

He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease

"John answered, 'No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full. He must increase, but I must decrease.'" John 3:27-30

We live in an age where people measure their worth by their perception of how well they do in comparison with others. This creates an ethos of competition and envy. It is particularly galling when someone steals an idea that originated with you and becomes more successful with it than you. The Baptist faced this in regard to baptism. The disciples of Jesus began baptizing "and all are going to him."¹ You learn a couple of important lessons from John's response.

First, "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven." The Apostle Paul said it this way: "What do you have that was not given to you?" (1 Corinthians 4:7) Whatever you have, God gave it to you. He can give it to others as well, and with it He decides whether or not to prosper you.

Second, your objective is to use whatever He gives to exalt Him and debase yourself: "He must increase, but I must decrease." If you wish to "measure" your success in life, this is the standard: to the degree that Christ is exalted and people think less and less of you, you are successful. If you seek to please only Him in your life, what He gives you and what He does with you are of no importance.