



God's Stagehands

by Dale Fincher

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God, who is infinite, finds no need to stand on another's shoulders. Yet in the affairs of men, there seems to be an economy of relationships and networking that provides pathways for success.

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ," writes Mark at the beginning of his first chapter. The story has begun; the stagehands are in place; the good news is about to be announced. Yet God finds it important to begin his story with a prologue. Someone comes on the scene before Jesus to set the stage for his ministry. His name is John the Baptizer.

"John" means "gift of God," and it is no doubt that John was a gift to prepare the way for God's Son, Jesus. Fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, John appears as a voice in the wilderness preparing the pathway of the Lord.

I have heard many men and women boast of being self-made. "I've built this company by myself," I've

heard them say. "I didn't ask for anyone's help to achieve my success," say others. It is no hidden fact that the arrogance latent in these comments remind us of the Proverb that falling down is usually on the heels of a proud stand.

Still others have complained that the reason for their ill success is that they knew the wrong people. "It's not what you know," they say, "but who you know." There is much truth in this statement. But, again, we must heed what is being said. Merely to know someone who has paved a road does not mean that those who follow are able to walk in it.

God finds it important for Jesus to have an introductory speech through John. The people fixed their attention toward the Baptizer. Mark says, "All the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him." The scene is set. The protagonist of the story is on his way.

But there's more. Merely knowing John will not thrust Jesus into public ministry. He must hold his own, proclaim the kingdom, forgive sins, die and rise again. Who you know may get you there, but what you know will keep you there. And once Christ takes

the stage in the verses that follow, he sets his face like a flint and accomplishes God-sized tasks.

Imagine what it was like for John. He could have spoken up, "Hey, this is my congregation. I built this ministry. This is my job!" Instead, he takes his place in obedience in God's grand story. For John to promote himself would be hypothetically similar to a Sunday School teacher of Billy Graham feeling envious because Billy was increasing in stature and influence. We succeed in our obedience of setting the stage for others when we are willing to let them surpass us to the glory of God.

Here is an example for us all. God calls us to equip others with tools for kingdom living and sharing. At the same time, he has left a model for us that when those behind us are ready, we help set stages for them. This is God's economy at work. How are we doing as God's stagehands?

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