

God Loves a Selfless, Obedient Man

John the Baptist came preaching in the spirit and power of the prophet Elijah (see Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14). He wore hair-skin clothing and ate locusts and honey (see Matt. 3:4). He was a man on a mission sent to prepare the way for Jesus. A lone voice, John cried out not in the big cities but in the desert. He didn't do it for headlines; he did it to make a people ready to meet Jesus so that "all people will see the salvation sent from God" (Luke 3:6, NLT).

John's mission was from God, who gave him the message. John knew who he was and who he wasn't. He said: "'I am not the Messiah'" (John 1:20) and "'Someone is coming soon who is far greater than I am'" (Matt. 3:11). John was not a self-promoter.

How many men confuse the message and calling of God with their own sense of importance? If our birth was announced by the angel Gabriel, would we still say, "'He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less'" (John 3:30)? Or would we go around boasting about who we are? John could have done that. Instead, he was obedient. He stepped aside for Jesus and God gave him the opportunity to baptize and announce the Messiah (see Matt. 3:13-16).

John was born of a parents who were faithful to God: "Both of them were upright in the sight of God" (Luke 1:6). But both were also old. John was God's miracle baby for them. In spite of that beginning and the joy he brought to his aged parents, he was never his own. He was a man called by God and he yielded to that call. During his life, John never had the things most men want: a family, house, prestigious job and easy death in his old age.

John's death came at the whim of a powerful woman and a weak husband who did what she asked. John was beheaded during a rich man's birthday banquet and his head was brought to the revelers on a platter (see -12). What did John do to get himself murdered? He told the truth to the king (see Mark 6:17-29).

"Unfair!" we cry out when a person is treated brutally, as John was. Why was he able to do that? How simple it would have been to keep his mouth shut about the king's morals. There is a way to live an easy, comfortable life? don't obey God. But John did obey God. He was faithful and for that faithfulness he was killed. John didn't invite suffering, but he accepted it.

Are you open to the leading of God even if it means that you must become less just as John did? Will it matter to you if your obedience takes you to the desert rather than to a palace? Will you always point people to the Savior? Jesus had something powerful to say about John: "None is greater than John the Baptist'" (Matt. 11:11). What an epitaph for an obedient man. What a selfless man of God. What an example for today's man.

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