

“What is Really Important?”

John 3:22-30

Hello friend and welcome to *Hope for Today*. My name is J. Mark Horst; I'm your friend and Bible teacher. The program you're listening to is produced by Heralds of Hope, an international Gospel radio and literature ministry.

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The Bible is the only source of lasting hope. It is God's Holy Word. You know as well as I do that we cannot rely on the words of men because men change. But God is unchanging, His Word is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Psalmist, David, said in Psalm 119:89, “*Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.*” My friend, you can depend on God's Word.

In a few moments, Dr. Yoder will speak to us from John 3:22 to 30. But right now, let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we come to you in the precious name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior. We praise you that you have revealed yourself to us in the pages of Holy Scripture. For those of us who are your children, we understand that faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

In a few moments Dr. Yoder will share his teaching from the Word, and I pray that you will open my heart and the heart of my friend who is listening to receive that Word. I pray that each one listening will gain a better understanding of what it really important in life. And I pray this in His name, Amen.

Now, here's Dr. Yoder.

I look around and I see that some people must surely believe that clothes are the most important thing in life. I'm reminded of what Jesus said to the disciples one time. They had that same problem. He asked them why they were thinking so much about clothing. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.”

Then I look around and I think I can see that some people believe that money is the most important: if I just had more money! Again, I'm reminded of what Jesus said to the disciples. He

said some people pile up treasure on earth, but treasures on earth can spoil, thieves can steal them. So, money can't be the most important thing in life.

Well, WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT? I believe some people think that friends are really important; and they are. But friends die; and sometimes they prove untrue.

We still have the question of what's really important? If we can get to the important things, we will find the answer to our question. We'll get the answer to our question in John 3:22-30.

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them and baptized.

23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

25 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

*26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to **him**.*

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

31

Ah, what is really important? On the basis of this Scripture, I'm going to raise three QUESTIONS which will help you find out what is really important. We focus our attention upon this portion of God's Word.

Our first question comes from John the Baptist's ministry: **Is It Baptism?**

What is really important? Is it baptism? Well, I read that John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, and people came to him and were baptized. I also read that Jesus and his disciples came into the land of Judea and there they were baptizing.

Perhaps you would think then that baptism is really important. Many arguments have been brought together as to how the baptism should be done. In some cases the reason for baptism has been almost lost. Because people have insisted so much on how the baptism should be done, many never experience the reality which it is to convey.

So, I'm raising the question, what is really important? Is it baptism? Is that really the most important thing? Answer, No.

Well then, I'm raising a second question which comes from those who observed John the Baptist: **Is It Purification?**

I read that some of John's disciples had a dispute with the Jews about purifying. Among the Jewish people in those days, it was commonly practiced that one should wash his hands coming from the market before saying prayers. Yes! The Lord had instructed Moses in the years gone by that they were to appear before the Lord with their bodies washed in pure water. There is a principle set forth here: God wants us at our best, not our worst.

But the question remains, is purification really that important? Yes, Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." There are some who go through very careful outward forms, everything is precisely done, but they never, never reach God. How sad!

Then those who came to John tried to plant the seed of jealousy in his heart. Watch them inform him. Listen to what they said. "He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizes and all men come to him." They were trying to plant impure thoughts in the heart of John the Baptist. Now inner purity is better than outer purity.

How do you attain purification? It starts inside as John's answer clearly told them. My question holds, what is really important? Is it baptism? Is it purification? Answer, NO!

The third question comes from John the Baptist's words: **Is It Position?**

John the Baptist made it clear that one only receives: “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” That is quite humbling because some people think they are selfmade, that they made themselves. But John the Baptist came through clearly and said whatever you have, you received. Now, don’t forget that.

Then John the Baptist said, “I am not the Christ. I’m only sent before Him.” Were we to return to the first chapter of John’s Gospel we would learn there exactly how this all came about. He was just reviewing for these people what he had said earlier, “I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him.” John was the announcer of the Christ.

He said, “I’m not the bridegroom, I’m just a friend of the bridegroom. The bridegroom is the one who has the bride. My joy is fulfilled because I am his friend.”

Now I want you to see what is the real answer to this question: Is it position? Well, yes, if you take verse 30 for what it says, “He must increase but I must decrease.” When we see it correctly, when we understand it exactly like John the Baptist put it, then we can say to put Jesus Christ in His rightful place is the most important thing in life! He must increase but I must decrease! Let Jesus increase in your life. Only by this way can you know what is really important.

Now we are not saying that baptism is not important; that purification is not important. I’m only pointing out to you that the most important thing, that which is really important, is to put Jesus Christ in His rightful place in your heart.

Thank you, Dr. Yoder for that helpful teaching. My friend, have you discovered what is really important in life? Or are you still searching? I must tell you, that if you refuse to give Jesus His rightful place in your heart, you will continue your fruitless search for meaning and purpose.

Do you have questions about the Bible and living as a Christ-follower, if so, write to us. We will take your questions to the Word of God and find answers that will help you find what you’re looking for in life – IF – you accept them. So, if you have questions write to us today.

The quickest way for you to contact us is to send an e-mail to mail@heraldsofhope.org. That e-mail address is mail@heraldsofhope.org. That email address again is, m-a-i-l@heraldsofhope.org. Or you may write to *Hope for Today*, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Remember too, you can request a printed manuscript or an audio CD of this teaching, “What is Really Important?” I’d be happy to send one to you.

And friend, if you do not have a Bible, and you cannot afford to buy one, please let us know. We will gladly send a copy to you without charge. This offer is only for those who DO NOT have a copy of God's Word and cannot afford to purchase one. If you meet those qualifications, you may request a copy of the Scriptures from us without cost.

Once again, the quickest way for you to contact us is to send an e-mail to mail@heraldsofhope.org. Or you may write to *Hope for Today*, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Remember; you can request a free copy of this teaching, "What is Really Important?" It's available in print or on an audio CD. And if you don't have a Bible and can't afford to buy one, you may ask us to send one to you.

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Now friend, I urge you to tune in next week as we continue study in the Gospel of John. In his teaching, Dr. Yoder will show us how to "The Essence of Truth." And until then, keep looking for that blessed HOPE.