ADULT SMALL GROUP GUIDE

He Must Increase

The Gospel of John: Why Should I Believe? · Week 11 · November 22, 2026

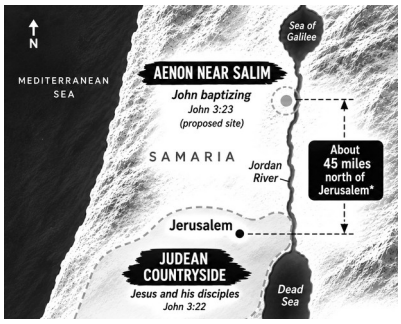
LEADER OVERVIEW

Big idea: When the crowds left John the Baptist for Jesus, his disciples saw a loss and John saw the whole point, and his joy was complete. Jesus comes from heaven and is above all, so what a person does with Him decides everything. Step out of the center so Jesus can take it.

Sermon outline: An attitude of competition arises within John's disciples (3:25–26) · John corrects their thinking and points them to Jesus (3:27–35) · John the writer calls everyone to believe in Jesus (3:36).

Scriptures used: John 3:22–36 · Revelation 20:15

Time: 60–75 minutes. Eleven questions are more than you need — choose what fits your group and skip freely. Questions in bold are the ones not to skip.



Where were they? John 3:22–23. *Aenon's exact location is disputed; distances are approximate.

OPENING (10 MIN)

The goal of the opener is to get every voice in the room once before the harder questions arrive. Keep it light.

1. Have you ever been a best man, a maid of honor, or part of a wedding party? What was your job that day?
2. **Pastor Tom opened with a question: "How do you respond when someone else gets the attention, the credit, or the following you once had?" When have you lived a version of that?**

WHO GETS THE CROWD? (15 MIN)

Read John 3:22–26.

3. **John's disciples report, "Look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." Pastor Tom said they were really trying to discern who is superior, John or Jesus. Where do you see that attitude of competition in churches, in ministries, or in your own heart?**
   Leader: it can sound spiritual. Comparing churches, classes, platforms, or gifts is the same instinct.
4. Pastor Tom said, "It hurts because we assume the story is about us." Where did you feel that most recently?

5. John was still baptizing at Aenon near Salim after Jesus' ministry had begun (vv. 23–24). What does it say about John that he kept doing his work while the crowds thinned?

THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM (20 MIN)

Read John 3:27–30.

6. **John answers, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven." How does believing that change the way you look at another person's success, or at your own?**
   Leader: if every role is a gift from God, someone else's gain is not my loss, and my own success is not mine to boast in.
7. John had said it all along: "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him." Why is it freeing to know who you are not?
8. The friend of the bridegroom was the best man: his joy was seeing the wedding happen. John says, "This joy of mine is now complete." What is the difference between stepping aside with joy and stepping aside with resentment?
9. **"He must increase, but I must decrease." Pastor Tom called it one of the shortest and hardest sentences in the Bible. Which half is harder for you? What would it look like in your home, your work, or your ministry?**
   Leader: push for specifics. "Decrease" is easy to affirm in general and hard to name in particular.

ABOVE ALL (15 MIN)

Read John 3:31–36.

10. Why must Jesus increase? List what these verses say about Him. Pastor Tom said, "If Jesus is above all, then what you do with him decides everything." How does verse 36 show that?
    Leader: whoever believes has eternal life now; on whoever does not obey the Son, God's wrath remains.
11. **Pastor Tom asked us to identify one place where we are fighting for the center: work, home, or ministry. Where is yours? What would it look like to step back from it this week with John's joy?**
    Leader: give people room. Some may realize they have never believed in Jesus, or have believed and never been baptized.

CLOSING (5 MIN)

Read John 3:30 together. We are three chapters into John's Gospel, and one thing should be clear: Jesus is worthy of being the center of your life. In Him there is joy, and there is life eternal.

If someone in your group realizes they have never believed in Jesus, don't rush past it. Pray with them, and point them to a pastor this week. If someone has believed and never been baptized, encourage them to make their faith public through baptism.

Then give the week's assignment: Pray John 3:30 every day: "He must increase, but I must decrease." Name one place where you are fighting for the center, and step back from it with joy.

Memory verse: John 3:30. Next week: Week 12 · Living Water · John 4:1–26 · November 29, 2026