



SERIES: September 2022 – February 2023 Believe

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

Scripture: John 3:22-30

TITLE: Real Ministry Success

Here in Nebraska, we've seen a consistent passing of the baton in football after Tom Osborne. And each coach is compared to Coach Osborne. As good as the next guy appears to be, he'll never beat Osborne or his legacy. But that's not fair, is it.

Well, what is true now was true 2,000 years ago in another transition. What was that transition? Let's go back to our study of John.

In verses 22-24 of chapter 3, we find Jesus outside of Jerusalem in the Judean countryside and stayed for several months. Both John the Baptist and Jesus are carrying on ministry and people are being baptized. Let's pick it up in John 3:25-28.

Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it 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.'"

Let's stop here. John's disciples are unhappy and jealous that the ministry is transitioning from John to Jesus. John's disciples are focused on keeping the spotlight on themselves and John, but John reminds them. This ministry isn't about us or me. It's about Jesus. I came to prepare the way for Him. John saw Jesus' increasing influence and notoriety not as a problem but as the fulfillment of his ministry. It brought him great joy instead of jealousy.

John continues in John 3:29-30.

"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. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease."

One of the greatest challenges of any leader is to hand off and encourage them to stay. It's easy to recruit people to follow. It's much harder to move them to another. John did just this. His humility made him great, not his ministry accomplishments.

Here's a hard truth: The measure of success for any ministry is not how many people follow the leader or pastor, but instead how many people follow Christ through the ministry.

So here's my challenge for you today: hand off your ministry. You may not be leading a church. You may not be on the staff of a ministry. But whatever you do for the glory of God, it is far too easy to take the credit and think it's about you. Today, I encourage you to point people right back to God. Remember, it's all about Christ.

When we decrease, it's Christ who wins the day.