

The Bridegroom's Friend [1]

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If all of our study of God in the past or future reveals only one thing—our utter ignorance and truly insignificant identity—then it has accomplished its goal.

The purpose of man is to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7). How is this accomplished? The same way our beloved brother John did. "... He must increase, but I must decrease."

How do we decrease? By obeying and following the One who did it before us—our Lord Jesus Christ. If we live after the flesh we will die, but if we through the Spirit do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, the world will hate us—and yet some will glorify God—and we will live. If we are big to the world and to ourselves, then Christ is defrauded and belittled. But if we are little in our own eyes and the world's, then Christ is enlarged, exalted, and glorified.

"Love your enemies." When we obey that, we decrease and Christ increases. "Do not your alms before men." More decreasing of self, and more glorifying Christ. "When thou prayest enter into thy closet." Obeying Christ will always decrease self and glorify Christ. If it does not, we are probably obeying the wrong one!

"And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also." "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." "Give to him that asketh." Again and again, over and over, Jesus is saying, "Take the low road." Seeking to give Christ glory does not mean obtaining much wealth and a large estate to "show the world I'm a Christian." It means selling it and giving to the poor. Glorifying Christ does not mean exercising God-given talents to draw attention to one's self; it may mean dumping those in exchange for the priceless gem of humility.

Glorifying God does not mean going on a mission trip and making sure everyone knows about it—it may mean staying home and dying some more. Lest someone accuse me of portraying a dreadful Christian experience, let me remind them that we have something to rejoice in ... but only if we are small. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom [not you or me]: but the friend of the bridegroom [you and I], which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29).

Is our joy fulfilled in hearing the bridegroom's voice? Or do we want more: more honor for ourselves? We admire great men like Isaiah who said in the presence of God, "Woe is me! For I am undone ..." We admire Moses who in God's presence hid his face, "for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:6). We admire Job, the perfect man in the Bible who told God, "... I am vile; what shall I answer thee?" (Job 40:4).

God can only be glorified if we surrender our identity to His—our dreams, plans, wishes, ambitions, talents; everything in exchange for the mind of Christ, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6b-7). How can men and women claim this man as their Master while demanding respect and honor from the world? Men are not supposed to be able to see us, but the Divine Presence who permeates our being. A godly

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young woman should be so hid in Christ that a man has to seek Christ to find her. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). Are we willing to be hid? Or must we be seen?

George Müller, a man of great faith, said concerning his ministry: "There was a day when George Müller died." We see the huge orphanages, the many thousands that flocked to hear him preach; we see a life richly blessed by God. But do we see the death that George had to die? Many hundreds of thousands of dollars passed through his hands, but he considered none to be his own, and all to be Christ's. This requires death of the flesh!

Not I, but Christ, be honored, loved, exalted;
Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard;
Not I, but Christ, in every look and action,
Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word.

Not I, but Christ, to gently soothe in sorrow;
Not I, but Christ, to wipe the solemn tear;
Not I, but Christ, to lift the weary burden,
Not I, but Christ, to hush away all fear.

Christ, only Christ, no idle word e'er falling,
Christ, only Christ, no needless bustling sound;
Christ, only Christ, no self-important bearing,
Christ, only Christ, no trace of I be found.

Not I, but Christ, in lowly, silent labor,
Not I, but Christ, in humble, earnest toil:
Christ, only Christ, my every wish fulfilling:
Christ, none but Christ, the gatherer of the spoil.

Not I, but Christ my every need supplying,
Not I, but Christ my strength and health to be;
Christ, only Christ, for spirit, soul, and body,
Christ, only Christ, live then Thy life in me.

Christ, only Christ, ere long will fill my vision;
Glory excelling soon, full soon I'll see—
Christ, only Christ, my every wish fulfilling,
Christ, only Christ, my all in all to be.

~Ada A. Whiddington

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Category: [Christian Life](#) [3]

Remnant Issue: [July/August 2013](#) [4]

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[2] <https://www.bereanvoice.org/name/shane-d-curran>

[3] <https://www.bereanvoice.org/category/christian-life>

[4] <https://www.bereanvoice.org/remnant-issue/julyaugust-2013>