WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL · PRINT EDITION

He Must Increase

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

JOHN 3:30 (ESV)

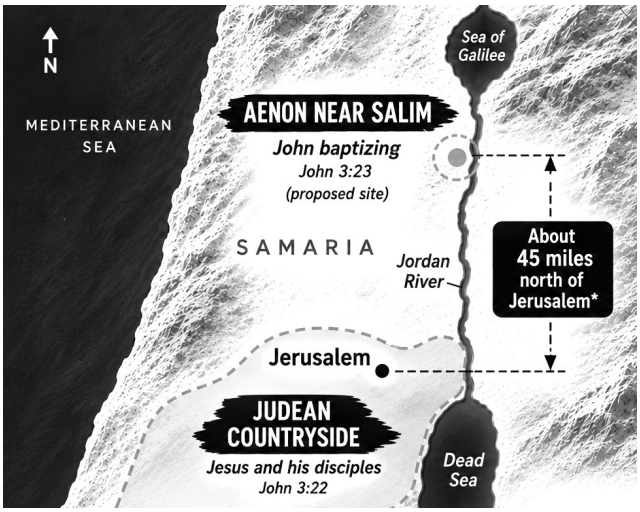
He must increase, but I must decrease.

HOW THIS WORKS

- Five days, Monday through Friday — about ten minutes each. Every day has a prayer to open, a short reading, something to think about, one action step, and a prayer to close.
- This week's homework runs underneath all five days: 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.
- Keep a pen with it. The lines are part of the devotional.
- Prefer your phone? The same devotional is online each week at thesummit.life → The Gospel of John → Reading Plan.

THIS WEEK

Sunday Pastor Tom asked how we respond when someone else gets the attention, the credit, or the following we once had. John the Baptist's disciples were living that question as the crowds left John for Jesus. John's answer was one sentence: "He must increase, but I must decrease." This week you will take it one piece at a time: the hurt of losing the spotlight, the freedom of knowing who you are not, the joy of the best man, why Jesus is above all, and why what you do with Him decides everything.



Where were they? Jesus and His disciples were in the Judean countryside (John 3:22). John was baptizing at Aenon near Salim (John 3:23). *Aenon's exact location is disputed, and distances are approximate.

DAY 1 · MONDAY

All Are Going to Him

JOHN 3:22–26 · JOHN 1:19–23

Opening prayer

Lord, show me where I have made the story about me. Amen.

Read John 3:22–26, and use the map to find your bearings. Jesus and His disciples have left Jerusalem for the Judean countryside, and people are coming to be baptized. John the Baptist is still at work too, at Aenon near Salim, “because water was plentiful there.”

Then John’s disciples bring him a report, and you can hear the alarm in it: “Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—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. In their minds John was losing.

Sunday Pastor Tom asked a question: How do you respond when someone else gets the attention, the credit, or the following you once had? Everyone has lived a version of it: the coworker who gets the promotion, the new person everyone wants on their team, the friend whose life looks better every time you open your phone.

Pastor Tom said it hurts because we assume the story is about us. Nobody says that out loud, but we feel it the moment someone else has the spotlight. Now read John 1:19–23. John had already settled who the story was about. His disciples had not.

The hurt of being passed over shows you who you think the story is about.

Reflect

When did someone else last get the attention, the credit, or the place you wanted? Write down what you felt, honestly.

Today’s action step

Start this week’s homework today. Pray John 3:30 out loud: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Then ask God to show you one place where you are fighting for the center.

Closing prayer

Jesus, the story is about You, not me. Forgive me for acting otherwise. Amen.

DAY 2 · TUESDAY

I Am Not the Christ

JOHN 3:27–28 · 1 CORINTHIANS 4:7

Opening prayer

Lord, everything I have came from You. Help me hold it with open hands. Amen.

Read John 3:27–28. John's first answer to his worried disciples is about where ministry comes from: "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven." John's crowds were a gift. So were the crowds now going to Jesus. Neither was John's to keep.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:7. Paul asks, "What do you have that you did not receive?" If your role, your gifts, and your season of influence were all given to you, then someone else's gain is not your loss. God is not short on assignments.

Then John reminds them of what he had said from the start: "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him." Pastor Tom put it simply: John makes it clear that he is not the Messiah. Jesus is. John was sent to prepare the way, and that is all he ever claimed.

There is freedom in knowing who you are not. John never had to defend a place at the center, because it was never his. Much of our worry comes from guarding a position God never gave us.

You are not the Christ. That is not an insult. It is a relief.

Reflect

What role, gift, or position have you been holding as if you earned it and must protect it? Write it down.

Today's action step

Pray John 3:30. Then thank God by name for one person whose success has been hard for you to celebrate.

Closing prayer

Father, I am not the Christ, and I don't have to be. Thank You for sending the One who is. Amen.

DAY 3 · WEDNESDAY

The Best Man’s Joy

JOHN 3:29–30 · PHILIPPIANS 2:3–4

Opening prayer

Lord, I want to be glad when You get the attention. Give me John’s joy. Amen.

Read John 3:29–30. John reaches for a wedding. “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice.”

Pastor Tom explained that the friend of the bridegroom was the best man: his joy was seeing the wedding happen. No best man stands at the front hoping the guests will look at him. The day is not about him, and he is glad. That is John. “Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.”

Notice what John does not say. He does not say, “I’ll learn to live with it.” He says his joy is full. Then comes the sentence Pastor Tom called one of the shortest and hardest in the Bible: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

Read Philippians 2:3–4. “In humility count others more significant than yourselves.” Stepping out of the center is not thinking you are worthless. It is being so glad Jesus is seen that you no longer need to be.

John did not lose the spotlight. He gave it away, and he was glad to.

Reflect

Where are you stepping back with gritted teeth instead of joy? What would it take to be glad there?

Today’s action step

Pray John 3:30. Then do one thing today that gives the credit or the attention to someone else, and tell no one.

Closing prayer

Jesus, You are the Bridegroom. Let my joy be complete when people look at You. Amen.

DAY 4 · THURSDAY

Above All

JOHN 3:31–35 · COLOSSIANS 1:15–18

Opening prayer

Lord, I have made You smaller than You are. Show me who You are today. Amen.

Read John 3:31–35. Why must Jesus increase? Pastor Tom said John the writer explains. First, Jesus was sent from heaven and is above all things: “He who comes from above is above all.” John the Baptist was a great man, but he was of the earth. Jesus is not.

Second, Jesus speaks the words of God. “He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.” When Jesus speaks, God is speaking. And the passage adds: “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.” All things.

Read Colossians 1:15–18. Paul ends where John does: “that in everything he might be preeminent.”

This is why decreasing is not a loss. You are not handing the center to a rival. You are giving it back to the One it has always belonged to. We are three chapters into John’s Gospel, and Pastor Tom said one thing should be clear: Jesus is worthy of being the center of your life.

Jesus does not need you to make Him first. He already is. The question is whether you will live like it.

Reflect

In which part of your life does Jesus have the least say right now? Write it down.

Today’s action step

Pray John 3:30. Then name the one place where you are fighting for the center: work, home, or ministry. Write it on a card.

Closing prayer

Jesus, You are above all, and all things are in Your hand. Take the center of my life. Amen.

DAY 5 · FRIDAY

Decides Everything

JOHN 3:36 · 1 JOHN 5:11–12

Opening prayer

Lord, let me hear this verse as plainly as You said it. Amen.

Read John 3:36. Pastor Tom said, “If Jesus is above all, then what you do with him decides everything.” This verse is why. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Look at the verbs. The believer has eternal life: now, not someday. And on the one who refuses the Son, God’s wrath remains. It is already there, as we saw last week: “condemned already.” Pastor Tom said everyone spends forever somewhere.

Read 1 John 5:11–12. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” Everything turns on the Son. That is the deepest reason to step out of the center: you cannot save yourself from there.

So Pastor Tom gave the next steps. Never believed in Jesus? Today is the day to believe. Never been baptized? Make your faith public through baptism. Already following Jesus? Step back from the one place you named, and do it with John’s joy.

When Jesus is at the center, we decrease, and He increases in us and in others.

Reflect

Have you believed in the Son? If so, have you made it public? Write your honest answer, then write the one place where you will step back.

Today’s action step

Pray John 3:30 one more time. Then take your step: believe, talk to a pastor about baptism, or step back from the place on your card.

Closing prayer

Jesus, I believe in You. Be the center of my life. Increase, and let me decrease. Amen.

LOOKING AHEAD

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