because they descend from Heaven. And because they are usually not what we want to hear, we are always tempted to reject them.**

# Principle #3

**Choosing to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase means letting go of control and partnering with Christ in whatever He pleases, whenever He pleases, and with whomever He pleases.**

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A debate broke out between John's disciples and a certain Jew over ceremonial cleansing.



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**Defining**  
**Decreasing**  
**Becoming Less**  
**Dying to Self**



# **Becoming Less**

- **Consistently practicing self-denial.**
- **Putting to death your selfish ways.**
- **Renouncing the belief, the behaviors and the words that make it appear as if you sit on the throne or that you are at the center of the universe.**

# Selfish Thinking

- I must be true to myself.
- I must be paid according to my worth.
- I must do what makes me happy.
- I must follow my dreams.
- I must live my best life.
- I must speak my truth at all times.
- I must always follow my heart.

# Becoming Less

- **My marriage is not about me.**
- **My relationships are not about me.**
- **The work I do is not about me.**
- **The money I earn is not about me.**
- **The church I serve at is not about me.**
- **Even my life is not about me.**

# Principle #3

**Choosing to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase means letting go of control and partnering with Christ in whatever He pleases, whenever He pleases, and with whomever He pleases.**

# Principle #4

**Choosing to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase is necessary because Christ is the only one that can genuinely love, forgive, save, heal, redeem, and bless.**

# Principle #5

**Choosing to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase is about emptying out myself in order to be filled up by the Holy Spirit.**

# Principle #6

**Choosing to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase is about embracing the changes of life that tempt me to believe I no longer have purpose or that I am no longer valuable, necessary, or wanted.**

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# Surprising Twists

- **John the Baptist had a committed circle of disciples and some of them struggled with the decision to shift their commitments from John to Jesus, even after John declared that Jesus was the Messiah.**

# Surprising Twists

- **Some of John the Baptist's followers were not able to see that their affection for and devotion to the prophet made them unable to follow Jesus the Messiah. As a result, some of them never made the switch.**

# Surprising Twists

- In Acts 19:1–7 we are told that there were people in Ephesus who were followers of John the Baptist but who did not believe in Jesus.
- Can you guess where this belief and where these people came from?



# Surprising Twists

- Church history (later postapostolic evidence) even suggests that such communities continued to exist a few generations later, which elevated John the Baptist and rejected Jesus' messiahship.

# Surprising Twists

- **Jesus had a baptizing ministry wherein He taught His disciples how to baptize His followers.**
- **Jesus and John enjoyed a simultaneous period of ministry in Judea.**

# Surprising Twists

- **John's preaching was always faithful to his calling from God. He testified of the coming Messiah and demonstrated his allegiance to Him at all times.**

# Surprising Twists

- **We need to set aside the fantasy that the earliest Christians worked easily with each other and that they did not have to fight against their own fleshly desires, prejudices, and biases that got in the way.**

# Principle #6

**Choosing to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase is about embracing the changes of life that tempt me to believe I no longer have purpose or that I am no longer valuable, necessary, or wanted.**

# Principle #7

**Whenever God's people choose not to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase; division, fragmentation, pain and suffering will always follow.**

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**Anytime a spirit of division begins to pop up in a Christian family, local church or Christian organization, almost no one ever takes the time to go before God as individuals, in order to have their hearts, attitudes, words, and behaviors evaluated by Him.**

**Because if we did, some of us would come to discover that when we were not paying close attention, we had begun to drift, and that subtle drift over time had caused us to embrace an agenda that is altogether different than and competing with Jesus' Kingdom agenda.**

**We must be careful because just as some of John the Baptist's followers deceived themselves into making him into something he wasn't (for their own self interests), so too can any Christian family and any local church be easily fooled into only seeking out its own self interests, instead of God's will.**



# Principle #7

**Whenever God's people choose not to decrease so that Christ can continue to increase; division, fragmentation, pain and suffering will always follow.**

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