

Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



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I Must Decrease

The world measures success in terms of fame, wealth, or power. But real success comes when we can see our lives as tools to be used in behalf of a greater purpose than ourselves.

“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:29-30).



The disciples of John the Baptist were concerned about the rising popularity of Jesus. “All are coming to Him!” they complained (v. 26), and in their minds that encroachment posed a threat to John’s work. How could he retain the affection of the people in the face of Jesus’ growing influence?

John’s response to this complaint reflected the wisdom of his position. Just as the best man is not in the business of competing with the bridegroom, so John felt no threat from Jesus’ growing popularity. In fact, this shift in public affection was an intentional development in a larger plan; John played a supporting role in a production that featured Jesus as the star attraction, and he found his joy in seeing Jesus fulfill his destiny. The sequence of events was playing out

exactly as the script called for. “He must increase, but I must decrease,” and John was fine with that. John even may have had a premonition that his decrease would lead to an ignoble end. Shortly after this, he was thrown in prison and executed by a spineless tyrant. Not exactly a career highlight.

John’s behavior provides an important lesson in the nature of *humility*. Whatever great things John had accomplished in his career up to this point, he knew they were incidental to the larger mission that God was working out. His own personal fame or advancement was not relevant to God’s purpose, and he knew that. If God’s plan called for him to fade into obscurity and die a gruesome death, he could deal with it. “I must decrease” was not a cry of bitter resignation, but a cheerful acceptance of his place in God’s master narrative.

It’s a lesson that is so difficult for most of us to learn. We seethe with envy when others move ahead—especially if it’s at our expense. We scratch and claw and fight to get “our fair share” of the credit for accomplishments achieved in

a team setting. We get offended if no one acknowledges, or even notices, some contribution we make to the general good. The common thread in all these scenarios is a heart that is driven by the motto, “I must increase.” As long as that is our objective, we will always be finding ourselves in situations that make us miserable and unhappy. A life devoted to self-promotion will never satisfy its owner.

“I must decrease” is not an easy mindset to develop, but it is essential to fulfilling our purpose in life. When we can accept that we are not the center of our world, that our happiness is not the ultimate goal in life, and that it’s perfectly legitimate for others to have a calling that exceeds our own, only then we will be free to realize the purpose that God has for our life. When we are willing to sacrifice ourselves—and our pride—for God’s greater purpose, we will find the real joy of a life well lived.

John accomplished what God sent him to do, and Jesus benefitted from his sacrifice. Are we using our lives in a similar fashion?

– David King