Making Sure He Increases

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[0:00] Take your Bible and go with me to John chapter 1 and verse 29. Tonight's our... John chapter 1 and verse 29. I think sometimes we forget what those words are just about that were sung.

And I would just like to remind you as we head into a discussion about how you can help and be a better sender and a goer. We'll talk a little bit about that. But in John chapter 1 and verse 29, the most famous preacher of his day was this crazy guy who ate weird foods, lived in the wilderness and dressed in animal skins.

And people had already quit doing that. They were dressing in good linen clothing and cotton clothing, etc. And they were living in the cities and everything. And John the Baptist was the most popular preacher of his day.

He was challenging people to get ready because God had sent his son to earth to pay the sin debt. You remember God created the earth.

And when he created the earth, he put us all there. He put man and woman, Adam and Eve. He put them in the garden. He put them in a perfect environment. And they were in a position where they were with God and walked with Jesus on a regular basis.

But they decided to break the one rule that he gave. He gave one rule, don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Don't eat that. And so what did they do? They had all the others.

There was not a lot of restrictions, one restriction. And they ignored that restriction, ate of that tree. And he said, in the day you do, you'll be rebelling against me and you will separate yourself from me.

You'll be separated from God. And from that day forward, the entire Bible story unveils itself. It shows us how the great God of creation loves you and me.

And so Adam and Eve were standing there ready to die, knowing they should die. Adam knew they should die. Eve knew they should die. And Jesus comes and says to them, this is the pre-incarnate Christ.

That means, you know, Jesus has always existed. The Christ has always existed. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost that existed for all eternity. And so Jesus steps out and pre-incarnate, before he had a body, the Christ, steps out and says, Adam, Adam, where are you?

[2:15] And Adam says, hey, I'm hidden, I'm naked, and I'm embarrassed. And the Christ said, the Messiah said, I told you you're naked.

He said, we ate that fruit. We're naked. We've sinned. We're separated. He fully expected complete wrath. But instead of hearing complete wrath, the Lord called him to him and said, I'm going to kill this animal and cover your nakedness.

And I'm going to forgive you. And though you should die, lady, your name is woman, and you have messed everything up. But I'm going to give you your dignity back, and you'll be the mother of all living.

And someday, and someday, a woman will give birth to a man child who will actually be from heaven, God, come to earth. And so Adam turned to her and said, I changed your name.

You're not woman anymore. I call you Eve, the mother of all living. And so Adam and Eve, and the whole story of the Bible, all the sacrifices and all the stuff that you've heard. And then you get to John 1, 29.

[3:17] And John's the last Old Testament prophet. We're breaking into the New Testament. John's the last Old Testament prophet. He is telling everybody, you do know you've sinned against God. You do know you deserve to go to hell.

You do know that your sin separates you from God. You do know there is a God. You're not an animal. You're not just a product of animals and evolution. You are a created being.

You know that. And John's preaching that. And he's telling them they must repent. They must see their sin and turn from their sin and turn to God. And all of a sudden, he breaks in one of my favorite verses in the Bible.

In John 1, 29, he says, the next day, John sees Jesus coming unto him. And he says, behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

And you'd have to know the Old Testament. But that Lamb was killed to cover Adam and Eve in the beginning. And all those stories throughout the entire Old Testament was that Lamb dying. And now the Lamb, the real Lamb, the one everything else pointed to was here on earth.

[4:15] And he'd come to die. And he'd come to shed his blood. He never sinned. He never did wrong. He was God perfect living on earth all the time he was here. Never did wrong. And when they tried him, even the courts with all their lying witnesses couldn't find anything wrong with him.

There was no reason for him to die except they were jealous and they hated him. And they said, we've got to put a sign over his head that says what his sins are. They said, we don't have anything to put up there.

And so they said, we're going to put up Jesus, King of the Jews. They said, don't put that up. And they said, that's what we're putting. Because they couldn't find anything wrong with him. And he died and paid every man's sin debt all over the world.

You know why we have a missionary goer sender meeting? Because we go to tell people that news. Because we walk into countries where they've never heard that, where they don't understand that, where they have some religion that gives some foolish form of trying to get to God.

And they never realize, you don't have to try to get to God. God came to you. You don't have to try to get to God. God came to you. And so God came in human flesh, died on a cross, and paid our sin debt.

[5:17] He was buried, dead, dead. Three days he was dead. And he arose from the dead. And for 40 days he walked around the earth, proving he was alive. And over 500 witnesses saw him at one time.

And then he ascended into heaven. And he's coming back. And so we go with the gospel to make sure they know that. Everybody's going to die sooner or later. Everybody's going to die sooner or later.

You will not stay living here on this earth. You're going somewhere when it's all over. Heaven or hell. And you decide today because the Lord Jesus has already paid you price. He has died to make you free.

He's died to give you eternal life. He loves you. And he wants to be saved. And if you choose to rebel and say, I don't need you, God. And I'm bigger than you. And I don't need you. Then you'll get your just reward.

But if you would simply humble yourself and say, I have sinned. And I do deserve to go to hell. And I want to trust Christ as my Savior. You can be saved. That's the message we preach everywhere.

[6:13] That's the message Hudson Taylor preached in China. That's the message Mark Tolson told over in China to get those people to get saved. He told them about the great God of heaven. Amen. And so we sang songs about that.

We talked about how great our God is. And you ought to realize that's really true. That's really true. And so I want you to go with me to John chapter 3 and verse 30. Now John the Baptist is the greatest preacher of his day.

He is the greatest preacher of his day. He's the greatest personality of his day. Everybody knows who he is. He may be a little bit on the eccentric order. But they're going everywhere. People find where he is and they go to hear him speak.

And the crowds are following him. The religious leaders are following him. Everybody's keeping up with him. But once he sees Jesus, he knows it's all about Jesus.

It's all about the God of heaven who loved us and died on the cross to save us. It's all about the person who could save me from myself, save me from my sin. It's all about the person that could give me eternal life.

[7:13] It's all about the person that could take me no matter who I am, no matter where I'm from. He could take me and change me. And so he says this verse, John 3, 30. He says he must increase. Jesus must increase.

I must decrease. That's what I want to talk to you about tonight. I want to talk to you as believers. I want to talk to you about his born again people making sure he increases.

Making sure he increases. That's what the giver or the goer sender coalition is all about. I can make a comparison between John the Baptist and our responsibility as senders. John published a ministry of another over his own.

If you're a sender in our church, in a lot of ways, you can kind of get your feelings hurt because the goers, man, they get all the privileges. We give them all the titles, man, they're the heroes. We don't give swords out to pastors.

We don't give boxes of stuff out to me or Robert or Trent or Jimmy. You know, I mean, many missionaries. But that's what John the Baptist did. He pushed somebody more than he did himself.

[8:12] John gave his best disciples to the ministry of Jesus. John was willing and desirous of diminishing so another could be magnified. And our goal as goers is to see Jesus increase.

Our goal is that his kingdom would be increased. Our goal is to have a position of lesser importance. We lose our identity in his.

It means that we become the forgotten supporters of his work. People don't even remember you guys. You know, you're laymen and you're deacons and you're working and you're building a church building and you're teaching Sunday school classes and you're discipling people and nobody thinks about you.

And so we got a goers center meeting tonight. So I'll just go ahead and tell you, I acknowledge nobody thinks about you. The missionary has called me a has-been. I really like that. He used to be a missionary.

I've had people say, I can't even believe you came back here. It means that we are the forgotten supporters of the work, his work. It means others get the medals for doing the work, not us.

[9:16] This is an ego buster. And we all hate that. Someone else gets the gold and all the medals. They get the gold and the silver and the bronze. They get all the honorable mention and their name gets written up there.

And what do we get? Nothing. We're just hidden somewhere in the background and forgotten. That's a goer. Now you all are saying, praise the Lord.

He finally figured out how we feel around here at Vision. Like we're kind of a secondary citizen. So I want to go through some scripture with you for the next 19 minutes if I could. Number one, our prayer is about our desire to obey and magnify him, not us.

In Matthew chapter 6 and verse 10, Jesus is given the Lord's Prayer, we call it, the model prayer. And in that prayer, he says, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done as it is in heaven. On earth as it is in heaven.

And that's what our prayer is. We want Vision Baptist Church and we want our lives to look like we're doing as much of what God wants as we would if we were in heaven. In Matthew chapter 6 and verse 13, he said, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine.

[10:23] For yours is the kingdom and yours is the power and the glory forever. Amen. We want to get the gospel message to the world. Good intentions are not what godly sinners have or look for.

Instead, we look for his will and his kingdom. Prayer and church attendance cannot be a cover for not obeying. So you should, if you attend Vision and you're a goer, I'd just like to tell you a few things.

And I'm going to walk you through this. This is just me chatting with you tonight. But you should get discipled and get to discipling. We may be the lost and the forgotten. And Cal may go to the airport and everybody goes down and hugs and cries.

And we all come home and it's like, back to our lives. Nothing matters. We don't count. So, hey, man. They just rip our hearts out. We were driving into it.

One of my grandkids was born over in Augusta area. We were driving in. And Betty and I were living in Peru, South America. We're pulling up. Betty's crying. And I said, what are you crying about? We're just now getting here. And she said, we've got to leave.

[11:22] I said, we're not there yet. I mean, we could go in the house and stay there a couple of days. And then you cry when we leave. She said, I'm already thinking about leaving. That's the missionary thing. You should get involved in discipleship and vision.

If you're not involved in foundations, you should be. You should start listening to every message as though it were from God to you for your life. You should always. You know, people always say stuff. In Spanish, there's a saying that says that you take it to heart.

You take it to your chest. It's like I take that message like it was meant for me. That you say it to me. I say, good. That's exactly where it was meant. Amen. Somebody said, you stepped on my toes. I wasn't aiming for your toes.

I was going for your heart. I'm sorry I missed. Get on target and realize what the purpose of your life is. Be willing to spend and be spent to get the gospel to the world.

You loved it when I told you about the gospel message. Your face is lit up. You got excited. You knew you were saved. You was glad that message is getting out. But now we're down to where the rubber meets the road. Accept that you are here for a purpose.

[12:22] That you're his and he wants to use you to get his gospel to the world. Take your time and talents and treasures and consider how much you invest each in his purposes compared to your purposes.

Do you allow the fact that you're not called to ministry to give you an excuse? To not view everything about you as though it were meant for him and his purposes? You know, if you're a called guy, it's like, well, your life's for Jesus.

Thank God I wasn't called. Isn't that how we feel sometimes? Glad I wasn't called. Get to keep my money. Get to keep my time. Get to keep my talents. That's not our attitude. Say amen. Or oh me.

Do you truly believe that you're responsible to get the gospel to the world as the missionaries are? Are you willing to give your life, your family, your money, your talents to accomplish great things for the cause of Christ?

We should consider that our lives were meant to carry the gospel to the world. Second thing I want to talk to you about quickly is the danger of the goer-sender relationship.

[13:18] So missionaries, I'd like you to listen to this first part. So the goers can think less of cinders. Goers can kind of get this attitude. Well, I'm going and I'm sacrificing and I'm giving and these guys are just staying here in the States.

The goer can think that he or she is really doing the sacrifice and serving God. They think about how they're leaving, how they're giving up. They think about what they're going to miss.

They think about themselves way too much. Could I get an amen or an oh me? Missionaries, it ought to be you.

Take it to a pitchel. Take it to your heart. Say amen. And all the giving. I'm a missionary, man. They forget that they were called to take a cross and follow Jesus.

Not one thing in the Bible about you're going to go be a missionary and everybody's supposed to treat you real good. You're supposed to be picking up a cross to go die. They forget that it was never about them but all about the Lord Jesus and what he commanded them to do.

[14:17] They get too hung up on themselves and too readily except being the hero. I have known some heroes from the military that were in battles and they often don't really want to discuss a lot of that.

But we sure do like to talk about ours. The missionaries fail to be thankful. They only seem to think of their own needs and their desires and their wants.

Their lack of gratitude and the fact that they expect things, they demand things, they hurt the cause of world evangelism. The oh me attitude is completely selfish and of the devil.

The believing their own press release will cause their destruction. So I would just like to say, missionaries, how people feel about you is a lot about how you act. And you ought to be very grateful for every little penny you're given.

People sacrifice and pray for you and give to you. Your mama did, your family does, your church does. And you ought not be ungrateful. I can't think of words in English right now.

[15:28] I don't know why. I'm talking to you missionaries. You can't take advantage of people. Senders, this is for you. The sender can find it hard to deal with taking what seems to be second place.

You know, I feel like if I go to vision, if you're not a missionary, you just don't measure up second place. But every wife knows that problem, doesn't she?

She's called to submit and follow. She loses her own identity and finds her new identity in her husband. She is to lovingly follow, respect, reverence, and submit when she might feel like she loses her identity.

You know, women kind of, I think they kind of understand something. I do a lot of marriage counseling. Three hours so far and one more to go today. Second place, the missionaries are the heroes.

We brag on them. We give them money. We listen to their reports. And if they're the heroes, what are we? It seems like those that are on the front line get all the coverage and love and respect.

[16:35] We talk about their needs and no one thinks about our needs. They seem to get too much since I don't get mentioned enough. We're the yoke fellows.

They get the credit. We give the cash. They get noticed. We're supposed to notice them. I'm called to notice you.

And you like it, don't you? They get the name and recognition except for taking care of them. We're kind of lost behind the scenes. We're about meeting their needs. Sometimes we just wish someone would think of us and what we're sacrificing.

There's real power in being the sender of taking second place. Just like that challenge you all to think about this. When God wanted to put a man in a place of influence in the Bible, he put him in second place.

This helps you wives also to deal with this. You know, I'm the head of our home. Betty's the next. She turns her head any way she wants to. He placed Joseph in second place in Egypt.

[17:44] And Joseph ran the whole country. He placed Daniel in second place and he ran the whole country. He places a wife in second place and we won't discuss about what she runs. John the Baptist took second place to Jesus and said, he must increase.

I must decrease. Jesus even takes second place. Because everybody gets saved in his name. But it's God the Father. They're equal.

But they are. 1 Corinthians chapter 3. The head of every man is Christ and the head of Christ is God. Jesus said, I do what the Father wants me to do. It must have not been so fun.

You're not in control. You're not in charge. If you're not in charge, you kind of feel like I'm not so important. Well, Jesus did what the Father wanted. Wives do what the husband wants. Most of us men are just glad we ain't women.

Not good. There's actually more power in second place than in the first place. The first place is a position of power. The position doesn't give you near the power you think you have.

[18:48] A famous man who talks about leadership talked about one of the first churches he went into. And he got named the pastor. He was so excited. And he went into the board of deacons. And to tell them his plan.

And he started laying out his plan. And he said, this is what I want to do. And he noticed that everybody in the room went and looked over at a certain man in the room. And then that man made a signal.

And everybody agreed with him. And he figured out something. I might have the position. But that guy's got the real power. I remember pulling into my subdivision in Querétaro, Mexico.

We're pulling in. And I saw the missionary. And he was meeting with my friend Alberto Romero. And as we came around, I noticed that I'd never seen that missionary look so white in my entire life. I mean, all the blood was gone.

He was heaping pale face. But he was talking to Alberto. So later after he left, I said to my friend, I said, what's going on? He said, he came over here to see about making some changes at the church. I said, well, what happened? He said, I told him no.

[19:47] I said, he's the missionary. He said, I know. Power, influence. It went the way Alberto wanted. It does that almost everywhere I've ever worked and everywhere every other pastor has.

So when you got second place, you got that place of influence. Hmm. The position doesn't give you near the power you think. Husbands that have a brain learn that quickly.

The newlyweds like, I run my house, bless God. My wife would never do that. Yeah. And all the other men laugh.

Presidents move and act according to their advisors. The second place is a place of influence and real power. You get to help in decision making. You place the conditions on how decisions are made.

And day-to-day running of the business is often left to you. Your missionary needs a friend. You'll have enormous influence if you become a real friend. You can help them think through so many things.

[20:48] You can help them in their walk with the Lord. I'll give you one more thing before I get towards the last. My friend, his name was Paul. Paul Forsyth. And Paul Forsyth never did any work in Peru.

And if he ever did any work in Peru, I translated every word he said. So if I like what he said, I just fixed it. He never had any idea. You know, don't ever trust a translator. We do what we want to do.

Say amen. Man. And so, but my ministry got in trouble. I had a whole bunch of junk go wrong. And I had called some friends. And my friends had kind of reacted negatively like I had messed up.

And my, because my preacher boys messed up. They kind of blamed me and said my ministry wasn't going good. I didn't have anything to come see. And it really hurt my feelings. I was crushed because I taught these guys that he didn't do what I said. I got a phone call.

Brother Paul was on the phone. Now he's a nobody. He has no power over me. He's not my pastor. He's just my buddy. He called on the phone. He said, hey, buddy, what's going on? I said, I'm about to quit. He said, you ain't quitting.

[21:45] I'll come down and whip your rear. I said, you don't understand what I'm going through. He said, I fully understand. I can see that. That'd be terrible. Man up. And I said, you know, you don't need to talk to me like that.

But I manned up and did what he told me. See, that second place has a lot more power than you think it does. Wives have figured that out if they got a brain. I didn't mean that, ladies.

I know you have a brain. Boy, I just got in trouble. I got to go home tonight with a woman. The danger is in allowing jealousy and gratitude, selfishness to creep into our relationship on both sides.

Lay people often get jealous. They get ungrateful for the guys going. And selfishness creeps into our relationship. Missionaries get jealous and ungrateful and selfishness creeps into the relationship on both sides.

I've lived long enough to remember a war that our country fought where when the guys got off the airplane and came back to America, people spit on them and didn't appreciate them. I sat in my house on this past Saturday with a guy who was in Vietnam for over a year, getting shot at, shooting at.

[22:58] And I said, how many of your friends did you see die? He said, only about two. And he said, one time when the bombs were whistling over the building, as they came whistling over the building, everybody started running for the bunker to get down there so they'd be saved.

And he said, I was starting down there and the rocket hit right amongst a bunch of guys in my platoon and they were gone. He said, I didn't know them, but they were gone. And people didn't appreciate them.

That's how cinders can get a bad attitude. He said, I came home, nobody even wanted to talk to me. Nobody wanted to know anything about what I'd done. It's like I'd been over here getting shot at for a year and not one person cared. Missionaries can be treated that way.

It also goes the other way around. Missionaries, you can get jealous and ungrateful and selfishness can creep in. We all think of ourselves more. The most important word in the world, according to famous people, is our own name.

Most important word in your vocabulary is your name. And guess what you want to see when you look at a picture? Yours. In fact, some of you would say, well, I don't like getting my picture taken.

But that's usually not true. You just like to make sure it looks like you want it to look because you're really hung up on how you look. Oh, I didn't say that. We want to be recognized, but we don't really want to recognize others.

It's natural. It's human. We will all have to focus on doing our job for the cause of world evangelism. There's a big danger, and a church like ours faces it. And this go-or-sender thing, it could turn into an us-and-them kind of deal.

It could turn into they're the missionaries. They always need money. And here we are as a church. We're always sacrificing. These guys could say, y'all don't do enough. And we could say, they never say thank you. They always take too much. And it could cause a problem.

It causes missions to dry up. It causes things not to work. But we got a job to do. We must remember that they were saved in our church. They were raised here.

They were trained here. They learned how to do the ministry from us. They were sent from here. They were and are prayed for here. They get paid from here. We forget whose responsibility it is to get the gospel to the world.

[25:00] Not one verse in the Bible singles out missionaries and says, y'all are supposed to get the job done. It was written to a church. The church. Our church. And guess what they're going to do when they get to the mission field?

They're going to build what we have shown them a church looks like. So we want to produce the kind of church that they would want to reproduce. We want them to think that we are the best pattern possible.

We must show them what their members should look like. We're all to carry the gospel to the world. We're to be in every way doing here what we want them to do there.

But just let me show you real quickly something. Whatever we are, we're modeling something to them. I deal in a lot of marriage counseling with new couples getting married.

That's where I spend the majority of my time, 10 or 12 hours, helping a couple get ready to get married. And you know when they come in to get married, how much, how their marriage is going to work in a lot of ways depends on what they've watched. Boy, if they've lived with some people, you already know their marriage is in trouble.

[25:59] And they've lived with others, you know their marriage is in good shape. And so when a missionary leaves, you know what he's going to do? He's going to walk up and he's going to say, I can tell you what my church is going to look like in Argentina. Or I can tell you what my church is going to look like.

Cal Shreve and Hannah, there are guys, they just arrived. You know what they've got in their mind? I know what church is supposed to look like. It's supposed to look like vision. They're probably going to look for a fat pastor. And some ugly deacons.

I mean, great looking deacons. And some Sunday school teachers a lot like you. It's a lot more true than you'd ever admit. Sometimes when they're talking to me, they say, this guy's just like brother so and so.

And they mean that as a high compliment of you. The missionaries need you. And the kingdom and our king need you.

Living away from your country and family can make you feel very alone. When you feel alone, abandoned, and forgotten, the devil uses that to play with your mind.

[26:57] Though the missionaries will live very comfortably on the field and have a good life, they never completely fit in. You would not understand that. You would not understand that. Until you've done it.

And David, our son, is as Spanish as you can get. His first language was Spanish and English at the same time. He doesn't even know which one he learned. He never went to language school. He looked at you and he knew what to speak by the color of your face and the shape of your face.

He knew exactly which language to speak. And as he's growing up and playing with Alonso, who later becomes a pastor out of our ministry, Alonso tells him one day when they're fighting, he said, You may speak the language perfectly and you may have been here all your life, but you ain't one of us and you ain't never going to be one of us.

He came in the house crying. He said, Mama, that guy said I wasn't a Peruvian. Betty said, Well, hon, you're not a Peruvian. Yes, I am. No, you're not. You ain't one of us. You're not one of them.

It's what happens. Negative attitudes develop because no one is truly in the yoke with them. The missionary begins to feel that no one cares. The church member begins to think that all the missionary wants is financial help and already has it too good now.

[28:03] The home church will forget their mysteries over time. I will tell you this. I know from 19 years of experience living overseas, out of sight, out of mind, you are forgotten. You know, we'll never forget them.

Chuck and Lisa probably won't forget Hannah. They'll try to forget Kyle. It affects you more than you think it does. Even your mother, whoever lives in California, if you're honest, they just don't get an equation that much.

The missionary feels very strange the first time they return to church after being gone so long. They don't feel that our church is just one. I don't want them to feel that our church is just one more of a large number that support them.

You don't understand this, but they're going to a place where the devil has strong influence and they need your prayer. And I don't have time to read verses with you. So let me finish this up by saying you and I ought to know that vision and what we're doing is important.

It's sitting in a club and this isn't a discussion of a, you know, a denomination. There are souls hanging in the balance. Listen to what I want to tell you.

You know this, but you just remember this. Everybody living on the planet will sooner or later spend all of forever somewhere. They'll spend that eternity in the presence of God in heaven and enjoying all the wonderful things he has prepared and he wants them to enjoy.

Or they'll spend all of eternity in hell in a place where they will pay for their sin and they'll pay for the rebellion. And they might not hardly even know they've done it. But we have been commissioned with good news.

And that good news is they're sick and they're dying and they're going to go to hell. And there's nothing they can do about it. But God can do something about it. And he did do something about it.

And we're commissioned to go in there and tell them, hey, God loves you. You have sinned against the Holy God because you've lived for yourself. You believed in yourself. You've pushed yourself.

You think of yourself. You've done things for you. You've been your own God. But you need to repent of that. You need to turn from that and trust the one God who made you.

[30:08] And we tell them that God loves them. And Jesus died for them. And Jesus paid their sin debt. And the only thing they need to do is trust what Jesus did on the cross.

When Jesus was dying on that cross, he wasn't dying for anything he did wrong. He wasn't dying for anything because, by the way, the Bible is real clear. Jesus said this before he died. Nobody will kill me.

I will give my life. He had the complete power to walk out of there and never die on the cross. He could have called the angels and said, by the way, when they came to get him in the garden, and they came to him and they said, we're looking for a Christ.

And he said, that's me. Scared them to death. And they fell over backwards. One guy ran off naked. I mean, that's how powerful he was. He didn't have to die. He died because he wanted to die. To pay your debt and pay my debt and to pay everybody's debt in Peru and Africa and China.

So this is important what we're doing. This isn't a Baptist thing. This isn't a church thing. It's a God thing. To a missionary, take your role seriously. And sender, take your role seriously.

[31:13] Thank you.