

He Must Increase: An Exegetical Study of John 3:30 and Its Implications for Christian Educational Leadership

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Abstract

Modern theological discourse and popular culture frequently generate various speculations concerning the identity of Jesus that do not always align with the theological witness of Scripture. Certain historical approaches tend to portray Jesus merely as a human figure within the context of first-century Judaism, thereby obscuring the Church's confession of His divinity and messianic identity. In this context, the testimony of John the Baptist in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease," serves as a significant text affirming the supremacy of Christ. Although this verse has been widely examined from Christological and spiritual perspectives, there remains a limited number of studies that specifically explore John 3:30 as a theological foundation for a leadership paradigm in Christian education. This gap in the literature constitutes the primary focus of the present study. The purpose of this research is to examine the theological meaning of John 3:30 through exegetical analysis and to formulate its implications for a Christ-centered model of leadership in Christian education. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to position John 3:30 as a paradigmatic foundation for Christian educational leadership oriented toward the supremacy of Christ, a perspective that has received limited attention in both theological and Christian educational scholarship. This research employs a library research method using an exegetical-theological approach. Data were collected through an analysis of the Greek text of John 3:30, an examination of the narrative context of John 3:22–36, and a critical review of relevant biblical, theological, and Christian leadership literature. The findings reveal that John 3:30 constitutes a theological confession of Christ's supremacy within God's plan of salvation. The Greek expression *ekeinon dei auxanein, eme de elattousthai* conveys a divine necessity whereby the glory and authority of Christ must increasingly be manifested, while the role of John the Baptist diminishes as part of the mission entrusted to him. Within the narrative framework of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist appears as a witness who directs attention to Christ as the center of God's revelation. His testimony reflects a model of leadership characterized by humility, self-emptying, and an orientation toward the glory of Christ. This study contributes to the development of Christian educational leadership theory by affirming that authentic leadership authority is realized through a disposition that centers the entire educational process on Christ as the source, goal, and transformative center of learners.

Keywords: John 3:30; Christian leadership; education; He must increase; i must decrease

Abstrak

Diskursus teologi modern dan budaya populer sering menghadirkan berbagai spekulasi mengenai identitas Yesus yang tidak selalu sejalan dengan kesaksian teologis Alkitab. Pendekatan historis tertentu kerap menempatkan Yesus hanya sebagai tokoh manusiawi dalam konteks sejarah Yudaisme abad pertama sehingga mengaburkan pengakuan iman gereja mengenai keilahian dan kemesian-Nya. Dalam konteks tersebut, kesaksian Yohanes Pembaptis dalam Yohanes 3:30, "Ia harus makin besar, tetapi aku harus makin kecil," menjadi teks penting yang menegaskan supremasi Kristus. Meskipun ayat ini telah banyak dikaji dalam perspektif kristologi dan spiritualitas, masih terdapat keterbatasan kajian yang secara khusus menelaah Yohanes 3:30 sebagai landasan teologis bagi paradigma kepemimpinan dalam pendidikan Kristen. Kekosongan literatur inilah yang menjadi fokus penelitian ini. Penelitian

ini bertujuan untuk menelaah makna teologis Yohanes 3:30 melalui analisis eksegetis serta merumuskan implikasinya bagi konsep kepemimpinan yang berpusat pada Kristus dalam pendidikan Kristen. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada upayanya menempatkan Yohanes 3:30 sebagai dasar paradigmatis kepemimpinan pendidikan Kristen yang berorientasi pada supremasi Kristus, suatu perspektif yang belum banyak dieksplorasi dalam literatur teologi maupun pendidikan Kristen. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan (library research) dengan pendekatan eksegetis-teologis. Data diperoleh melalui analisis teks Yunani Yohanes 3:30, penelaahan konteks naratif Yohanes 3:22–36, serta kajian kritis terhadap literatur teologi biblika dan kepemimpinan Kristen yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Yohanes 3:30 merupakan pengakuan teologis tentang supremasi Kristus dalam rencana keselamatan Allah. Ungkapan Yunani *ekeinon dei auxanein, eme de elattousthai* menunjukkan suatu keharusan ilahi bahwa kemuliaan dan otoritas Kristus harus semakin dinyatakan, sementara peran Yohanes Pembaptis semakin berkurang sebagai bagian dari misi yang dipercayakan kepadanya. Dalam konteks naratif Injil Yohanes, Yohanes Pembaptis tampil sebagai saksi yang mengarahkan perhatian kepada Kristus sebagai pusat wahyu Allah. Kesaksiannya mencerminkan model kepemimpinan yang ditandai oleh kerendahan hati, pengosongan diri, dan orientasi pada kemuliaan Kristus. Temuan penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan teori kepemimpinan pendidikan Kristen dengan menegaskan bahwa otoritas kepemimpinan sejati diwujudkan melalui sikap yang memusatkan seluruh proses pendidikan pada Kristus sebagai sumber, tujuan, dan pusat transformasi peserta didik.

Kata kunci: Yohanes 3:30; kepemimpinan Kristen; pendidikan; Ia makin besar; aku makin kecil

INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist's testimony concerning Jesus demonstrates a profound acknowledgment of Jesus' identity as the Messiah. When John saw Jesus coming toward him, he declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," as recorded in John 1:29. This statement carries deep theological significance because it connects Jesus with the motif of redemption that was already well established within the Old Testament tradition¹. Furthermore, John the Baptist reaffirmed his confession by declaring that Jesus is the Son of God, as recorded in John 1:34. This testimony constitutes an important element of the Christology of the Gospel of John, affirming the divine identity of Jesus Christ². Nevertheless, texts that affirm Jesus' messianic identity are often not given adequate attention in various modern historical reconstructions that portray Jesus merely as an ordinary human being.

This phenomenon demonstrates that various currents of modern thought continue to seek to reduce or even reject the Messiah and Jesus Christ. Such rejection ultimately extends to the denial of the eschatological hope of the Christian faith, which affirms Christ's return as the Judge of the world. In other words, when the identity of Christ is called into question, the entire theological framework of the Christian faith, particularly its doctrines of salvation and future hope, is likewise placed at stake.³ In this context, the testimony of John the Baptist carries profound significance. Amid the enthusiasm of the crowds who flocked to him at the Jordan River, John consistently rejected every form of self-exaltation. He explicitly declared that he was neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy

¹ Donald Arthur Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids Michigan USA: Eerdmans Publishing, 1996).

² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids Michigan USA: Baker Books House, 2004), 1,13. (1) *The Gospel penetrates more deeply into the mystery of God's revelation in his Son than the other canonical Gospels and perhaps more deeply than any other biblical book...* (13) *In keeping with the Gospel genre, John's narrative focuses on Jesus and his messianic mission. At the very outset, John's account is based on OT theology.* Köstenberger views the Gospel of John as a much deeper effort to unveil the mystery of God's revelation in the Son, a revelation whose foundations can already be traced back to the Book of Genesis.

³ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (California: HarperOne, 2016), 96.

18:15 and 18. Instead, John identified himself merely as “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,” as recorded in John 1:23. This declaration reflects remarkable integrity and humility, for John did not use his spiritual influence or charisma to elevate himself but rather to direct attention to Christ as the center of salvation.

This situation becomes even more significant when viewed within its socio-religious context. Many Israelites regarded John the Baptist as a figure of extraordinary spiritual authority, leading large crowds to come to the Jordan River to receive baptism from him. His influence was so remarkable that the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish religious authority, sent priests and Levites to investigate whether he was the Messiah awaited by Israel. Yet despite the recognition and admiration he received, John remained steadfast in identifying himself not as the object of faith, but as a witness whose mission was to direct people to Christ.⁴

Against this background, it becomes evident that many modern discussions place greater emphasis on historical speculation about Jesus than on the theological testimony presented in the Gospel narratives. The Gospel of John, however, clearly portrays the testimony of John the Baptist as one that places Christ at the center of God’s self-revelation. Consequently, there remains a need for theological and exegetical studies that specifically examine the meaning of John the Baptist’s testimony, particularly his statement, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Such an investigation is important for understanding how John’s testimony provides a theological foundation for viewing Christ as the center of the life of faith and as a model for Christian leadership. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the theological and biblical significance of John 3:30 and exploring its implications for understanding Christ as a model of Christian leadership. Although numerous studies have examined the Christology of the Gospel of John and the concept of Christian leadership in general, research that specifically connects John the Baptist’s testimony in John 3:30 with leadership paradigms in the context of Christian education remains relatively limited.⁵ Several studies have primarily focused on the Christological dimensions of the Gospel of John or have examined the leadership of Jesus as a model of spiritual leadership within the contexts of church ministry and pastoral practice.^{6,7,8} On the other hand, studies on Christian educational leadership have tended to emphasize managerial, transformational,⁹ character-based,¹⁰ or pedagogical dimensions without thoroughly developing a strong biblical foundation grounded in specific texts from the Gospel of John. As a result, the relationship between John the Baptist’s theological witness to Christ and leadership paradigms within Christian education has not been systematically explored to any significant extent.

⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 2003), 69.

⁵ Soneta Veronica Saogo and Ampinia Rohi, “Christian Leadership in Education: Religious Moderation in the Era of Diversity 2045,” *KINAA: Jurnal Kepemimpinan Kristen Dan Pemberdayaan Jemaat* 5, no. 2 (2025): 108–22, <https://doi.org/10.34307/kinaa.v5i2.175>.

⁶ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 1996.

⁷ Köstenberger, *John*.

⁸ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*.

⁹ Robert J. Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids Michigan USA: Baker Academic, 2004), 63–65. Both emphasize that spirituality and leadership should be present in every member of an organization and should play a significant role, as spiritual values encourage individuals to engage in spiritual development.

¹⁰ Binsen Samuel Sidjabat, “Christian Leadership in the Church, Education, and the Public Sphere: Reviewed from the Urgency of Character Renewal,” *Didache: Journal of Christian Education* 6, no. 2 (2025): 152–65, <https://doi.org/10.46445/djce.v6i2.1082>.

Yet John the Baptist's statement in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease," contains important theological dimensions for understanding Christ-centered leadership. This declaration not only affirms the messianic identity of Jesus but also exemplifies a model of leadership characterized by humility, self-emptying, and an orientation toward the glory of Christ. Within the context of Christian education, this principle carries significant pedagogical implications, as educational leaders are not called to establish themselves as the center of authority but rather to serve as stewards who direct the entire educational process toward Christ as the source of truth and the ultimate goal of learning.¹¹ (konf. Dyk.¹²). Nevertheless, the literature on Christian educational leadership has rarely developed a theological reflection rooted directly in John 3:30 as a conceptual foundation for a theology of Christian educational leadership. Most studies tend to emphasize leadership models derived from modern organizational theories or general leadership frameworks, while the exploration of biblical witness as a normative foundation for Christian educational leadership has received comparatively limited and insufficient attention^{13,14}. Therefore, there is a need for a theological and exegetical study that specifically examines John 3:30 as a foundation for formulating a Christ-centered leadership framework within Christian education. This study seeks to address that gap by exploring the theological significance of John the Baptist's testimony and its implications for the development of a theology of Christian educational leadership that places Christ at the center, as the ultimate purpose, and as the primary orientation of all educational leadership practices.

THEORY

The Place of John 3:30 in Johannine Theology

Before examining John 3:30 in detail, it is important to understand the place of this verse within the broader theological framework of the Gospel of John. The Gospel is structured around the theological purpose of revealing Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah sent by the Father so that people may have life through faith in Him (John 20:30–31). Consequently, the entire Johannine narrative consistently directs the reader's attention to the supremacy of Christ as the Word made flesh (John 1:1–14), the source of life (John 11:25), the light of the world (John 8:12), and the way to the Father (John 14:6). This central theme forms what many scholars describe as the Christocentric orientation of Johannine theology, in which Christ is presented as the center of God's revelation and saving work.¹⁵

Within this framework, John the Baptist occupies a unique role as a witness (*martys*) who prepares the way for the recognition of Christ. From the very prologue of the Gospel, John is introduced not as the light itself, but as a witness who testifies to the light (John 1:6–8). His entire ministry is directed toward leading people to Jesus rather than drawing attention to himself.¹⁶ Therefore, John 3:30 represents the climax of John the Baptist's testimony in the

¹¹ D. Wilkins, J. Thayer, and L. Tatum, "Book Reviews. Journal of Research on Christian Education," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 10, no. 2 (2001). Van Dyk katakan, ... *for true Christian teaching take place, the entire process must be infused with biblical principles. Teaching strategies are not neutral with respect to the development of Christian Character.*

¹² John Van Dyke, "Teaching Our Education Students to Teach Christianly," *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal* 8, no. 1 (2012): 2.

¹³ Saogo and Rohi, "Christian Leadership in Education: Religious Moderation in the Era of Diversity 2045."

¹⁴ Arif S Sitompul et al., "Management and Leadership in Christian Educational Institutions," *Jurnal Multidisiplin Sahombu* 5, no. 08 (2025): 2456–68, <https://doi.org/10.58471/jms.v5i08>.

¹⁵ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*.

¹⁶ Köstenberger, *John*.

Gospel of John, as this verse encapsulates his theological role as a witness who willingly steps aside so that Christ may be increasingly glorified.

Furthermore, John 3:30 reflects one of the major theological patterns in the Gospel of John, namely the contrast between human witness and the glory of Christ. Throughout the Gospel, individuals who encounter Jesus are consistently directed away from self-centered concerns and toward Christ as the focal point of faith.¹⁷ Thus, the statement, “He must increase, but I must decrease,” not only portrays John the Baptist’s personal humility but also expresses a theological principle that underlies the entire Gospel of John: all forms of witness, ministry, and authentic leadership find their true meaning when they direct people to Christ as the center of God’s revelation.

From the perspective of Johannine theology, John 3:30 may be understood as both a narrative and a theological summary of the relationship between the witness and the one being witnessed to, between the servant and the Lord, and between humanity and Christ. Therefore, this verse is significant not only for Christological studies but also for providing a strong theological foundation for the development of a Christ-centered framework of Christian leadership, including within the context of Christian education. By understanding the place of this verse within the broader theology of the Gospel of John, the following exegetical analysis can be situated within a more comprehensive and coherent theological framework.

Exegesis of John 3:30

John 3:30 is one of the most significant statements in John the Baptist’s testimony concerning the identity and mission of Jesus. This verse appears within the narrative context of John 3:22–36, when Jesus’ ministry was expanding and increasing numbers of people were coming to Him.¹⁸ The passage describes a situation that had the potential to create tension between the ministry of John the Baptist and that of Jesus. John’s disciples expressed concern that Jesus, who had previously been baptized by John, was now attracting the attention of large crowds. From the perspective of John’s disciples, this development could be interpreted as a threat to the influence and authority of their teacher.¹⁹ However, John’s response to the situation reveals neither a competitive nor a defensive attitude; rather, it reflects a profound theological understanding of his relationship to Jesus.²⁰

Within this dialogue, John makes the statement that serves as the climax of his testimony: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). This declaration is far more than an expression of personal humility; it is a theological confession concerning the place of Jesus within God’s plan of salvation. Accordingly, John 3:30 may be understood both as the conclusion of John’s response to his disciples and as a significant Christological affirmation within the narrative of the Gospel of John.²¹

Textually, John 3:30 in Greek reads, *ἐκεῖνον δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι* (*ekeinon dei auxanein, eme de elattousthai*). Although the structure of the sentence is simple, it is rich in theological significance.²² One of the key terms in this verse is *δεῖ* (*dei*), which is commonly translated as “must.”

¹⁷ Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019).

¹⁸ Craig E. Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: John’s Gospel, Hebrews-Revelation* (Colorado: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005), 55.

¹⁹ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado: David C. Cook, 1983), 283.

²⁰ Witherington, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*, 108.

²¹ Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*.

²² “Expositor’s Greek Testament: John Chapter 3,” Biblehub.com, 2026, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/egt/john/3.htm>.

Referring to Barrett's statement, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (*qelal*) constitutes an equivalent Aramaic wordplay. This wordplay indicates that John the Baptist rejoiced because what had long been anticipated had now been fulfilled, as reflected in the expression, "this joy of mine is therefore fulfilled" (*kelal*)^{23,24}. Köstenberger argues that John the Baptist clarified his relationship with Jesus by identifying himself merely as the *shoshben*, or best man of the bridegroom. Alderman's interpretation is consistent with Barrett's view, noting that in Jewish wedding tradition, the friend of the bridegroom (*shoshben*) served as an intermediary who prepared for the wedding and brought the bride and groom together, yet he was never the focal point of the celebration.²⁵ Once his task was completed, he willingly stepped aside so that all attention could be directed to the bridegroom. John the Baptist employed this imagery to explain his role as a witness to Christ. He understood that his mission was not to exalt himself but to direct people to Christ. Therefore, the statement, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30), reflects a principle of Christ-centered leadership characterized by humility, a willingness to relinquish personal interests, and a commitment to glorifying Christ as the center of ministry and Christian education.²⁶

John the Baptist positioned himself merely as an intermediary between the bridegroom and the bride. His role was simply to convey the bridegroom's message and to prepare the bride for the arrival of the bridegroom.²⁷ He was willing to do whatever was necessary in the service of the bridegroom. This role is reflected in his self-description as "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness," whose mission was to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord (John 1:23).²⁸ In New Testament Greek, this term frequently denotes a divine necessity or an event that unfolds within the framework of God's sovereign plan. In the Gospel of John, the use of *dei* often marks events that are integral to God's redemptive purpose (cf. John 3:14; 4:4; 9:4; 20:9). Therefore, the statement that Jesus "must" (*dei*) increase does not merely refer to a natural development in the dynamics of religious ministry, but to a theological necessity grounded in the will of God Himself.

The second important verb is *αὐξάνειν* (*auxanein*), which means "to grow" or "to become greater." In the context of John 3:30, this growth refers not only to the increasing number of Jesus' followers²⁹ but also to the progressively clearer manifestation of His identity as the Messiah.

The Gospel of John consistently emphasizes that its purpose is to lead readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have life in His name (John 20:31). Accordingly, the statement that Jesus must "increase" may be understood as the process through which the glory and authority of Christ are progressively revealed within salvation history. Matthew Henry observes that John the Baptist recognized the growing glory and influence of Christ as the will of God, something to be embraced with joy rather than with envy or rivalry. For this reason, the diminishing of his own role was not a loss but a rightful, natural, and deeply satisfying aspect of his mission to exalt Christ.³⁰ Ultimately, John's

²³ Barrett.

²⁴ Rudolf Bultman, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 174. Bultman memberikan dua catatan bahwa 1) sebagai "sahabat dari mempelai, Yohanes bersukacita. 2) *it has come to fulfillment-tergenapi*.

²⁵ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 56. ... *John compares himself with a "friend of the bridegroom*.

²⁶ W. Max Alderman, *The Bible Believer's Handbook, Campbell: Bethel Baptist Church, 2003*, (Campbell: Bethel Baptist Church, 2003), 25.

²⁷ Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 283.

²⁸ Köstenberger, *John*, 138 ... *who stands ready to do the bridegroom's bidding*.

²⁹ Rudolf Bultman, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 172-173.

³⁰ Matthew Henry, "Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis-Deuteronomy," Grand Rapids, 2018, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc1.html>.

testimony underscores that Jesus is of far greater significance than himself and that the knowledge, glory, and recognition of Christ must continually increase.

In contrast, John uses the verb ἐλαττωῦσθαι (*elattousthai*), which means “to become less,” “to diminish,” or “to decrease.” The term conveys the idea of becoming smaller or less prominent. In this context, it suggests that the “self,” the “ego,” or one’s personal prominence is to diminish rather than be elevated. An interesting feature of the text is the contrast between *auxanein* (“to increase”) and *elattousthai* (“to decrease”). While *auxanein* carries an active sense, *elattousthai* is expressed in a passive form. This contrast underscores that the primary focus is not on advancing oneself but on allowing Christ to become increasingly prominent. John the Baptist did not seek recognition for himself; rather, he desired that Jesus would be exalted and become more widely known than he. As a result, John’s statement reflects a deliberate reorientation away from self-promotion toward Christ-exaltation. The decrease of John is not an end in itself but serves the greater purpose of magnifying Christ. As John Piper argues, this does not imply that Jesus is an egomaniac or a person obsessed with self-promotion. Rather, the problem of self-exaltation belongs to fallen humanity. Christ’s exaltation is fundamentally different because it reflects His unique identity and rightful place as the Son of God and the center of God’s redemptive work. Therefore, John 3:30 presents a theological vision in which authentic discipleship and leadership are characterized not by the pursuit of personal prominence but by a willingness to direct all attention, honor, and glory to Christ.”³¹

The verbal form ἐλαττωῦσθαι also indicates an ongoing process rather than a single, momentary action. Within the narrative context of the Gospel of John, the term describes how John the Baptist consciously accepted the diminishing of his role as Jesus’ ministry began to flourish. For John, the decline of public attention toward himself was not a sign of failure but evidence that his mission was unfolding according to God’s plan. He understood himself as the forerunner who had been called to prepare the way for the Messiah.³² Therefore, when Jesus became increasingly known and was followed by growing numbers of people, John viewed this development as the fulfillment of the task that had been entrusted to him.

The Greek sentence structure of this verse also reveals a striking contrast between Jesus and John. The word ἐκεῖνον (*ekeinon*), meaning “He” or “that one,” is placed at the beginning of the clause, thereby giving special emphasis to the person of Jesus. This placement highlights that the primary focus of John’s statement is Christ Himself. In contrast, the word ἐμὲ (*eme*), meaning “me,” refers to John. The particle δὲ (*de*) functions as a connective that marks a contrast between these two realities. Thus, the parallel structure of the verse underscores a deliberate shift in attention from John to Jesus.³³

This shift is not merely narrative in nature but also theological, for the Gospel of John consistently presents Christ as the center of God’s revelation. When viewed within the broader narrative context, John 3:30 serves as the culmination of John the Baptist’s explanation to his disciples.³⁴ Earlier, he had affirmed that no one can receive anything unless it has been given from heaven (John 3:27). This statement reflects John’s conviction that all spiritual ministry operates under the sovereignty of God. He then reminds his disciples that he is not the Messiah but merely the one sent ahead of Him (John 3:28).³⁵

³¹ “John 3:30 Commentary,” Precept Austin, 2026, https://www.preceptaustin.org/john_330_commentary.

³² Bultman, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 173.

³³ Köstenberger, *John*.

³⁴ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 106. Köstenberger, referring to Moloney, Leon Morris, and Herman Ridderbos, argues that John the Baptist continued to remind his disciples to remain consistent with his earlier statements concerning Jesus, “*Jesus greater than he is*”.

³⁵ Bultman, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 174.

John then employs the wedding metaphor to describe his relationship with Jesus. He declares that Jesus is the bridegroom, while he himself is merely the friend of the bridegroom who rejoices at hearing the bridegroom's voice (John 3:29).^{36,37} This metaphor provides a powerful illustration of John's role as the forerunner of the Messiah. Just as the friend of the bridegroom in Jewish wedding tradition prepared for the union of the bride and the bridegroom, so John prepared the people to welcome the coming of Christ.³⁸ Once this task had been completed, the friend of the bridegroom was no longer the center of attention, for the focus naturally shifted to the bridegroom and the bride. Within this framework, John 3:30 serves as the concluding statement that summarizes the entirety of John's argument. Because Jesus is the true Messiah, it is both fitting and necessary that He be increasingly glorified while John's own role gradually diminishes. This declaration reflects not only John's personal humility but also his profound theological understanding of his place within God's plan of salvation.

The theological significance of John 3:30 becomes even clearer when the verse is viewed within the broader structure of the Gospel of John. The testimony of John the Baptist plays a crucial role in the narrative of this Gospel. John is portrayed as a witness sent to testify concerning the light that has come into the world (John 1:6–8). Accordingly, John's primary function is not to become the center of religious attention but to serve as a witness who points to Christ as the source of salvation. Andreas J. Köstenberger explains that, in the Gospel of John, John the Baptist functions as a witness who affirms Jesus' identity as the Messiah and the Son of God, directing the reader's attention to Christ as the center of God's revelation.³⁹ Recent scholarship also demonstrates that the motif of witness in the Gospel of John constitutes a significant narrative element that establishes the Christological legitimacy of Jesus through various witnesses who testify concerning Him (Koester⁴⁰; Anderson⁴¹).

John the Baptist's humility is also evident in his statement regarding his unworthiness before Jesus: "I am not worthy to untie the strap of His sandal" (John 1:27). In the cultural context of first-century Judaism, untying someone's sandal was considered the task of a servant. By employing this metaphor, John places himself in an exceptionally humble position before Christ. His attitude toward Jesus reflects his conviction that Jesus is the One for whom he has had the privilege of preparing the way.⁴² Leon Morris interprets this statement as an expression of John's awareness that Jesus possessed an authority far surpassing his own as a prophet or spiritual leader.⁴³ Similarly, D. A. Carson argues that the expression highlights the sharp contrast between the authority of Jesus and John's role as a witness whose mission was to prepare the way for Him.⁴⁴

John 3:30 also holds significant importance in the history of Christian interpretation. Raymond E. Brown explains that this verse marks a crucial transition within the narrative of the Gospel of John, namely the shift from the ministry of John the Baptist to the public ministry of Jesus as the Messiah.⁴⁵ Cronin's assessment of Brown provides additional insight into the

³⁶ Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: John's Gospel, Hebrews-Revelation*, 283. ...*The Friend of the bridegroom.*

³⁷ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 56. *John compares himself with a friend of the bridegroom.*

³⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado: David C. Cook, 2010), 160.

³⁹ Köstenberger, *John*, 137. *Not compare himself with others.*

⁴⁰ Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2008), 25-26.

⁴¹ Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 19. *Yohanes 3:31-36;12:44-50 sebagai The Central Structure of John's Christology.*

⁴² Witherington, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*, 108.

⁴³ James E. Smith, *From the Nile to Nebo: Deuteronomy* (Morrisville: Lulu.com, 2015).

⁴⁴ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 95.

⁴⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

significance of John the Baptist's statement. According to Cronin, Brown does not merely interpret John's words as a personal expression of humility; rather, he demonstrates how the author of the Gospel of John systematically presents Jesus as the fulfillment and replacement of the central institutions and pillars of Judaism.⁴⁶ This perspective offers an important framework for understanding John the Baptist's declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and his insistence that his disciples should not compare him with Jesus. John's role was to prepare the way for the One who would fulfill and surpass the established structures of Judaism through His person and teaching. Similarly, D. A. Carson interprets this statement as affirming that the glory of Christ must increasingly be revealed, while John's role would naturally diminish within God's redemptive plan.⁴⁷ Thus, the verse not only describes the relationship between John and Jesus but also articulates a theological principle concerning the supremacy of Christ in the work of redemption.

Within the Christian theological tradition, John 3:30 has frequently been understood as a principle of spirituality that emphasizes self-emptying for the sake of exalting Christ. John Calvin interpreted John the Baptist as recognizing that the honor he received as a prophet was temporary and remained valid only until the coming of Christ. Consequently, John willingly withdrew from the center of attention so that the glory of Christ might be fully revealed. In contemporary Johannine theology, this principle is likewise understood as an expression of Christ-centered spirituality, one that places Christ at the center of the life of faith and the ministry of the church (Moloney⁴⁸; Koester⁴⁹).

John the Baptist's statement in John 3:30 may be understood as the climax of his testimony concerning the identity of Jesus. The verse affirms that the entirety of God's saving work is centered on Christ and that every form of spiritual ministry must ultimately direct attention to Him. Within this framework, John the Baptist serves as a model witness who places the glory of Christ above personal interests. His testimony not only introduces Jesus as the Messiah but also provides a theological foundation for the Church's understanding of Christ-centered spirituality. Therefore, John 3:30 possesses significance not only within the historical context of John the Baptist's ministry but also as a theological principle that remains relevant for the life of faith and the ministry of the Church throughout history. This theological principle, in turn, provides a normative foundation for the development of Christian leadership, including within the context of Christian education, by positioning Christ as the center of authority, purpose, and orientation in the entire process of faith formation.

METHOD

This study employs a textual analysis approach within the framework of New Testament exegesis to interpret John 3:30. The purpose of this approach is to understand the meaning of the text through an examination of its original language, grammatical structure, and the literary and theological context of the passage under investigation. In biblical studies, textual analysis constitutes an important method for uncovering the meaning of a pericope by paying careful attention to the linguistic features and narrative context that shape its interpretation.

⁴⁶ Sonya Shetty Cronin, *Raymond Brown, "The Jews", and the Gospel of John: From Apologia to Apology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 40. *Brown does not frame these statements with any qualifier like 'John says ...' Thus, he does not distance himself from the negative statements made by the Gospel towards the Jews. In addition, as Brown demonstrates how the author of John systematically removes the pillars of Judaism in order to replace them with Jesus ...*

⁴⁷ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 2004.

⁴⁸ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 105.

⁴⁹ Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*.

The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, a lexical analysis was undertaken to examine key terms in the Greek text of John 3:30, including *dei* (“must”), *auxanein* (“to grow” or “to become greater”), and *elattousthai* (“to become less” or “to decrease”), in order to identify the theological nuances embedded within these expressions. Second, a syntactical analysis was carried out to investigate the parallel structure of the Greek sentence and to identify the rhetorical emphasis that highlights the contrast between Jesus and John the Baptist. Third, the study engaged in dialogue with major Johannine commentaries and scholarly literature in order to enrich the interpretation of the text. Key exegetical works consulted include those of Carson, Köstenberger, Keener, Moloney, and Brown, all of whom provide important theological and historical perspectives on John the Baptist’s role as a witness who points to Christ in the Gospel of John.

The analytical procedure followed a sequential process. It began with an exegetical interpretation of John 3:30, proceeded to the formulation of theological principles of Christian leadership derived from the exegetical findings, and concluded with an exploration of the implications of those principles for a theology of Christian educational leadership. The workflow of the study is presented in the diagram below.

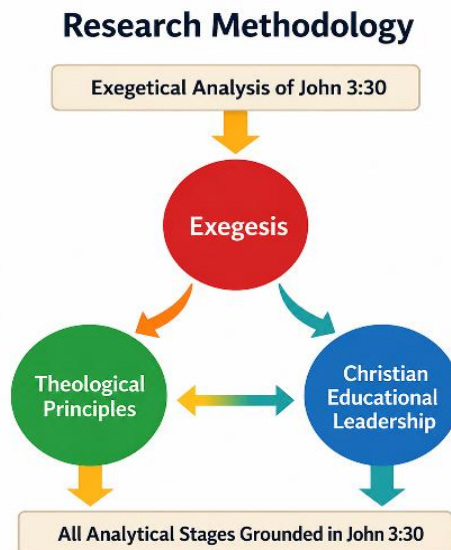


Fig 1. Workflow of the Writing Article

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theological Implications of John 3:30 for Christian Educational Leadership

The exegetical analysis of John 3:30 yields three major findings. First, the expression *ekenon dei auxanein* reveals a divine necessity that Christ must be increasingly glorified and acknowledged as the center of God’s redemptive work. Second, the phrase *eme de elattousthai* expresses John the Baptist’s willingness to accept the diminishing of his own role and influence as an act of obedience to God’s mission. Third, the relationship between “Christ increasing” and “John decreasing” reflects a theological pattern in which all human ministry functions as a means of exalting Christ rather than advancing personal authority or self-interest. These findings demonstrate that John 3:30 speaks not only about individual humility but also about a theological principle of ministry that is wholly centered on Christ. Based on these findings, several principles of Christian leadership may be formulated as practical implications of John

3:30 and may serve as a foundation for the development of leadership paradigms in Christian education.

John the Baptist's attitude reflects a model of leadership that differs significantly from approaches oriented toward power, status, or personal influence. He did not regard the growth of Jesus' ministry as a threat to his own position but rather as the fulfillment of the calling entrusted to him. This awareness demonstrates that John understood his ministry as part of God's larger redemptive plan. Consequently, the success of a ministry is not measured by the extent to which a leader preserves personal influence, but by the extent to which he or she can direct the community toward Christ.

Drawing on the theological framework of the Gospel of John, the attitude of John the Baptist demonstrates that authentic leadership arises from an awareness of divine calling and a willingness to place Christ at the center of the life of faith. This principle carries broad implications for understanding leadership within both the church and Christian education. Christian leadership cannot be separated from Christ-centered spirituality, because the ultimate purpose of all Christian ministry is to make Christ known to the world.

The interpretation of John 3:30 not only provides historical insight into the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus but also offers a theological foundation for the development of a Christian leadership framework. John the Baptist's testimony demonstrates that Christian leaders are called to exercise a ministry that directs attention to Christ rather than to themselves. His witness reveals that leadership is not primarily about establishing personal authority or securing institutional prominence, but about serving as a faithful instrument through whom others are led to a deeper knowledge of Christ. Based on this theological understanding, several principles of Christian leadership may be formulated as practical implications of John 3:30.

The theological principles derived from John 3:30 are relevant not only to church leadership but also have significant implications for leadership in Christian education. If Christian leadership is understood as a Christ-centered ministry, then leadership within Christian educational institutions must be directed toward cultivating learning communities that place Christ at the center of the entire educational process. Accordingly, John 3:30 provides a theological foundation for an educational leadership paradigm that is not primarily oriented toward institutional power or administrative achievement, but toward the formation of students' faith and character.

Principles of Educational Leadership Theology Based on John 3:30 **Christocentric Leadership**

Within the context of Christian education, the principle "He must increase" can be concretely embodied in the curriculum, academic culture, and leadership practices of educational institutions. At the curricular level, Christ is not merely taught as content within Christian Religious Education courses, but serves as the center of the integration of faith and learning across all academic disciplines, so that every field of knowledge is directed toward understanding truth in the light of Christ. At the level of academic culture, this principle is reflected in the development of learning communities that cultivate humility, service, integrity, and respect for others as expressions of Christlike character. Meanwhile, at the institutional leadership level, Christian educational leaders are called to practice servant leadership, prioritizing the growth of students over personal image-building and establishing educational systems oriented toward character formation and discipleship.

Accordingly, the success of Christian education is not measured merely by academic achievement, institutional reputation, or the popularity of its leaders, but by the extent to

which the entire educational process helps students to know, love, and imitate Christ as the center of life. In the context of educational quality management, leadership significantly influences the learning process, as demonstrated by Kenneth Leithwood and his colleagues in their research.⁵⁰ In other words, educational quality is profoundly shaped by educational leadership.

Christian educational leadership must be Christ-centered. The principle “He must increase” indicates that the primary purpose of Christian education is to make Christ known and glorified throughout the entire learning process. As discussed previously, leadership is one of the key factors that determines educational quality because leaders play a crucial role in shaping vision, organizational culture, instructional quality, and human resource development. However, unlike educational leadership paradigms that generally regard organizational effectiveness and institutional achievement as their primary goals, Christian educational leadership understands educational quality in light of a more fundamental purpose: the formation of individuals who are increasingly conformed to the likeness of Christ. Consequently, the quality of Christian education is measured not only by academic achievement, managerial efficiency, or institutional success, but also by the growth of students in faith, character, and vocational calling.

This understanding is consistent with Harro van Brummelen’s assertion that Christian education must be grounded in a Christian worldview that integrates faith with the entire learning process⁵¹ Therefore, Christian educational leaders function not only as administrators or institutional managers but also as spiritual leaders who guide the entire academic community toward a deeper knowledge of Christ. In practice, this is expressed through the development of curricula that integrate Christian faith perspectives across various academic disciplines, the cultivation of an academic culture that fosters service, integrity, and humility, and decision-making processes that take the values of the Kingdom of God as the foundation for educational policy.

Consistent with the perspectives of Kenneth O. Gangel⁵² and Robert W. Pazmiño,⁵³ Christian educational leadership is concerned not only with producing students who excel intellectually but also with forming disciples who experience spiritual and moral transformation. Therefore, the principle of John 3:30 can serve as a foundation for developing a model of Christian educational quality oriented toward holistic transformation. From this perspective, the success of leadership is not primarily measured by the growing reputation of leaders or institutions, but by the extent to which the entire educational process helps students to know, love, and follow Christ more deeply.

Accordingly, the principle, “He must increase, but I must decrease,” provides a theological foundation for a model of Christian educational leadership that integrates educational quality with a Christocentric orientation. As a result, the vision, curriculum, school culture, and leadership practices of educational institutions are intentionally directed toward glorifying Christ as the center of education.

⁵⁰ Kenneth Leithwood et al., *Review of Research How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 2004), 67-69.

⁵¹ Harro Van Brummelen, *Walking with God in the Classroom: Christian Approaches to Teaching and Learning* (Colorado: Purposeful Design Publications, 2014).

⁵² Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Broadway: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002). Pemikiran Gangel dan Benson tentang pendidikan Kristen dapat dibaca di Bab 1 dari buku ini.

⁵³ Robert W. Pazmino, *Fondasi Pendidikan Kristen*, 1st ed. (Bandung-Jakarta: STT Bandung-BPK Gunung Mulia, 2012).

Leadership Rooted in Divine Calling

The use of the Greek word $\delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ (*dei*) in John 3:30 indicates a necessity that is connected to God's plan (*divine necessity*). In the Gospel of John, this term is frequently used to describe events that occur within the framework of the divine will, such as when Jesus declares that the Son of Man "must be lifted up" (John 3:14). Therefore, the statement that Jesus "must" increase does not merely describe the social expansion of His ministry; rather, it signifies that the growth of His glory and influence forms part of God's redemptive plan that is being fulfilled. D. A. Carson explains that the use of *dei* in the Gospel of John points to a theological necessity associated with the accomplishment of God's purposes through the work of Christ.

This awareness demonstrates that John the Baptist understood his ministry as part of a divine calling with a specific purpose. He did not regard the increasing prominence of Jesus' ministry as a threat to himself but as the fulfillment of the mission entrusted to him. Andreas J. Köstenberger argues that John's statement in John 3:30 reflects a theological acknowledgment that Jesus' ministry must become increasingly prominent because He is the center of God's plan of salvation. Thus, John's declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease," reflects the understanding that his entire ministry ultimately existed to point to Christ as the center of divine revelation and salvation. Craig R. Koester likewise emphasizes that John the Baptist's testimony in the Gospel of John functions to direct attention to Jesus as the embodiment of God's saving work. Consequently, the increasing glory of Christ was not a failure for John but rather the successful fulfillment of the calling that God had entrusted to him.

Christian educational leadership possesses a formative dimension that emphasizes the development of faith and character. If Christ's increase in John 3:30 is understood as the growing recognition of Christ in the lives of believers, then Christian educational leadership must likewise be oriented toward the spiritual growth of students. Christian educational leaders are called to create learning environments that help students grow in faith, moral integrity, and social responsibility. Consequently, Christian education focuses not only on the acquisition of knowledge but also on the transformation of life.

Witness-Oriented Leadership

The strong motif of witness in the Gospel of John also carries significant implications for Christian leadership and pedagogy. Christian leaders and educators are called to be witnesses who, through their lives, teaching, and ministry, point others to Christ. From this perspective, the task of a Christian teacher extends beyond the transfer of knowledge or mastery of academic content; it involves guiding students toward a deeper knowledge of Christ as the source of truth and life. Just as John the Baptist did not make himself the center of attention, Christian educators are likewise called to place Christ at the center of the educational process.

This understanding is consistent with the thought of Robert W. Pazmiño, who argues that Christian education is fundamentally a ministry that integrates teaching, character formation, and discipleship in the light of Christ's work. Consequently, Christian teachers function not merely as transmitters of information but also as models of faith who bear witness through their words, attitudes, decisions, and relationships with students. Within the framework of Christian pedagogy, students learn not only through what is taught but also through who teaches and how Christian values are embodied in everyday life.

These implications are evident in various dimensions of Christian education. In the learning process, teachers help students integrate faith and knowledge so that every academic discipline is understood in relation to God and His purposes in creation. In pedagogical relationships, teachers demonstrate a spirit of service, affirm the dignity of students as bearers

of the image of God, and guide them toward growth in wisdom, character, and faith. Within the academic culture, the principle of witness is expressed through learning communities that promote honesty, love, responsibility, and service to others. Thus, Christian pedagogy is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward the formation of disciples who increasingly know and follow Christ.

From the perspective of John 3:30, the success of a Christian teacher or educational leader is not measured primarily by personal recognition or influence, but by the extent to which students are directed to Christ and experience growth in faith through the educational process. Therefore, the witness of John the Baptist provides a theological foundation for a Christian pedagogy that views teachers as witnesses of faith and facilitators of transformation, helping students through every aspect of education to recognize Christ as the center of truth, life, and personal formation.

Spiritual Formation Leadership

This understanding provides a strong theological foundation for the concept of spiritual formation in Christian education. Christian leadership is not aimed merely at expanding organizations or increasing institutional influence; rather, its primary purpose is to facilitate spiritual growth that leads students toward a deeper knowledge of Christ. From the perspective of John 3:30, true growth is not primarily concerned with institutional development or academic achievement, but with the increasing manifestation of Christ's presence and work within the lives of individuals and educational communities. Consequently, Christian educational leaders are called to create learning environments that help students grow in faith, character, and commitment to Christ as the center of their lives.

This understanding is consistent with the literature on spiritual formation in Christian education. James C. Wilhoit argues that the primary goal of Christian education is the formation of disciples who increasingly reflect the likeness of Christ (*Christlikeness*), rather than the mere acquisition of religious knowledge. Similarly, Robert W. Pazmiño emphasizes that Christian education must integrate cognitive, affective, spiritual, and practical dimensions so that the learning process results in genuine life transformation. Within this framework, spiritual growth is not regarded as an activity supplementary to education but as the very heart of the Christian educational enterprise.

In practical terms, Christian educational institutions can facilitate spiritual formation through a variety of pedagogical and institutional practices. At the curricular level, faith-learning integration is achieved by helping students understand each academic discipline in light of the Christian faith and God's work in the world. At the instructional level, teachers function as spiritual mentors who encourage theological reflection, Scripture reading, prayer, and discussions that connect academic content with students' faith experiences. At the institutional culture level, spiritual formation is expressed through communities that embody love, service, forgiveness, integrity, and social responsibility as values of the Kingdom of God. In addition, mentoring programs, discipleship groups, school or campus worship services, community service initiatives, and reflective activities provide important avenues through which students can experience spiritual growth both personally and communally.

From the perspective of John 3:30, the success of Christian education is not measured primarily by academic achievement, student enrollment, or institutional reputation, but by the extent to which the educational process enables students to grow in their knowledge of Christ. In other words, the principle of *auxanein* ("to grow" or "to increase") finds its pedagogical significance when the entire educational system is directed toward facilitating spiritual transformation that increasingly centers students' lives on Christ. Therefore, John 3:30 provides

an important theological foundation for the development of a model of Christian education that not only pursues academic excellence but also prioritizes spiritual formation as its central educational goal.

Servant Leadership

From the perspective of Christian leadership, the attitude of John the Baptist reflects the principle of servant leadership. This concept has been widely developed in leadership literature, particularly through the work of Robert K. Greenleaf, who emphasized that a true leader is first a servant who prioritizes the growth and well-being of others. Within the context of Christian education, this concept has been further developed by scholars such as Gary S. Sande and Doug Johnson, who argue that Christian educational leaders are called to cultivate learning communities characterized by service, healthy relationships, character development, and student empowerment. Consequently, servant leadership has become one of the most influential paradigms in the development of Christian educational institutions.

Nevertheless, John 3:29-30 offers a theological perspective that extends beyond conventional understandings of servant leadership. Whereas much of the servant leadership literature emphasizes serving others as the primary goal of leadership, John the Baptist demonstrates that such service ultimately possesses a deeper orientation: directing people to Christ. As the friend of the bridegroom, John not only served the needs of the community but also intentionally prepared the people to meet the Bridegroom, namely Christ. Therefore, the success of his leadership was not measured by the quality of relationships he cultivated, the extent of his influence, or the continuation of his own ministry, but by his effectiveness in directing people's attention to Christ.

Herein lies the distinctive theological contribution of John 3:29-30 to the discourse on Christian educational leadership. The text demonstrates that servant leadership must be Christ-centered and witness-oriented. Leaders are not merely servants of the community; they are also witnesses who, through every aspect of their leadership practice, point others to Christ as the source of truth, the goal of education, and the center of human transformation. In other words, service is not the ultimate end of Christian leadership but rather the means by which communities are led to know and follow Christ more fully.

The implications for Christian education are significant. Christian educational leaders are responsible not only for improving institutional quality, developing curricula, or cultivating healthy organizational cultures, but also for ensuring that the entire educational process directs students toward Christ-centered faith formation. Within this framework, servant leadership is expressed through empowering teachers, attending to the needs of students, fostering supportive learning communities, and creating educational environments that facilitate spiritual growth. Thus, John 3:29-30 enriches servant leadership theory by adding a strong Christological dimension: the service of leaders finds its deepest meaning when every leadership activity is directed toward making Christ more fully known, honored, and glorified within the educational community.

Humility Leadership

John the Baptist's statement in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease," also reflects a model of leadership grounded in humility. This expression reveals John's willingness to place himself behind Christ and to make room for the glory of Christ to be increasingly manifested. Within the context of the Gospel of John, this attitude is not merely an expression of personal modesty; rather, it constitutes a theological confession that Christ is the center of God's saving work, while human beings are merely witnesses who point others to Him.

John the Baptist's humility is evident in his awareness that his ministry had specific limits and purposes. He understood that his mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah. Therefore, when Jesus became increasingly known and followed by many people, John did not perceive this development as a loss of significance or status. On the contrary, he regarded it as the fulfillment of the task entrusted to him. Andreas J. Köstenberger explains that John's attitude reflects the theological recognition that all human witnesses must ultimately direct attention to Christ as the center of God's revelation.

The humility of John the Baptist has often been regarded as a model for Christian leaders. John willingly accepted the diminishing of his own role because he recognized that true glory belongs to Christ alone. According to Calvin, this attitude demonstrates that servants of God are called to humble themselves so that Christ may be increasingly exalted among God's people.

John 3:30 also underscores the importance of humility in Christian educational leadership. Humility enables leaders to recognize that educational success is not merely the result of human ability but is ultimately part of God's work in shaping the lives of students. Christian educational leaders are therefore called to lead with the awareness that their primary responsibility is to facilitate a process through which Christ becomes increasingly known and glorified within the educational community.

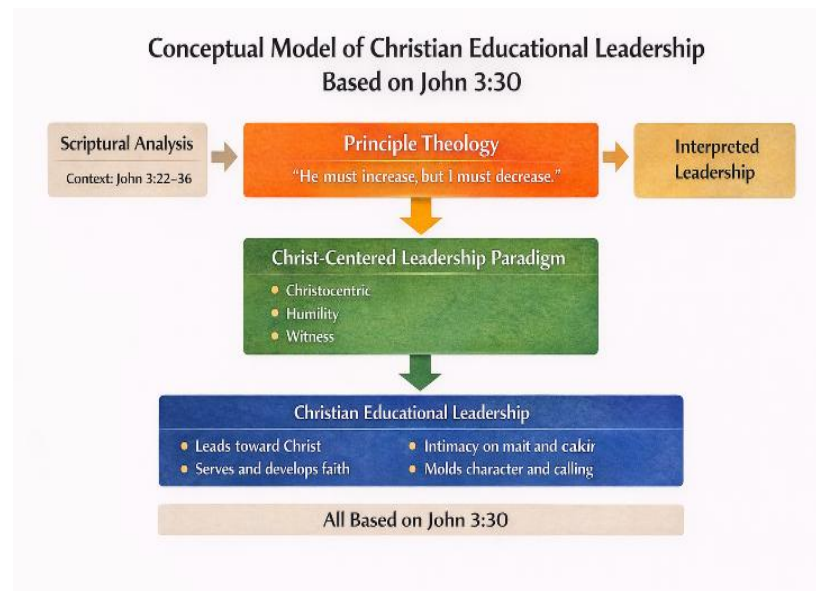


Fig 2. Christian Religious Education Leadership Model Based on John 3:30

CONCLUSION

The study of John 3:30 demonstrates that John the Baptist's statement, "He must increase, but I must decrease," is not merely an expression of personal humility but a profound theological confession concerning the supremacy of Christ in God's plan of salvation. An analysis of the Greek text, *ἐκεῖνον δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττωσθαι* (*ekeinon dei auxanein, eme de elattousthai*), highlights a divine necessity (*dei*), indicating that the increase of Christ's glory and authority forms part of God's sovereign will that must be fulfilled in salvation history. Within this framework, John the Baptist understood his role as the forerunner of the Messiah, called to prepare the way for Christ and willingly accept the diminishing of his own prominence as Jesus' ministry became more widely revealed.

Based on the narrative context of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist's testimony demonstrates that authentic leadership is not centered on the leader but on bearing witness to

Christ as the center of God's revelation. John positioned himself as a witness who directed attention to Jesus rather than as a figure seeking glory for himself. This attitude reflects a form of leadership characterized by humility, an awareness of divine calling, and a complete orientation toward the glory of Christ. In this way, John the Baptist presents a model of leadership that functions as a witness pointing to Christ as the Messiah and the Son of God.

The theological implications of John 3:30 are highly relevant for the development of leadership paradigms in Christian education. Christian educational leadership is not understood as an effort to establish personal authority or institutional dominance, but as a ministry that directs the entire educational process toward Christ as the source of truth and the goal of faith formation. From this perspective, Christian educational leaders are called to exercise leadership rooted in an awareness of divine calling, humility, and a commitment to placing Christ at the center of all educational practices.

This article contributes to both biblical studies and Christian education by demonstrating that John 3:30 possesses not only Christological and spiritual significance but also provides a paradigmatic foundation for the development of a model of Christian educational leadership that is Christ-centered, witness-oriented, and focused on the spiritual formation of students. These findings expand the discourse on servant leadership within Christian education by emphasizing that leadership success is measured not only by the quality of service offered to the community but also by the extent to which leadership directs the entire educational community toward Christ as the center of learning and transformation.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study encourage Christian educational institutions to develop curricula, academic cultures, spiritual formation programs, and leadership practices that intentionally integrate faith formation, Christian witness, and discipleship as integral components of the educational process. Consequently, the quality of Christian education should be evaluated not only in terms of academic achievement and organizational effectiveness but also by the extent to which students grow in their knowledge, experience, and practice of faith in Christ.

Future research may extend this study through empirical investigations into the implementation of the principles of John 3:30 within schools, universities, and other Christian educational institutions, as well as by examining their influence on character formation, spiritual formation, and organizational culture across diverse social and cultural contexts.

Therefore, John 3:30 possesses significance not only within the historical context of John the Baptist's testimony but also as a biblical and theological foundation for understanding Christ-centered leadership. The principle, "He must increase, but I must decrease," serves as a paradigm affirming that all ministry and leadership in Christian education must ultimately be directed toward the glory of Christ as the center of faith, the source of truth, and the ultimate goal of Christian formation.

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