

I Must Decrease



#greater

John 3:22-30

We're going to do a little imagining as we get started. I'm told that every minute, sixty hours' worth of You Tube video is uploaded. Think about that, sixty hours' worth of You Tube video is uploaded. Now, we're going to pretend like you have an idea for the best You Tube video that's ever been made. You've had this idea for a while and you've actually written a script because you need some people to participate in this video you're going to do. You get the whole family on board, you invite everybody over, if you're a student, you get mom and dad and your grandparents. If you're a mom or dad or grandparents, you're getting the kids, you're getting the grandkids around. You invited the neighbors over because you just know that this video that you're going to make in your living room is going to be watched by everybody in the world. You just have this feeling that it's the biggest deal ever, so you've invited everybody over and you have the script that you've written out. This little movie that you're going to create, of course, you are the star because it's your movie, it's your world, and you just invited your friends to play along. You hand everybody their part and you have these different scenes that you're going to work through, and you just know that when you film this video, it's going to be so big. You're so excited, you get everybody in, you're the star, and you pull out your iPhone. You turn it on the selfie cam and holding it up and making sure everybody's got their places. "You're over there. You're over there. Remember, when I say this, you need to say this." You're orchestrating everybody for this movie that you're going to make and upload to You Tube, and it's going to go crazy. You're so excited. You've been thinking about this for a long time. So here you are, everybody's ready, you're

smiling, you've got your wardrobe on, and you're about to hit record. Right before you hit record, you hear a knock on the front door. You're like, "Who's coming over? All the people I invited are here." So you go to the front door and you open it, and two men are standing outside your door. When you open the door, you're like, "I think I've seen these people before, but I can't remember who exactly they are." You're like, "Come in?" They walk in and say, "We would like to introduce ourselves. My name is Steven Spielberg," and "my name is George Lucas." Now you're like I remember who these guys are now. I know why I noticed them. If you don't know who Steven Spielberg and George Lucas are, they're sort of big deals in the film industry, probably the biggest directors ever of all time. Steven Spielberg did a few little movies like, Jaws, ET, and Jurassic Park kind of went big for a little bit. This other guy, George Lucas, had one little story called Star Wars that a few of you might have heard about or saw the movies. So these two guys are standing in your living room and you're holding a video camera up, aka your iPhone, and you have all the people to film your little movie in your living room that you think is going to be really great, and now in walk these two guys who have produced some of the best movies of all time. So you're speechless. They say, "Here's the deal. We're filming a movie over by your neighbor's house. We just want to set this up a little bit. We've both done a few movies, like Jaws, ET, Jurassic Park, and Star Wars. Those movies were good and a lot of people saw those movies, but this movie is going to be the one movie that trumps every movie that's ever been filmed or shown. We're both saying this is going to be the biggest deal in the history of film. In a hundred years, people will still be watching and still be talking about the movie that we're about to film. There's already a star, already actors that we have, but what we need is a few supporting cast. We need somebody to walk in with a cup of copy, hand it to the star, and say a few words. So, you're going to be on the big screen, you're going to be part of the biggest movie that's ever going to be, but it's just a small role. It's just a supporting role. There's going to be a different star. The story is going to actually be about them. It's not going to be about you, but we need you to come with us right now if you want to be part of this movie." Here you are; you've got a decision to make. You have your camera and you're holding it, and you're like, but

this movie is going to be awesome. In reality, let's just think about it for a moment. Probably what's going to happen is you're going to upload this video and nobody is going to really watch it. The people you tell, the co-workers you email it to, you're like, "Check out what me and my grandkids did." They are like, "Oh, that was neat. Yeah. Good job." Probably the friends that you tell about it might see it, but let's all be honest, it's probably not going to be as big of a deal as you think it is. So here's your dilemma. You're the star of this movie. You wrote it. You made the script. It's all about you. You're in control. You're the lead. You're the star. But you've just been given a different option, and the option is not to be the star of another movie; it's only to be a small part of it. But here's the deal; that movie is probably going to be way bigger than the little movie that's going to take place in your living room. You have a decision. You can either keep doing your movie in your living room, or you can put down your phone, walk out, join these two directors, and join this cast to make a movie where there's a different star in a different story and you're just the supporting role in it, but it's probably going to be a story that everybody in the world is going to see and hear. Just by show of hands, how many of you would stop your little movie in your living room and go with Steven Spielberg and George Lucas to film the greatest movie ever? Most of us are like, yeah, that's probably what I would do.

The reason I brought that imaginary story to us is that in some way is what takes place when the gospel comes to us. Here's how the gospel comes to us. Before we meet Jesus, life is about us. We've got our own script, we've written the story, and we are the stars. It's all about us, it's about our glory, and we rope our friends and family in, but they're really playing parts in our story. It's all about us, and we think it's a really big deal, like my life is the most important life on the entire planet. That's how we are before we meet Jesus. Then, when the gospel comes to us, it's as if Jesus knocks on the door and says hey, you've got a really cool thing going in your little story, but I want to tell you there is actually something much greater than that. There is a bigger story that I'm going to invite you to be part of. It's the story of a king and a kingdom and I am that king. Jesus comes into our little life and He says I want to invite you to lose your life, to give up your starring role in your little story and I'm going to invite you

into My life, into My kingdom, but you aren't going to be the star. No, I'm the star; this whole thing is about Me and My glory, but I want you to participate. I want you to play a small part of drawing people into My presence. I want you to play a small part of the redemption plan that I have for mankind. But in order to get My life, in order to get into My kingdom, you have to give up the starring role in your life. You have to trade your life in order to see and be in the life of Jesus. That's how the gospel comes to us. We have a choice; either we can keep doing our own thing for our own glory and live our own life or we can say I think Jesus story is way better and way bigger. I want to give up my life and be part of His story. I want to be part of His life, part of His kingdom because it's actually going to last forever.

We're going to do a little two-part series called, Greater. The idea is that we want Jesus to be greater in our life. When it comes to ending the summer and going into the fall, we want our new focus to be how I make Jesus greater. How do I play a small part in His big story rather than being the star of my own story? How do I make that switch? How do I become less so that Jesus can actually become more? We're going to look at a guy named John, because we have this guy named John the Baptist who really lives out this vision and this mission of becoming less so that Jesus can become more. If you have your bibles, turn to John chapter 3, verse 22.

Scripture

"After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized (for John had not yet been put in prison). 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.' 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."

(Prayer)

Father God, I pray that You would help us to really believe that, feel that, and live that, that the mission of our life is that we would decrease so that Jesus might increase. We pray this in the good name of Jesus, amen.

Let's just walk through the story briefly. Here we have John the Baptist and he's been preparing for this moment. Ever since he was a little boy, he's been told you're going to be the forerunner of the Messiah. So he goes out into the wilderness. He's been around wild beast. He's dressed in crazy wardrobe. He's been eating locust. He comes out on the scene as a prophet from God. Now there hasn't been a prophet from God for about four hundred years, so it's kind of a big deal. So everybody begins talking about John. Like if you go to a restaurant, if you go to the coffee shop, wherever you're at, everybody's talking about John; hey, did you hear about John the Baptist? Yeah, I went out there; he baptized me. Wow, I'm going out there today. Everybody is talking about John the Baptist. His social media has little a little blue check on it; he's verified. Like he's going nuts, everybody is running out to John the Baptist. It actually says that all of Judea goes out to him. He's a big deal, lot of influence, lot of power; everybody is running to him and wants to hear what he has to say. Then all of a sudden, this guy named Jesus comes on the scene. John starts pointing people to Jesus. He starts telling people about Jesus and something happens. All of John's followers go over to Jesus. Like here's John, big influence, big crowds, lot of power, lot of leverage, and then everybody leaves and goes to Jesus. So those who are close to John, they panic because they've probably been around John because they've seen his great influence and they want to be part of that influence. Now, like everybody's leaving John, so they come up and say, John, we've got a problem. John's like, what's the problem? Um, everybody who followed you has just left and went and saw Jesus. Like everything you just tweeted, nobody retweeted it. Like, nobody's watching you anymore. Like, you're irrelevant now. Like, nobody is listening to your name. Nobody is saying

hey John. Instead, they're saying hey Jesus. Everybody is going to Jesus. We've got a big problem. You need to go get some of your followers back. What's John's response? His response is basically, that's great. That's exactly what I wanted to happen, because here's the deal; I'm not the Christ, I'm not the groom. I'm just a friend of the groom and here's what we want. We want the groom to meet the bride, and the bride to meet the groom. So I'm just happy that the bride, those people who are meant to be in a relationship with God, are finally seeing their groom and the two are coming together. We see that they're meeting, and I want people to see Jesus because people need Jesus. He's the Messiah. He's the groom. He's the one people were made for. So my joy is complete introducing to people to the one they need most. So I'm glad that my name is not being said anymore, and I'm glad that everyone around me is saying the name of Jesus. Then he says this; here's what I want for my life, "that He must increase, but I must decrease." That was John's mission. That was what John wanted more than anything, for in his life, for him to decrease, for him to be less, and for Jesus to be more.

I just want to soak on that little statement for just a moment, because let's be honest, that's really, really, hard for us to do. It's hard for us to desire to become less because as little boys and girls, we're constantly told to become great, follow your dreams, always climb the ladder, and always become more. You can do it. We cheer you on, and by default, we love becoming greater. We don't like becoming less. We like increasing; we don't like decreasing. For instance, if you have flown lately you know that when you go through an airport, there are all these bookstores. In bookstores, they are advertising the latest book about certain self-help or whatever you need to do. So let's just imagine you are getting ready to go onto the plane, you go into the bookstore and there are two books on the endcap of the shelf. One of those is titled, Decrease, and it's got a subtitle, how to have less influence, make less money, and be forgotten forever. That's the book. Then there is another book on the other side of it, and it says, Increase, how to make more money, have more influence, and be remembered forever. Which book do you think more people are going to buy? Probably the one to the right. They're probably going to have to take the book to the left and throw it away because nobody walks into a

bookstore thinking, man; I wonder how I could have less influence. I wonder how nobody could remember me. I wonder how I could just sort of be in the background and no one will know my name. No, we want to read books that tell us how to increase our leadership, how to climb the ladder, how to have more influence over more people, and how to have more people know who we are and what our name is. But here, John is saying no, I want the other book. I want the book that says decrease because I don't care if anybody knows my name. What I want is for everybody to know the name of Jesus Christ. That's my goal. Here's John, everybody is leaving him and going to Jesus. His friends are panicking and John is saying that's good. That's exactly what I want to happen.

So how are we actually going to live out this statement, he must increase, but I must decrease? That's a hard thing. It's hard for us to decrease because we naturally want to increase. So how in the world are we going to do this? The only way that we're going to do this is if we become a trader. So what we're going to say is this; becoming less starts with being a trader. So if you want to become less, if you want to decrease, the very first thing you must do is become a trader. I want to read some very hard words in Matthew's gospel. Here's what Jesus comes and says to us when it comes to the gospel, people wanting to follow Him, here is what Jesus says to people who want to be His disciples. He says this in Matthew 16:24, "Then said to His disciples, if anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" So here's Jesus, people are wanting to follow Him, they're wanting to be around Him, and Jesus says hey, if you want to follow Me, there is great cost. It's actually going to cost you your life. You're going to have to deny yourself. You're going to have to die to yourself if you're going to come and follow after Me. In other words, Jesus doesn't sugarcoat it. He's very blunt and honest right off the bat; if you're going to follow Me, there's going to be sacrifice, there's going to be cost; it's going to be a little bit scary. Sometimes we don't do this when we try to tell people about Jesus. Sometimes we kind of hide the truth. Sometimes we sugarcoat it a little bit.

As parents, we sometimes do that with our kids. I'll just give you a little parenting secret. If you're a kid in here, just muffle your ears just for a moment. One of the parenting secrets that we know as parents is that sometimes we lie to our kids. I know, it's true; sometimes we lie to our kids. I'll give you one example. We were at Disney several years ago. Finley was four years old, we were at Magic Kingdom, and there was this goofy ride called The Barnstormer. I just knew he would love it. I just knew Fin was made for The Barnstormer. Fin was not wanting to go on The Barnstormer because he saw that it goes up and it goes down. I look him in the face and say, Finley, don't worry, it's going to be awesome. This roller coaster is only going to be fun. It really doesn't go up, it really doesn't go down, and it just kind of goes like around, it goes fast, like on your four-wheeler. Like, it's going to be great, I promise. Like, there's not going to be fear, you're not going to be upset, like it's only going to be fun, 100% you're going to love it. So Fin, of course, looks at Dad and fully trusts Dad and says ok, I'll do it. So luckily, I decided to video the whole endeavor, so we have lasting proof of how Dad didn't quite tell him the whole truth (video plays with Fin crying and screaming). Dad of the year, right! No worries, no problems, everything is going to be great, I promise. It's going to be awesome! He trusted me, right; I told him half the truth, not the whole truth. You would have thought I had learned my lesson, but like an hour later, we're going around in Animal Kingdom, and here we are with Crider and we want to do the River Rapid ride. Crider says I'm not doing that because I don't want to get wet. I said Crider, come here; I've got a secret. Check this out. Do you see that seat right there? If you sit in that seat, you won't get wet. It's a secret. Only Dad knows if you sit in that seat, you won't get wet. It's going to be great. So Crider is like, I don't know if I believe you, but he sees as the rapids are going down, only about half of the people get wet and the other half are completely dry. I said it is because of the seat. So we get in the big raft and I put him in the dry seat. I'm like, Crider; I'm getting all the way over here in the wet seat. Dad is going to get soaked, so just watch me get soaked. So we go through the ride, he's dry, everything is good, and we get to the last moment where we're going down the big downhill. Here we go; we're going down the waterfalls at the bottom, and I'm at the back, like getting ready to get

soaked. I'm like yes, this worked out perfect. As we're going down, about halfway through the raft starts to tilt a little bit. It just slowly revolves until at the very bottom, Crider is in the wet seat. When it hits, all of the water in the waterfall just goes completely on him! He is soaked to the bone, and I'm pretty sure he is walking through the park going Dad you lied to me! I have to go and get him new clothes, and get him dry. I thought I can make him do this, and I can make Finley do this by withholding some of the truth because they're going to have fun and it's going to be awesome. But I didn't tell them the whole truth.

I just want you to know like in this text Jesus doesn't do that with us. He doesn't say hey, come follow Me, it's going to be great. There aren't going to be any downhills. You're never going to get wet. It's going to be awesome, I promise. You'll be healthy, wealthy, your marriage will be great, and all your kids will obey, like it's just going to be awesome. Your garden's going to grow. There's going to be no weed, like it's going to be good! It is just roses all the time; come and follow Me; it's going to be perfect. No, what Jesus is saying here is if you come and follow Me, it's going to involve some suffering. It's going to involve some bad days. It's going to involve some downhills. It's going to involve some getting wet. It's going to involve some moments that are going to be tough. So if you want to follow Me, step 1, deny yourself. What you want, what you desire, your life, you being in the front seat, that's now over. Step 1 in following Me is you've got to get out of the front seat. You've got to get your hands off the wheel and you've got to give Jesus the keys. It's no longer you living your own life however you want. You're saying I'm denying myself.

Then he says after you deny yourself, then you have to die. That's what a cross is about. When he says take up your cross, he's saying you've got to go through a death. That's what a cross was; it was an instrument of death. So there's going to be a death and he's pointing it to the gospel that when you come to Me, you're going to go into My death, into My grave, and you're going to come out the other side a new person, a person that is not about you, a person that is about Me, a person that has Me as Lord and Savior, not yourself. So if you're going to follow Jesus, it includes denying yourself, dying to yourself, then you're ready to now follow Jesus.

He doesn't say hey, just come with Me and it will be all about you. No, Jesus says very pointed right at the very beginning, if you come and follow Me, it's no longer about you; instead, it's all about Me. That's the life of a Christian. It's no longer me; it's now Jesus. I live for His honor, and I live for His glory.

So if we're going to make Jesus great, it starts with being a trader. We have to make that trade. We have to say it's no longer me, but it's only about Jesus. Now the question is why do we need to become traders? Why do we need to deny ourselves, go through death, in order to follow Jesus? The reason is because we were all actually bad traders. The whole Bible is full of bad traders. So the whole story of Scripture is men and women who are bad traders. I'll just give you a few examples. Think about going all the way back to Genesis. What do we have? We have Adam and Eve, created to live under God's good rule and reign. They're supposed to rule the world under God's good word, and under His authority. Their life mission was to glorify God with their life. But what did they do? They traded the script. They decided no, I don't like the way that's going. I don't want to live my life for God's glory. I don't want to live under His rules and His commands. Instead, I want to rewrite the script. I want to make my own story, so they traded God's glory for their own. I don't want to follow God; I want to become God. I want to be like Him; I don't want to worship Him. So they traded His glory for their own, and we have the fall of man. Ever since that, every human being born has traded God's glory for their own. We see this all throughout the Bible. We see Noah, for instance. Noah, this righteous man who is believing in God, God used him to judge the entire world. He built a boat and eight persons were saved in the boat. The rest of the world died. He comes out the other side, seemingly to be the savior. Noah has saved the world, his goodness, and his righteousness, he's living under the right story, and he's following God and believing God. But then right after that in Genesis 9, like right after the flood, right after the waters subside, he goes out, he worships God, and then, he goes in his tent and he gets drunk and naked. You can read about it in Genesis chapter 9. His son comes in and sees him, and he curses his son for it. Like that's Noah, it's a little awkward to talk about. Like we don't put that on like the kid's material. Like, it's like 'and then the flood,' now let's go to the next story!

Noah's good. No, Noah had some good moments, but he also had some moments where he said I don't care about Your glory, God, I'm going to do my own thing for my own pleasure because ultimately it's about me. We see this moving on. We see the story of the tower of Babel, that all men are created to spread God's glory out. The nations are supposed to go and proclaim God's glory to the corners of the earth, but instead they all got together, built one great tower, and said we're going to make a name for ourselves. They trade God's glory for their own glory. We see that all throughout the Bible. David commits adultery. Moses murders. Paul condones murder. Peter denies Jesus. These people of the faith that we say man, they obviously lived under God's story, not all the time, often, they would trade God's glory for their own.

Here's what we need to remember. We often do the same. As people were created to live for God's glory, we often settle for our own glory. We do our own thing, and that's called sin. We've walked away from God, and we've all sin and fallen short of the glory of God. We've taken the reins. We've said no, life's about me, not about You. I'm not going to listen, follow, or worship You. I'm going to do my own thing my own way because life is really about me. I'm the star; Jesus isn't. That's what all of us have done. That's called sin. That's why we're in the mess that we're in. That's why life isn't working great for you. It's because you're still the star of your story. You've been a bad trader; made to live for God, you now live for yourself. That's a really bad way to live. So we've all become bad traders, but here's the good news of the gospel, that Jesus became a perfect trader for us, like that's the good news of the gospel, that Jesus becomes our perfect trader.

I love what John the Baptist says when he first sees Jesus. When he first sees Jesus, he says, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" Behold, the Lamb of God! There He is! There's the lamb! He's the one that takes away the sins of the world! When they heard that word, lamb, they probably heard it differently than we hear lamb. When we hear lamb, we think about a little cute lamb. When they heard lamb, they would have probably thought something different. They would have thought slaughter, blood, temple, and sacrifice. The reason they thought differently

than us is because we don't often see that side of food, for instance. Like for us, a lot of times, we go to Kroger and all of our meat is packaged and looks really nice. We go through a drive through and it comes in a sack all wrapped up, and it's like oh, that's how cheeseburgers are made. This is great! But there's another part that happens actually before that, that we don't often see and don't often feel. Other cultures even right now often see that on a daily basis. For instance, we were in Nicaragua at the first of the year, and we went to this guy Matthew's house. We we're having dinner with Matthew, we're having a Bible study with him, and it's about lunch time, and Matthew and his wife figure out that it's actually Dad's birthday. So they start making plans. They're going to make Dad a birthday dinner, like they're so excited. So we're like, yeah, this will be great; um sure, we'll do that. We've got to leave in a little bit. Then about a minute or two later, we see Matthew's wife come into the living room with a chicken in her hand. This little cute chicken is like looking at us, her hand is around its neck, and she's got it around the body. She comes in and she just looks at Dad and kind of like winks at him and then just walks out the door. We're like that was kind of weird, like why did they show us their pet chicken. So we're having our Bible study, we're talking a little bit, and then about a minute later, like both of us at the same time have that same realization of what's about to happen to the chicken. I look at Dad and he looks at me, and we're like oh no, that's the birthday surprise! That's the birthday meal, that little cute chicken that we just saw that we made eye contact with, like how are we going to undo this? So we told Matthew, uh, what's the chicken about? He said well that's lunch. We're like no, ok, we're going to time out from Bible study, and we want you to go and tell your wife that we're really full, like we had a big breakfast. We cannot eat anymore, thank you for the offering, but please don't kill the chicken. Like, we're already imagining what's happening out behind the shed, right. In that culture, to have a chicken, that's what lays eggs, that's a lot of what their income is, so to sacrifice this chicken would have meant a huge deal in this culture. It would have really harmed really in a way the family's income. So we're like go tell wife don't kill chicken. So Matthew's like ok, let's do Bible study, and we're like, no, stop right now! Go tell her don't kill the chicken. But see, in that culture that's so normal, like the kids would

have all seen hey we want some chicken, go get the chicken, go strangle it, and go lop its head off. There is blood and gore involved, and there is plucking that's happening. That's a normal part of everyday life in so many places around the world, but we kind of don't see that maybe on a normal basis. But in this culture, when they heard behold the Lamb of God, everybody knew what that meant. If you were an Israelite kid or an Israelite family, when you sinned against God, you had to go get a lamb and bring it to the temple. The priest would take this lamb, put his hands on its head, and you would confess your sin, then the little lamb would lose its life. The little lamb's blood would be spilled out on the altar, so you could vividly see this is what I deserve. I deserve death. I deserve to have my blood poured out on this altar, but this lamb is taking my place. There's a trade that's going on. I deserve altar, I deserve death; this lamb is trading places with me.

So John the Baptist says, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Behold, here's Jesus. Jesus is our perfect trader. Jesus traded places with us. What does that blood tell us about God, and what does it tell us about sin? It tells us that God is holy, holy, holy, and He cannot and will not tolerate our sin. It tells us that our sin is far more of a big deal than we ever imagined. Our sin is a serious offense. It is high treason against the king of all creation. That's what our sin is, and our sin is so heinous that it deserves death. That's why there's blood that's being poured out all throughout the Old Testament sacrifice. It's all pointing to one ultimate substitute, one ultimate sacrifice. It's not a lamb, it's not a bull, it's not a goat, it's not a turtledove; it's the Son of God. It's Jesus Christ, God, who became a man to live the life we couldn't so that He could go to a cross and die the death we deserved so that in Him, we might find resurrection and new life in the kingdom that's going to last forever. That's what Christ did for us. I love how 1 Peter says it in chapter 3:18, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit." Here's this trade that happened. Christ suffered once for sins. Why did He suffer for sins? How did He suffer for sins? He traded places. He is innocent. He is righteous. He does not deserve God's wrath. He's completely earned and merited God's favor forever. He has always obeyed,

never disobeyed. You, on the other hand, have been a bad trader. You've disobeyed God. You deserve His wrath and His judgement. You and I, the unrighteousness, deserve the wrath of God. Jesus, the righteous, does not. But here's what Jesus did, it says the righteous for the unrighteous. There was a trading that took place. Jesus took your place. The one, who should not have died, died for you so that the one who should die, you, can live forever. That's the good news, the one who deserved punishment, you and I, don't get punishment because the one who didn't deserve it took our punishment for us so that we could not only have our sins forgiven, and done away with, but we could actually get the righteousness of Christ. He would give us as a gift His very righteousness because what it says was not only does He just take away our sin, but He also brings us to God as holy ones who can stand before the very presence of God. See we were bad traders. We traded God's glory for our own, but Jesus came to earth to be a perfect trader. He traded our sin and our sin, shame, and guilt for His very righteousness. That's the gospel. That's the cross. You deserve to die, and Jesus died in your place for your sins. If you repent and believe in Him, you will have your sins forgiven and you will have eternal life in Him. That's the good news of the gospel.

So what is our response to this? Our response is that we must be traders. That's the only proper response to this news of the gospel. We must be traders. Mark 1:15 says, "The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and be believe in the gospel." That's what it looks like to become a trader. It's repenting and believing in the gospel. It's that deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me. That's another way of saying it. It's this; you realize that all your life you've been living your own story, your own movie, you have your little camera, and everybody is kind of living for you, doing what you want to do, and you think it's really, really great, and you've got your whole life scripted out, and everybody is here to play a part in your story because you really are the biggest deal in the universe. I mean, you believe that. You feel that. That's how you act, like tomorrow you wake up about me. Jesus says you've got to repent of that because you're walking in this direction, doing what you want to do, living for your honor and your glory, and He says you've got to stop. Repentance means to turn around. You turn from you. You deny. You go through a

death and resurrection, and then on the other side, you see there is a better story. There's a better movie that's playing. It's not your little living room movie; it's one about a King and a kingdom, and His name is Jesus Christ. It's one that is going to last forever and you're not the star of it. It's not about you. Instead, it is all about Jesus and His glory, and you just play a small part in it. That small part will give you more fulfillment and more satisfaction than it could ever be in being the own star of your own little movie, because the gospel is so much greater. We're talking about the God of the universe, who you were made for, who you've been disconnected because of your sin, but because of the cross, He's reuniting with, with Him, so you can be put in King Jesus and now you can live for His honor and His glory. See, if we're going to make Jesus greater, it has to start with us becoming less. I mean, that's what John the Baptist, he realized hey this whole thing isn't about me. I've got a bunch of influence, I've got a bunch of followers, but when push comes to shove, all this is to be leveraged for King Jesus. So, when everybody left him and they all went to Jesus, he says great. That's my goal. My goal is that He might increase and that I might decrease. That's what I want with my life. I just want to ask you; is that really the heartbeat of your life? At the end of the day, do you really say you know what; I don't care if anybody knows me or talks about me, what I want if for people to see and know Jesus. I want my life to be used so that those who are around me would ultimately see Christ in me. They would see the greatness of Christ and the beauty of Christ, and I would draw people into His story and His kingdom because I want to live for Him rather than me. I mean, that is since the very foundation of the gospel. Are you going to be your own Lord and do your own thing or are you going to turn to Jesus as Lord and say Jesus I want to live for Your honor? I want to live for Your glory. You be magnified. You be great. I simply want to play a small part in drawing glory to You. That's what the call to follow Jesus is like.

So here we're going to try to think about how we can make Jesus greater in our lives, so what we say is it starts with becoming a trader, trading your leading starring role in your little life, trading and saying Jesus I want Your life. Just give me my part. Just give me my marching orders because I want it to be about you from this day forward. I don't know what God's

doing in your heart, but maybe for some of you, right now God is calling you to be a trader. Like you realize I've lived my whole life for myself, my glory, my story, my script, my movie, and it's all about me, but today I realize there's a better option. There's a kingdom that I can be part of that's going to last forever. There's a God who died for me and rose for me, and that I can live in a love relationship with Him forever, that's way better than anything I could ever imagine.