

# Influence Ministries

## THE END OF ME

### LESSON 4

#### TITLE: WE MUST DECREASE AND HE MUST INCREASE.

Jesus loves to fill what is empty. In John 2 we read about His first recorded miracle, turning water into wine. Jesus is at a wedding party and in those days a wedding party wasn't just an afternoon event, it was a seven-day extravaganza. And Jesus finds out that the host has run out of wine. That was a significant problem. It would have been embarrassing because they were supposed to save wine, so they don't run out.

So, Jesus asks for six jars. Empty jars. And He has them filled with water and then, He turns the water into wine. And John points out, it's not just wine, it's the best wine. And this tells us something about Jesus. He loves to fill what's empty. And when He fills something that's empty, He fills it with something that's best.

In John 4, Jesus finds a woman at the well and she has an empty life. And He fills it.

In John 6, Jesus faces a vast crowd of people who are starving, they're so hungry. So, He fills their stomach with food and there's food left over.

In the home of Jairus, He finds emptiness that comes from the loss of his daughter. And He fills the house with joy once again when He brings the girl back to life.

Of course, you'll also find people in the Gospels who are not filled by Jesus, mostly because they were trying to fill themselves up on their own. Like the rich, young ruler who had filled his life with money and possessions and position, but none of those things satisfied. And whether it's those things or whether it's a romantic relationship or endless entertainment or physical pleasure; this idea of us trying to fill our own emptiness is still pretty common.

In Luke 14, Jesus tells the story known as 'The Great Banquet.' In the story a man sends out invitations to a feast. The table is set, the stove is hot, and the food is ready. He sends out his servant to announce to those who have been invited that "dinner is served." But no one really wants to go.

- One of the guests that he invited explains that he has a field to inspect.
- A second guest says that he just bought some oxen and it's not a good time.
- A third guest pauses, then explains that he has just gotten married.

They all seem to appreciate the invitation to come to eat and to be filled, but it's just that their lives are already pretty full. It's just that they don't have time.

The second guest in the story talks about his new oxen. You might think of this as another purchase or possession but really this is a reference to work, to business. He has responsibilities that need to be taken care of. He has to put some more time in at the office. And this is how many of us have tried to fill the emptiness in our lives, by climbing the ladder of success, by reaching certain professional goals. If it's not busyness from business, then we try to fill every second with some form of entertainment.

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The third guest to decline the banquet invitation might be the hardest to criticize. You'd really want to slap him on the back and say, "Congratulations! You just got married!" But he's returned from his honeymoon and it's not a good time for him, the calendar is full. I guess that describes us as well.

Our minds are distracted. Our lives are over-saturated, so much so that Jesus offers us an invitation to fill ourselves at His banquet but we just don't have room for it. But the time will come eventually for each of those guests, for each of us, that we will realize that what we thought would fulfill us has left us feeling empty.

When life leaves you empty, the truth is you've never been in a better position to be filled by God. You see, finally you have some space to make your way to His banquet table and to be filled with what He has for you.

If life hasn't left you empty then can I encourage you to empty yourself? It doesn't come naturally but if you begin to pray this prayer, "God, empty me of me; fill me with You."

It was the 19th century evangelist, D. L. Moody that put it in these terms. He wrote, "I firmly believe that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride and selfish ambition and self-seeking and everything that is contrary to God's law that THEN the Holy Spirit will come and fill every corner of our hearts. But if we are full of pride and conceit, and ambition and self-seeking of the pleasures of this world, then there's no room for the Spirit of God."

I believe that many people are praying for God to fill them when they are already full of something else. Before we pray that God will fill us, I believe we probably need to pray for Him to empty us. Said another way, there needs to be an emptying before there can be a filling.

*Mark 2:22*

*And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.*

We must decrease and He must increase.