

PROGRAM 48 TEASER

The door bell rings and you answer. It's a loved one—or a dear friend—and you are so glad to see them. Or the phone rings and it comes as good news from someone you love. Of course, other times you don't answer that knock at the door or phone call because you want to avoid the person or interruption. But now Someone is calling you—Someone very important. He wants to make you a spiritual trillionaire—with His unbeatable presence, protection, peace and plan for your life. Wow! The Creator of the Universe calling little old you! And little old me! Ready for More Than Talk? Here we go! Jesus Calling! Will You Answer?

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JESUS CALLING! WILL YOU ANSWER?

Page 1 The lesson of a lifetime

"He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30

Most Christians don't think of John the baptizer as a rabbi. But that is what his disciples called him, for he was their first teacher. In preparing the road for Messiah, John must have shined like the brilliant morning star over a clear desert sky. Now the sun was about to rise - the Son of God - and such brilliance would cause the morning star to decrease and fade from view. That's when Rabbi John left us a lesson that must become a daily discipline in every disciple's life - "He must increase, but I must decrease."

My greatest enemy is not the devil. It is something so sinister that even if there was no devil, *it* would still act like the devil. "It" is "self" - seen in its ugliest as "me", "myself" and "I". It is the craving to be seen, to be praised, to envy and be envied, to be indulged by the adulation of others, and a thousand other wily ways for self to occupy an inner throne made only for God.

But when a true heart sees Jesus, we become sickened over self and look for a deeper daily deliverance from the "Big I." "Your will, not mine, Lord. Your glory, not mine. Your graciousness, compassion, sensitivity and servanthood, not my own that is tainted by self, Lord."

I believe it is possible to be so full of Jesus and so consumed in His immediate Presence that others can see, hear and feel Him when we are in their midst. It is brought about by spiritual intimacy between us and the Lord, not a human striving that proves contrived and sterile - and still full of self. May the Lord be pleased to touch your heart and mine by continual revelation in how we can more fully submit to the increase of Jesus and the decrease of self.

My prayer: "I dare to say it - to pray it - and to learn Your ways, Lord Jesus, to obey it - Your will that You increase and I decrease."

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Page 2 Exposing that "other devil"

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." John 12:24

The most painful death of all has nothing to do with the body. It is the stripping of one's self-will from the inner throne and submitting that self-life to the cross for execution. This death does not precede but follows our salvation. Before we know the Lord, we are full of self - it is so the real "us" that we do not usually shrink back in horror from it. We may feel the weight of our sins and cringe at the devil's control of our lives, but we usually don't recognize the powerful pull of that "other devil" - self.

But for many who are truly repentant and born-again into a changed life, there comes a time when God asks for total surrender to His will alone. That is when a painful death must take place if we are to know His deepest presence and highest will.

Jesus was that corn of wheat that was to die in order to bring forth much fruit. But the context of scripture brings you and me into the "death equation." Jesus goes on to say that if we love our lives, we shall lose them. There is more to loving one's life than running from martyrdom. There is the love of self-will, self-planning, self-indulgence, self-pity and self-rule that insist on keeping at least partial control of our lives. But God insists on that final release of all - death to self - and a total surrender of will and ways to Him alone. Then, and only then, does His Spirit truly fill that life.

Have you faced that war and gone to the Cross for the execution of "self"? Many smaller battles will follow, but it's important to know that the big one is won - that decisive moment when you so see "self" in the full light of Christ's selflessness that you hold back nothing in reserve. From that death comes much fruit. Without it, we abide alone.

My prayer: "You gave all for me, Lord Jesus. Don't let up until I yield all to You."

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Page 3 The temple called "You"

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” 1 Corinthians 6:19

Notice the first words in that question? They are part of a question from Paul to the Corinthian church that signifies shock, disappointment, even amazement. Many are claiming Christ as Savior while their lives are filled with self on the throne and sin in the heart. God is not speaking this scripture to refresh them, but to rebuke them. He's doing the same with His Church today.

Have you and I grasped the wonder of it all: that our bodies are individual temples for the Holy Spirit and that collectively we are the body of Messiah whom the Father has made the Head?! It took years for Solomon to build the ancient temple - and what a moment when the glory of God filled it! That temple did not belong to Israel but to God. He called all the counts. Now you are His temple, bought and paid for by the price of Jesus' blood and no longer your own. The Spirit now comes to rule your life and to use your body and spirit to glorify God.

But how can I glorify God with my body? By disciplining it through habits of holiness and wisdom. What goes into my mind? The glory of the Word of God or the garbage of the world? What goes into my stomach? Junk food that tears the body down before its time or, as much as possible, nutritious foods that promote health? What about regular exercise that strengthens God's temple of spirit and flesh, rather than only flattening the bottom and broadening the tummy through excess time on the couch? Our Father wants each of us so under the control of the Holy Spirit that our bodies cannot be used for wasteful or immoral purposes - fun-houses for Satan - but only as houses cleansed by Christ's blood, filled with God's glory and controlled by the Spirit whose first name is "Holy!"

My prayer: "Such a profound truth, My Father, and yet You long to reveal it - that my body is a temple for the Holy Spirit. I want only to be controlled by Your love and filled with Your glory."

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Page 4 A race unlike any other

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." 1 Corinthians 9:24

When Jesus entered your heart, He redeemed you by His blood, forgave you all sin by His grace and filled you with new power by His Spirit. Now He has set a course - a race - for you to run in order to hear His "Well done!" at the end and receive the crown of life. He uses a disciplined runner, Paul, to give us our instructions in four verses (vv 24-27) that you would be wise to memorize.

In human races, many compete but only one gains first prize. Our race is not against humans but a race we run against invisible competition. Your race is like a marathon filled with obstacles. I think of myself running against the world, the flesh and the devil. Obstacles in my way include temptation, discouragement, fear, unbelief and a thousand other negatives waiting to trip me up. But you and I don't run alone - the Holy Spirit guides our run from within us, and God's angels protect us from without. We run to win!

And our race is different from anything the world has ever seen. We run this race one day at a time throughout our lifetime. That's why we are also in constant training like an athlete (v 25) and like a boxer (v 27) - learning to master our bodies, not be mastered by them. God puts us through our own weight training and endurance-building exercises - daily devotions, memorizing verses, disciplined prayer, crucifying our whining flesh, etc. One champion boxer was asked if he cheated on his road-work done in early morning darkness when no one could see him. "Never", he answered. "You see, what I do in the dark comes out under the lights when it is time to fight!" Run your race today as faithfully as you know how. The Holy Spirit is your trainer, Jesus is your companion, and the Father is waiting at the finish line with "a crown of eternal blessedness that cannot wither." (v27 Amplified)

My prayer: "I thank You, Lord Jesus, that I don't run this race alone. You are my constant companion. Grant me Your staying power to be faithful in this marathon - one day, one moment at a time."

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Page 5 Excuses are for losers!

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24

There have been many times in over five decades of walking with Jesus that I have thought my faith would surely crumble and I would fall as a failure. But time and again Jesus proved that He alone could and would keep me from falling. He will do the same for you - and see us through to the end of life. Take everything from me but leave me God's favor and grace and I am left with true riches. Give me everything but take from me God's favor and grace and I am left with only the wind.

Yet there are mysteries about God's keeping power that I do not understand and which cause me to tremble. Christians - including leaders - fall all around you and me. Far wiser than me (I shall not speak for you) and more gifted in many ways, some still fall into terrible sin and disgrace their testimonies. Why should not you and I, too, be tripped up by the devil?!

Friend, I dare to give you a bold answer. The Father knows us intimately. The one who falls in love with Jesus will not fall from His path. We know that our walk is by His grace and strength alone - but the Father does not leave it there. He expects us to live faithful to Him; not look for excuses to sin.

I have found six spiritual disciplines that keep me under God's control and not my own. I offer this simple plan to you. 1) Spend an hour each day alone with the Lord (Matthew 26:40,41); 2) Memorize and consistently review God's Word (His mind!) (Joshua 1:8, Psalm 119:9-11; 3) Determine to die to self so that Jesus can be formed in you (John 12:24, Galatians 2:20); 4) Recognize that our greatest pains reveal his clearest face (Romans 8:18, Hebrews 5:8); 5) Learn and practice the Holy Spirit's presence - His nudges, reproofs and leadings (Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:25, Revelation 2:7); 6) Model Jesus by releasing His love to others (2 Corinthians 3:2, 5:20).

Our privilege is to be faithful to the Lord. He promises to keep you from falling "without stumbling or slipping...and to present you unblemished (blameless and

faultless) before the presence of His glory - with unspeakable, ecstatic delight...".
(v 24 Amplified) And we're always only one breath away!
My prayer: "Father, I am in awe of Your promise to present me faultless before Your throne because of the blood and imparted righteousness of Your Son. I long to show my total gratitude through total faithfulness to You"