

Standout people

I've met a lot of people who wanted to stand out from the crowd. They desired prominence and celebrity. Hollywood's restaurants are filled with waiters who are movie star "wannabe's."

I've also met a lot of people who desired to fly below the radar too. They don't wanted to draw attention to themselves. This doesn't mean they don't want to change the world. It just means they have desired another road to accomplish their dream. These people want their achievements to speak for themselves.

Most of us in this room are somewhere in-between. Most of us in this room desire to be stand outs to someone. A wife, a husband, to our children or to members of your family. Mum, Dad. Maybe you desire to be a stand out in your job. Not a show off but a stand out. Hard working, diligent, proactive and profitable to the boss and the company. Your desire is to be noticed for your service, your achievements and not for sucking up.

Maybe you desire to stand out in your academic achievements by working hard, revising and doing well in your exams by obtaining high grades in an effort to snag a great job in the future. Maybe you desire to stand out by speaking out. You feel a certain passion for social justice issues or certain political policies. Maybe you sense calling from God for service to church.

In Australia we have a term "**the quiet achievers**" these people just get on with the business and do it without a fuss. Low maintenance. No drama. No problems. They are not averse to seeking greatness they just desire to stand out in a humble sort of way. They want their achievements to speak. They fly under the radar, they would down play their achievements rather than boast. They only achieve fame when others blow their trumpets instead of blowing their own trumpets.

There is a sort of quiet humility that surrounds them, they are not ones to brag. They feel that through their service they have achieved this level of accolade it's their work that deserves the praise not them as individuals. Maybe they want to praise their teams and give them the glory rather than receiving it themselves. You know – humble sort of people. **Harry S Truman** once said, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

Often we find ourselves at a bit of a loss when other go out of their way to take the glory. I find it interesting to see some people standing out because of self-aggrandisement and others just simply because of their service and humility. In this fast paced world where to be heard one needs to be increasingly public, loud and visible, the quiet achiever can be increasingly pushed into the background. But dare I say not for long!

Scripture is full of people who stood out who valued private devotion over a public platform.

In Genesis 37 we read about the young son of Jacob named Joseph. His father loved him very much and made a coat of many colours for him to wear. The robe spoke of Jacobs love and favour towards his son. It enraged his other brothers and they hated him.

Joseph's life continued to be stand out for his morals. He was accused of raping his master's wife because he wouldn't compromise his character by sleeping with her. She accused him and he was jailed. He later went on to public fame as the second in charge of all Egypt.

In 1 Samuel 16 we read about a young boy named David. He stood out to the Prophet Samuel because of the anointing of God upon his life. It was this anointing that grabbed Samuel's attention. Samuel saw that David had a heart after God, a deep devotion towards God and this marked him. But David

was also a stand out guy because of his bravery and courage. He killed a lion and a bear when he was looking after his father's sheep. He went on to public fame when he killed the giant Goliath.

In Daniel 1: 4, Daniel, along with his 3 friends, was a standout person because of he had no "physical defect, he was handsome, he showed aptitude for every kind of learning, he was well informed, he was quick to understand, and as a result was qualified to serve in the king's palace." Daniel stood out for his humility, his character and his intentions to walk in integrity.

He grabbed the King's attention and we know he went on to public fame as the most 2nd powerful man in Babylon. On the day his enemies were looking for him he was in private prayer before His God. He served 4 or 5 kings in his lifetime becoming one of the most influential leaders in Israel's history.

In the New Testament we read about a man named Stephen. **Acts 6: 5** (CEB – Common English Bible) it says, "They selected Stephen, a man endowed by the Holy Spirit with exceptional faith." In **verse 8** it is recorded, "Stephen, who stood out among the believers for the way God's grace was at work in his life and for his exceptional endowment with divine power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people."

Stephen was a man chosen to lighten the load on the Leaders in Jerusalem. The scripture calls him a deacon, the word simply means servant. But Stephen stood out for a number of reasons.

1. Because of Holy Spirit exceptional faith.
2. It was obvious to all that God's grace was upon him and working in his life.
3. It was visible to many that Stephen moved powerfully in the area of divine power.
4. It was obvious that Stephen was a servant and understood the power of servanthood.

Unfortunately Stephen stands out in church history as the first martyr. He was killed for his faith and service of Jesus Christ. Before he was murdered by the religious rulers it is recorded in Acts 6: 15 (CEB) that "Everyone seated in the council stared at Stephen, and they saw that his face was radiant, just like an angel's."

At his actual death it is recorded, **Acts 7: 55 – 56**, "Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man **standing** at the right hand of God."

It is written here that Stephen saw Jesus standing at God's right hand. It appears that Jesus gets up from His throne to receive martyrs. No greater stand out than a stand up!! This act is seen as God's favour upon Stephen's life. To our Lord Jesus Stephen death was worthy of a stand up for his stand out courage and bravery, faith and integrity he had shown.

Joseph, David, Daniel and Stephen they all experienced trials and tribulations. They all were private stand outs before they became public stand outs. It was their private devotion that brought them to public attention.

For us to stand out may I offer a few scriptural principles for you to consider.

1. Joseph had a coat of many colours that demonstrated his father's favour and God's favour. He had brothers who were jealous.

Many times our families will resist us, be jealous of us, seek to intimidate us, they may hate us, be angry at us, they will seek to manipulate us and all because we have God's blessing upon our lives. Who doesn't have a family member that drives you crazy?

The blessing of God and the favour from God doesn't negate the fact we will suffer persecution and people, even our families will work against us. We must wrestle in private prayer before we see a public break through. What we do in private is important.

2. David stood out because of his faith and courage. He stood out for his love for God, He was a man after the heart of God. Others could see that. He defeated Goliath and rose to public acclaim, married the King's daughter and became the king's son's best friend.

But David experienced so much resistance from Saul, his army and from his wife. David experienced treason within his family. Foreign armies stole his wife and the wives of his mighty men. He failed morally but somehow David continued forward. He never gave up, he never quit and he never stopped praying for God's help. It was his heart for God that kept him.

Psalms 51:10 – 12 is a heart breaking account of David's heart before God. "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."

What made him stand out to God? It was David's heart, his courage to go on, and his bravery to not give up. It was his private devotion to God that continued to make him stand out leader to his nation. What we do in private has its rewards in public. We will all face public opposition or resistance at one time or another in our public lives. That opposition will come from various places and we need to realise our victory is in private prayer.

3. Daniel stood out for his demeanour, his wisdom, his insights and his unswerving integrity. He rose in public fame to become a great leader. But he experienced the opposition and the work of his enemies to undermine him. His enemies sought to subvert his efforts with the King. They were jealous of his public celebrity and they wanted to destroy him.

Even when we do things right we will have our detractors. Daniel, at the end of the day was a man of business a politician and a civil servant. In business today there is such a cut throat attempt to discredit people who are more successful than ourselves. These people don't understand our private devotion and seek to destroy us in our public reputation. Business can be dog eat dog. It can be tough to make a mark. It can terrorise us with stress and anxiety. There is a terrorising attempt to make people work beyond what is expected. Daniel surely felt all of the above but because of his private devotion to God he succeeded. And so will we!

Remember this, even if you land in lion's den of opposition maintain your private convictions. Determine to walk in your integrity because it's the only way to walk with God. God declares that vengeance is His and He will repay. God will vindicate you in his time and by His own designs. Have faith. God is a God of justice. God is interested in your business life. God is more concerned with your private devotion than your public profile.

Psalms 4:1MSG, David in prayer before God he says, "When I call, give me answers. God, take my side! Once, in a tight place, you gave me room; now I'm in trouble again: grace me! Hear me!"

4. Stephen stood out as an amazing servant of God, full of faith, willing to serve at any level, full of God's power and anointing performing amazing miracles. Stephen spent his early days simply serving others with a humble heart and with great passion.

It was his service that grabbed the attention of the church leaders. It was his private energy to serve God that laid a platform for public service. It was his humility and passion that made him stand out. But he had opposition ranged against him.

God is interested in how you deal with your church life. He knows that His church can be a bruising place at times but He will flow with you and help you. God has a real interest in seeing you fulfil your service within His church.

James was pretty clear in his letter **James 1: 2 – 4**, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”

It will be your private devotion that will keep you in your public trials. We need to stop thinking that trial or tribulation is God punishing us or judging us. We need to understand that in this world there will be tough times for us all. We live in a fallen and dark world under the influence of the god of this world our enemy the Devil. Just remember it will be your commitments made in private that will keep you anchored publically.

Romans 5: 3 – 5, “Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

God rewards our private devotion towards Him. In **Matthew 6: 5 – 6** it says, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

The word hypocrite means actor – a person who does thing for public acclaim but is only acting because it’s not what really going on in their hearts. They are people who take a part of a movie or play. They are acting. There are and will always be people who do things for public acclaim. They will seek to steal the lime light and to stand out on a world stage for all to see.

Jesus says, go into the private space of your room, close the door and pray in secretly. Make this your platform. Make this the place where you desire to stand out. Make your private space your platform and God will give you a public platform in reward for your sincere and honest desire to serve Him.

If you seek the lime light, desire for public accolades and want public recognition you may lose the most important recognition from God your Lord.

If we are listening to the praise of the people then we will for sure miss the whisper uttered in private, “Well done good and faithful servant!” Never allow the public praises to drown out the private message from God’s Holy Spirit.

If you’ve publically compromised your personal integrity to obtain fame then you will sacrifice your private convictions and will receive shame instead of fame. God rewards your private prayers with His grace and favour.

Matthew 23: 11 – 12 MSG, “Do you want to stand out? Then step down. Be a servant. If you puff yourself up, you’ll get the wind knocked out of you. But if you’re content to simply be yourself, your life will count for plenty.”