

THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM



Gary Wilkerson August 17, 2015

John the Baptist is a biblical example of how to resist worldly distractions and pursue true greatness. He testified, “The friend of the bridegroom . . . rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice” (John 3:29). In Jesus’ day, the supporting role in a wedding was a place of honor and respect. It called for a person of great stature and responsibility.

In that time, the friend of the bridegroom was in charge of the entire marriage event. He invited the guests, planned and organized the wedding ceremony, and hosted and oversaw the reception. He even arranged the honeymoon, going ahead of the couple to make sure everything was in place for his friend and the bride. He also secured their new home, preparing it for the couple to live in. In short, the friend of the bridegroom was responsible for it all. His role was a rigorous work of love and grace, from beginning to end.

John the Baptist was not saying, “Theology isn’t important.” He was saying, “How can you be fixated on minutiae like this if you’re truly focused on the essentials? Jesus is going to give His life as a sacrifice, rise from the grave, and return for a Bride whose faith is spotless and without wrinkle. Can you not see what God is doing in your midst?”

John had good reason for his focus: King Herod’s household had begun calling for his head and he knew he was about to die. John was telling his followers, “I have only a few days left and I want everything I say to be fueled with this urgent message: ‘Turn to Jesus.’ I want my passion to be for the one true thing!”

John the Baptist had one overriding passion, and it is contained in this beautiful verse: “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” (John 3:29). Knowing his own time was short, John could rejoice over one thing: Jesus had come to proclaim the kingdom of God!

We all play John’s role in God’s kingdom—paving the way for people to receive Jesus. When that is our singular focus, all else falls into its rightful place. And God promises to empower us in our service to Him. As John the Baptist testified, “He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure” (3:34).

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