

STANDING OUT IN THE CROWD

1 Chronicles 4:9-10, ***“Now Jabez was more honourable than his brothers and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, ‘Because I bore him in pain.’ And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, ‘Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil that I may not cause pain!’ So God granted him what he requested.”***

Another translation says, *“Now Jabez was respected above his brothers.”* But what was it that made him stand out? Why was he so easy to spot? I'm sure we'd all like to know because we would also like to stand out in the crowd.

In these verses there are five keys that will help us to stand out in the crowd:

1. If you want to stand out in the crowd, don't let others determine your future.

The name Jabez meant “causes pain.” Every day of his life, when hearing his name, he heard “causes pain.” Can you imagine hearing day in and day out that you are nothing but a pain to those around you? After a while, you might begin to believe it. When Jabez's mother prophesied his life for him, he refused to listen. He prayed to God that he would not cause pain. These kinds of prophecies go on all the time. Every day parents and peers prophesy over people's lives. Sometimes it is positive; sometimes it is negative. Each day some children are told they will be a great success in life, and others are told they are going to be losers. When we hear these message over and over again, we begin to believe them. So remember, you do not have to be limited by the prophecies of your parents or others.

Like Jabez, you can stand out in the crowd if you will simply throw yourself at God's mercy and let Him help you be all He has purposed you to be. Don't let the crowd determine your future.

2. If you want to stand out in the crowd, stop procrastinating and get going.

Jabez had goals. He wanted to enlarge his territory. Within the context of his mother's negative view of him, this is impressive. It demonstrates a great mindset. He wasn't trapped within his circumstances. He simply decided to step out and pray that God would help him with his plans. What plans do you have? While we are not of this world, we are in this world. We are allowed to have goals. We are allowed to have plans. Yes, we must keep them within the confines of God's will, but if we just stand still, we will never stand out. So don't get bogged down by worrying about your future. Just look ahead and ask for God's blessing on your future as well as your present.

3. If you want to stand out in the crowd, stop standing and start kneeling.

Sadly, too many people have focused on what Jabez prayed, even turning it into a mantra of sorts to be repeated as if the words themselves are magical, but they have missed the real point. We should not focus so much on what Jabez prayed. We miss the whole point, and that is, Jabez prayed. Jabez was not more honourable because of what he prayed. He was more honourable because he prayed. He was more honourable because his prayers revealed a total trust in God. When God wanted us to know about Jabez, he didn't tell us about the territory he gained, He told us about his prayer.

If God was going to point you out in a crowd, would He mention your prayer life? The fact is, we can only stand out if we rely on God. Do you rely on God or on self? That will be the dividing line between those that God notices and those that God overlooks. If you want to stand out in the crowd, you can't do it alone. God has to be on your side. So, stop standing and start kneeling.

4. If you want to stand out in the crowd, recognise that God is your fortress and your strength.

Jabez recognised that he could not enlarge his own borders. Instead of relying merely on his own strength, Jabez relied on God's strength. Too often, we have a "pull myself up by the bootstraps" mentality that says we don't need help. We have this idea that we can do things all on our own and only need God for impossible things. That just isn't true. The fact is, apart from God we can do nothing. Therefore, if we want to stand out in the crowd, we must start recognising that real strength comes from God and not from us. We can't do this on our own. We must rely on God.

5. If you want to stand out in the crowd, don't step into the devil's traps.

Jabez understood that committing evil would be contradictory to what he was asking of God. He did not expect, as too many do today, to live however he wanted and still receive God's blessing. However, he also knew evil was too powerful for him. Therefore, he asked God to keep him from evil so that he would not inflict pain on others. We too need to recognise this. We may have all kinds of plans. We may even say we are relying on God, and offering all kinds of prayers.

However, if we are going to step out of our prayer closet to simply walk in sin, the devil will take our legs out from under us.

That way, we cannot not stand out in the crowd. Sin is diametrically opposed to what God wants for us. If we wish to stand out in the crowd, we need to turn from our sins and run to Him. He is faithful to forgive us and cleans us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

What a great example Jabez is. He stood out in a crowd, and we can too! However, we must follow these same five steps.

- a. Don't let others determine our future.
- b. Stop procrastinating and get going.
- c. Stop standing and start kneeling.
- d. Recognise that God is your fortress and your strength.
- e. Don't step into the devil's traps.