

## Rejoicing in the success of others

We often go through hard times and when we look at the lives of others they seem to be sailing through life and we find that hard, especially when some of them aren't righteous people. Or we work hard at work or even in the ministry and someone else gets a promotion or a job that we wanted. Sometimes we might have been spending a lot of time witnessing to someone and another Christian visits that person once or twice and leads him to the Lord.

How did John the Baptist react when Jesus started to baptize people in the river nearby the place where he was baptizing? On top of that many of John's disciples were leaving him and started following Jesus.

How do we react in such times?

John 3: 22 – 36

### 1) Various reactions in the light of the success of others

- Claiming the monopoly
  - John's disciples claimed the monopoly on baptizing people and making disciples
  - Sometimes we think we have the monopoly on people and can hold onto them and not let them fellowship anywhere else or even be ministered to by others not in our "circle".
  - Someone was depressed and was being counseled by an independent Christian counselor. When that person's pastor found out about it they stopped him from going to that counselor saying that he needed to be ministered to by someone in the church. However after he stopped going for counseling no one in the church ever counseled him resulting in him falling deeper into depression.
- Jealousy
  - Acts 13: 44 - 45 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.
  - Jealousy can cause us to turn nasty in the way we act towards those we are jealous about. In this case the Jews talked abusively against what Paul was saying. This wasn't necessarily because of what Paul was teaching but rather because of the crowds that followed Paul.
  - We can often tell if someone is jealous by the way they speak about someone.
  - If we speak about someone's doctrine that might be wrong that isn't jealousy. But we should be able to discern the attitude in which it is said. Speaking against wrong doctrine would be more of an apologetic approach rather than an abusive attack on the person.
- Anger
  - When someone has been successful when you weren't it can lead to you being angry with that person, yourself or with God
  - You might be angry with that person because you feel that they have stolen your success by being successful
  - You might be angry with yourself thinking that you didn't do enough to get what you were striving for.
  - You might be angry with God believing that He could have given you the success but didn't.
- Argumentative
  - Luke 9: 46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest
  - We can become argumentative with others especially if you think that they have "stolen" the success that you "deserved"

- When you were hoping for a promotion and someone that you considered far below your capabilities gets it in your place you can spend a lot of time arguing that it really belonged to you.
- When someone leads the person to the Lord who you had been witnessing to you argue that he “belongs” to you and your church.
- Anxiety and fretting
  - <sup>PS 37: 7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.
  - Anxiety and fretting will never change our situation. It will only give us ulcers and make things worse.
  - When others succeed ahead of us we need to trust God and wait on him for His time to give us what He is going to give us.

## 2) Being open hearted

- John recognized who Jesus was and so had an open hearted reaction.
  - A man can receive only what is given him from heaven (v. 27)
  - John recognized the sovereignty of God in our lives in everything including what we receive as well as the success of others.
- We don't promote ourselves but Jesus and whatever Jesus is doing.
  - We need to recognize that it may very well have been God who gave the other person the success that you claimed should have been yours.
  - When we recognize the hand of God upon someone else's life we need to rejoice with that person and have an open hearted reaction.
- Our reaction should be one of joy
  - <sup>Roman 12: 15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice
- We seek to glorify God and not ourselves
  - <sup>John 3: 30</sup> He must become greater; I must become less.
  - It isn't about us. It is all about Jesus.
  - We need to put Jesus first, others second and we come in last.
  - When we have our priorities in order we will react in a godly way when others succeed ahead of us.

## 3) Recognizing Jesus for who He is

- In dealing with the issue John ends by establishing the authority of Jesus
- Jesus is:
  - The one who comes from heaven and is above all (v. 31) i.e. he has all authority.
  - He has the final say in all matters – When Peter questioned Jesus about John he replied, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” (John 21: 22)
  - The one who speaks the words of God (v. 34)
  - The one who gives the Spirit without limit (v. 34)
  - The one who the Father loves and has placed everything in His hands (v.35)
  - The one who gives eternal life and saves from the wrath of God

If we know who Jesus is and that all things are in His hands let us respond to others knowing that our whole lives are in God's hands and we can trust Him to work things out for us rather than to react negatively to the success of others.