John the Baptist

A Character Study

1. Calling – Born for this

John the Baptist was called to his assignment before he was even born! Luke 1:13-17 records God's message through the angel Gabriel to John's father Zechariah:

> For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, . . . and **he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.** And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah, the fiery prophet], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; **to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**

God had a mission for John: prepare the way for the Messiah.

John the Baptist was literally born for this.

2. Equipping – Make Way for the Lamb of God!

If you had to set up a celebrity campaign, you would want to raise as much awareness as you possibly could. You'd send fliers, run ads, and talk to everyone you could about this upcoming star.

And that's basically what John did—except God used his strange lifestyle and controversial sermons to draw people to John.

Growing up possibly as a nomad, John grew up wandering Israel with the religous group called the Essenes. This contributed to his survivalist lifestyle, revealed in Scripture as John's eating locusts & honey while wearing animal pelts instead of regular clothing.

Between the Essenes and his priestly father and believing mother, John would have learned not only the truths of Scripture but also how God's ways differred from the false worship imposed on Israel by the Pharisees and Sadducees.

As he grew older and preached in the desert, he drew a large audience. Of course, leading multitudes equipped John with organizational and leadership skills that God used to turn John's listeners into followers—and ultimately evangelists.

We know this because later in Acts we actually meet some of his disciples: Apollos, the silver-tongued preacher (Acts 18:24-26) and the Twelve Men of Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7).

Not only did John's personal message set up *his* audience to receive Jesus as the Messiah, but his followers did, too! As John was being equipped, he was equipping others.

3. Sending – Just A Witness

John always had one purpose: bear witness to Christ.

In his own words, John described his ministry: “He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.”

This means that God sent John into the world to *lose* influence, not gain it. That’s counterintuitive by most standards. Couldn’t John have born a greater witness by being *more* popular, influential, and counter-cultral? No. Not in God’s eyes.

This all means that John the Baptist’s SENDING phase was really just setting *Jesus* up for success.

He had one job: Prepare the way, then disappear.

By giving up his influence, John massively helped Jesus’ minstry grow. John was sent for a time. And when that time was up, he obeyed.

Summary

John’s life is one of the clearest representations of the C.E.S. framework:

- **Called before his birth to proclaim the Messiah**
- **Equipped through his upbringing and ministry**
- **Sent to disappear**

John the Baptist gives us a great example of how God orchestrates every even in life to serve His purposes.