

How to influence kings

Me:

How is everyone tonight? Good. Let's talk about fashion..

Fashion is constantly evolving.. Many times we look back with regret at some of our past fashion choices or history let's say. (I didn't always look this good) However bad those old facebook photos are, everyone else in those photos looked ridiculous with you so it's ok. When it comes to fashion, society act like sheep. Fashion, let's be honest is basically, **let's all dress the same so we don't feel left out.. To be fair not everyone dresses exactly the same**, you get different types of fashion.. I don't want to offend anyone.. Cool fashion... Different cool fashion... Not everyone dresses exactly the same but'll you'll find that people do dress like the people they hangout with right?

There was a time when I dressed like a preppy jack wills rep because all my friends at sixth form did sooo so did I. Then there was a point when I dressed like a wannabe surfer.. when I worked for Hollister.. Flip flops in the winter am I right?! yikes... Now... well now I just dress like Phil.. haha

But at all these points I dressed the way I did so that I could blend in. When it comes to fashion, no-one actually dresses like they do at the fashion shows... because let's be honest, they look ridiculous! The purpose of mainstream fashion is not to stand out but to blend in.. pretty sad if you think about it.. people just want to be accepted.

But..

then there are some people who don't really care about blending in with society. Especially when it comes to fashion... these people (AKA my mum) kinda make up their own rules.. It's ok if you're only dressing yourself.. see my mum helped me stand out.. Let me show you some of the things she used to dress me in when I was younger..

Show some pictures

That... is why I only wear black now. haha

The thing is the people that are bold and brave when it comes to fashion, are actually the ones that shape the industries direction. The ones who are daring enough to wear stuff that they believe works are often the ones that influence the rest of us. I've always been a bit envious of those people. The early adopters, the trend setters, the ones that seem to influence the rest of us. I think this stems from the inherent desire to be influential. To be able to stand out in a way that makes a difference and causes society to stop and look and listen. Stepping away from fashion for a second, when I look at the people who manage to find themselves in positions of influence, I wonder what it takes to get there?

We:

I think it's the same for all of us. How do I get to that position of influence?

We all want to stand out. (the platform may not look the same for everyone) but Everyone wants to stand out. We all want to be able to influence others, to positively shape society.

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How do we gain the audience, the platform, that prominence? I want to be influential, I want to be seen, I want to be acknowledged! Maybe your desire for influence is not that strong but whatever level it is, Our desire for influence should only be reinforced by the need for us to positively influence the world around us.

Society is hurting. Everyday it seems, we read about another young person murdered as a result of gang violence. The UK is to remain on the terror threat level 'severe' for at least another three years. More people are in slavery today than at any other given point in history. Racism has found it's way back into politics with influential people condoning it. People are lonely, the largest killer of men in the UK is suicide. We need to influence society for the better.

It seems like for a lot of us, we're not having the impact we thought or hoped we would. If only I had more courage to speak to the barista about Jesus. (I always envy those preachers and evangelists who seem to invite everyone they meet to church and someone always gets healed or saved or both..) How come I can't seem to do that? Maybe it's my position that's limiting my influence. Is that it? maybe you're getting frustrated by how long it's taking you to get to the position you've set out for yourself? Once I make partner, I'll have loads of influence! I just need to get elected on to the committee and then just imagine! Just a couple more years and I'll be in high school and then no one will ignore me because of my age! Once I've established myself, then I've be able to positively shape society, **then I'll be able to 'stand out'!**

Is it my personality? The way I look? What is stopping me from gaining influence? **What's stopping me from being a 'stand out' individual?!** I can see so many other people influencing the world around them!

How do I do that?

So how do I get there?!

How do I get from where I am now, to that position of influence? How do I stand out in today's society?

God:

When I comes to questions like these, I always start exploring the bible for answers..

So, We're going unpackage an account of a guy who managed to not only influence the people around him but also Influence kings.

So I've titled this message, "How to influence kings" Because we need to be able to be a positive influence at the highest levels of society as well right?

There is a guy in the bible called Daniel. (Has anyone heard the story of Daniel and the lions den? Same Daniel.)

Daniel had incredible influence over kings and kingdoms. The bible states that he had significant roles of prominence in the courts of *several* kings, spanning several kingdoms from the Babylonian empire to the Persian empire.

Let's read a bit of Daniel's story so that we have some context moving forward..

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Daniel 1:2-6 (NIV)

When we read the book of Daniel, What's incredible is that Daniel started out his journey as a captive from Judah:

2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand,

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility

6 Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Skip forward a few years...and we see Daniel's progression from being a captive to becoming a ruler/governor of entire provinces and head of all the wise men in Babylon!

Daniel 2:48 (NIV)

48 Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.

Woah. How did he do it?

How did he get to this position of influence? How did he get from being a captive to being a ruler? How did he manage to stand out in the crowd? And more importantly, how can I do that myself!?

How did Daniel manage to influence kings?

Was it his fashion sense? Was it his good looks? Because the bible said he was handsome... Was it because he was intelligent or top of his class? What enabled Daniel to influence kings?

I believe it was his character.

Daniel's character was what helped him on his journey to influencing kings. If we look at Daniel's backstory, I don't think anyone could blame him if he became bitter about his situation. In fact, it is incredibly impressive to see how Daniel succeeded in the environment that he was thrust into because, as pastor Tom described last Sunday, Daniel and his friends were stripped of their identity, their future, forced to learn the religions and cultures of an evil empire.. The path set before Daniel was not an obvious route to success. It was not a clear path to prominence. Daniel had to work hard just to survive but he had to work harder to maintaining his character.

It was his character that helped him on his journey to the kings courts.

You:

I want us to look at a couple of attributes of Daniel's character, the first being his humility.

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His humility

Daniel humbly took on the opportunity that God had given him. The issue with a lot of us is that we are so bent on achieving prominence that we can't see the opportunity that God has opened up in front of us.

Daniel did not start out as the kings top adviser, he started out as a captive. What makes his humility even more noteworthy is *Actually* before that, he started out as a member of the royal family/nobility of Judah. See that's the thing, Daniel was born into a position of *prominence* but that didn't automatically give him the *influence* that God had set aside for him. **It would have been very easy for Daniel to disregard the opportunity laid out before him in Babylon if his eyes were focused on his lost opportunity of prominence in Judah.**

I think that is one of our problems. We feel a sense of entitlement.

Have you ever heard someone say, *I'm not doing it unless I get to be the leader?* That's definitely something I would have said as a kid.. I think me and my siblings used to argue about who was going to be the leader all the time..

We want to be in a position or place where we feel we would have the most impact. I'm not going to help influence society here, am I? so I need to be in a position of power. God you do your stuff, I want to be famous and powerful etc. I need to be in a position of prominence so that I can stand out in today's society... for You! Stand out for You obviously..

"God wants us to influence society and culture right? So He better put me in a place of prominence otherwise how am I supposed to influence?."

No no no... You've got it all wrong..

See, You are already where God needs you to be. It's just that your position of influence might not be what you thought it would be.

Daniel didn't influence kingdoms from his position of prominence in Judah. Daniel influenced kingdoms when he saw the small, unexciting, scary, difficult, uncomfortable opportunity that lay in front of him.

Daniel realised that the effectiveness of *his influence was not determined by his position.*

Don't disregard your position. You may not think that you can have an impact where you are but actually God has strategically placed you to be *exactly* where you are.

You might be thinking, 'Well that's easy for you to say Sam, you're the one who gets to preach on the platform'. In the same way, I might look at people like Carl Lentz, Brian Houston, Gary Clarke and say why don't I have that platform?

The thing is, you are uniquely positioned to reach people that only *you* can reach. There are people in your world that will never hear me speak about Jesus from this church platform but you have an opportunity to show them Jesus through your life and example. In the same way, there are people in this city/town who have never heard of Hillsong and couldn't care less that they have a church in every major city in the world but we

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(proclaimers) are uniquely placed to reach the people that only we can reach and have been given an opportunity to reach them.

The opportunity may seem small but that's what Daniel did so well! Daniel went about doing the small things with humility, regardless of the fact he was nobility, he never saw his opportunities as beneath him. Daniel understood that his sphere of influence was right in front of him, in Babylon.

We need to have the humility to accept the opportunity to have a small influence long, before we should be seeking to influence kings

The bible says that Daniel had to train for at least 3 years before he was brought into the service of the king... 3 years!

How often do we give up after a few months or weeks even?

Sometimes we get discouraged when our friends or family don't connect with God straight away or won't come along to church after being invited a couple of times.. I often tell the story of it taking me and others almost two years to get Ande (who was already a christian) along to church.. Just imagine if we'd given up?

Daniel consistently showed up and brought his best. The bible says that the king found them (Daniel and his friends) to be 10 times better than all the rest. Daniel diligently worked at being the best royal official he could be. Daniel didn't get given the positions of prominence straight away but the things he did get given, he did them to the best of his ability. Why? Well growing up as a Jew, Daniel would have been well versed in scripture. We would have read the proverbs and psalms.. He would have been taught to seek humility.

In Proverbs 15:33 its says:

Fear of the Lord teaches wisdom; humility precedes honour.

Daniel understood that living for God meant putting aside any desire to push himself to the top. Living for God meant putting humility before honour, it meant putting the small opportunities before striving for prominence, it meant valuing the journey instead of eyeing up the position. Daniel was able to look around and see what he could do in the here and now.

Humility for us is realising that we have the opportunity to influence and impact the lives of some many people around us. It's all well and good seeking to influence kings but what about the people your rub shoulders with on the day to day?

Don't disregard the importance of your position of influence.

Another attribute of Daniel's character that gave him influence was...

His Integrity

Once Daniel took hold of this new opportunity placed before him in the land of Babylon, it was his *integrity* that caused him to be noticed.

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The way that Daniel was able to garner the attention of several kings was because he didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walk! Again Daniel knew what the scriptures said about integrity.

Proverbs 10:9 (NLT)

People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will slip and fall.

Proverbs 20:7 (NLT)

The godly walk with integrity; blessed are their children who follow them.

Psalms 41:11-12 (NIV)

I know that you are pleased with me, for my enemy does not triumph over me. Because of my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.

Psalms 25:21 (NLT)

21 May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you.

Integrity is defined in the dictionary as (The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles). Daniel knew that it was his integrity that would open doors for him. He didn't put his trust in chasing influence, he put his hope in God understanding that if he continued to live a life pleasing God, **his actions would do the talking.**

We sometimes think that our job as "influencers" is to get people to change their ways through force!

"READ YOUR BIBLE! COME TO CHURCH! BE A NICE PERSON!"

In the book, *The Way Back*, the authors talk about the definition of influence when looking at the context of history. For most people, influence is wrapped up in *power* and *control*. The perception of influence is that you intentionally alter, sway or control outcomes, behaviours, beliefs of people.

That's the opposite of what Daniel did. The way Daniel influenced people was through his steadfast conviction to live in a way he believed to be right and to let his *life* be the example.

Daniel didn't stand on a box on the street corner and tell everyone they should only be eating vegetables and water #VeganDaniel...

Daniel did not force his ways on the world. Instead he let his integrity speak for itself.

And in doing so, he earned the right to speak.

His steadfast resolve to stick to his morals and to live the life that God had called him to caused him to garner the attention of those around him. The bible says that Daniel gained favour with the officials over him. There is an account early on in the book of Daniel where it says that "Daniel went in to the king". The account doesn't say specifically but I am sure you can't just walk into the courts of a king, someone has to take you there. Daniel managed to get to the courts of the king, not by trying to tell others how they should live but by saying, "Hey, I can't live like that, I believe that God has called me to live differently and I'm going to stick by it"

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Our job is not to *make* people listen to us but to show people a better way to live. We can't do that if we are wavering in our integrity. We can tell people one thing and show them another...

The book I mentioned before, gave some examples: You wouldn't buy pepsi if all the people at the pepsi company were drinking cokes. How confident would you be in owning a VW if all the management drove vauxhall's?

it is the same for us as Christians, We cannot preach what we are not willing to do.

People romanticise the church in persecuted counties because they are growing so fast. Maybe it is because the people there are so determined to live for Jesus that people can see their integrity and can see they act on their belief.

Brennan manning said,

The greatest cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips and walk out the door and deny Him with their lifestyles. That is what an unbelieving world simple finds unbelievable

The way we will influence society is by showing them Jesus through the way we live. The moment we compromise on our values and what we profess to believe, we lose the integrity of our faith.

We need to walk the talk, or as the amigos once said, "walk it like I talk it"

The world needs love, they need Jesus! But if we don't live what we preach, the world will stop looking to us to show them the example of love, justice, morality they need and they'll start looking for it in other places

Daniel's integrity unlocked doors for greater influence. His resolve to live a life pleasing to God earned him the right to speak at the highest level of influence.

Your "9 to 5"

The influence God has given you is not just so that you can succeed in whatever sphere you're in. Develop your business, strive for social justice, impact politics. God has given you your area of influence for more than just that..

Your influence is not for you to gain more instagram followers.
Your influence should be creating *Jesus* followers.

You know what's interesting, is that there is no mention of a prophet or man of God in the book of Daniel. There is no minister of God mentioned in the book of Daniel. In nearly all the books in the old testament, there was a designated 'man of God'. A prophet or priest.. someone who delivered God's message to the people. However, in the book of Daniel there is no such man mentioned. You might say, " well that was Daniel wasn't it?" Well that wasn't his job.. His '9-5' was working for the king. He was a royal court official not a prophet.

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But I think that's important for us. Even though Daniel's job was not as a prophet or a 'ministry man', through him, even the most evil of kings pointed to God's glory.

Daniel 2:47 (NIV)

47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

And again later on, Nebuchadnezzar gives praise to God as does King Darius..

You see, Daniel was able to use his '9-5' as his ministry.

I love one of the comments I heard at Leaders Lab recently: "You don't have to be on church staff to be ministry minded". I really struck me with the thought that everyone is part of the ministry. Your ministry is your work place, your family, your friendship groups, your local barista, the people you meet in your day to day. I realise being on staff now, I find it much harder to go out and reach people in my city on a day to day than I did when I was working in the city. But as I said before, each of us are uniquely positioned to be an influence in the spheres we walk in. Your "9-5" is when you're at work. But it's also when you're at home, when you're out with friends, when you're at the shops... Your influence is your "9 to 5" ministry. Your "9 to 5" ministry is the people you rub shoulders with everyday. Your ministry where ever you go.

Influence for influence sake is worthless. We are called to use our influence to point to Jesus! Jesus came to earth not to seek influence wrapped up in control or power, but to show us a better way of living. His life set the perfect example of how to love one another. His love for us was so great that he was willing to die for us. Society needs to know that, your friends need to know that, your colleagues need to know that, your family need to know that there is a better way. We might not be able to reach them from this church platform right now but you are uniquely placed to be a positive influence in their lives. Embrace your "9 to 5".

US:

Imagine if we could all learn to influence the world like Daniel did. Imagine if we took our opportunity for influence as seriously as Daniel took his. As seriously as gangs are taking their opportunities to grow their drug empires. As seriously as human traffickers are taking their opportunities to exploit vulnerable men, women and children.

Imagine if we all stepped up and embraced our small opportunities for influence. Imagine your communities, your streets, your families, your friendship groups, your workplace.

Imagine as God opens up more doors of influence for us..

Imagine the world of business, politics, science, sports, art, education, as we step through the doors God has opened for us.

Imagine if we took our opportunity to let our lives be an example to others. An example of humility, integrity, love...

People will be more open to hearing about Jesus if they've seen him in you first. You see some people aren't ready to walk through the doors of a church yet but they can't help but watch how you live your life set apart from other.

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You see, the significance of your influence is not measured by the size of your audience.

If we chose to step into the lives of influence that God has for *us*, God will open doors for us to share the goodness of who He is.

If you want to influence kings, start with the people around you. We aren't going to change the world by force feeding people our beliefs *but* by showing the world that there is a better way to live. Instead of standing against something why don't we show the world what we do stand for. We need to aspire to be people who stand out in a positive way. Showing God's love through the way we live. Influencing others through positive examples of integrity and character.