

## **Stand Up Stand Out**

*“Stand Up Stand Out”*

October 19-20

### **Introduction/Recap**

Hey everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to service. We are so excited that you're here this weekend as we conclude our powerful series, *Stand Up Stand Out*. Over the past weeks, we've tackled some of the biggest cultural and spiritual challenges of our time — issues that demand a choice to either bow down and blend in, or stand up and stand out for God.

Throughout this series, we've painted a picture of what it looks like to be a "stand up, stand out" individual, someone who stands firm despite the pressures of this world. We began by laying a foundation on the bedrock of objective truth, truth that doesn't bend or change with culture or opinion but is rooted in the unchanging Word of God. A stand up, stand out person is one who upholds this truth in a world that constantly tries to blur the lines between right and wrong.

We then moved into a conversation about radical love—the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated, a love that doesn't wait to be deserved but is freely given, even to those who oppose us or live differently than we do. This radical love sets us apart, calling us to extend grace and mercy when the world might say otherwise.

Next, we tackled what it means to live righteously and in purity, especially in a culture that often promotes self-indulgence and blurred moral boundaries. We saw how God's design for relationships, sexuality, and personal holiness calls us to stand up for purity, not out of legalism, but out of a desire to live in a way that reflects God's own heart and holiness.

Then we were reminded of the importance of Biblical stewardship—living with a Kingdom perspective that values eternal things above temporary comforts. A stand up, stand out individual is someone who sees their time, talent, and treasure as entrusted by God, not for selfish gain, but for the advancement of His Kingdom and His justice.

Last week we wrestled with how to contend for God's justice in a world that desperately needs His truth and mercy. We saw how a stand out person is not only grounded in truth, love, purity, and stewardship but also passionately seeks to see God's justice roll like a river in every area of life.

As we conclude this journey, we're reminded that standing up for God's truth and righteousness, loving radically, living purely, stewarding wisely, and pursuing justice are not just isolated acts. Together, they paint the full picture of what it means to live as a true disciple of Jesus—a life that stands out not for our sake, but for His glory and the advancement of His Kingdom.

### **A Dead Man Walking**

But as we look at the composite sketch of a stand up stand out person, there is startling reality that becomes apparently clear. This is the elephant in the room, the thing nobody seems to be talking about anymore although Jesus certainly taught it—you and I won't be able to stand out for Jesus as long as we live. That's why Jesus said that in order to follow Him, we must die.

*“Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?’” (Matthew 16:24-26 ESV).*

Jesus makes it clear that in order to live for Him—to stand up and stand out in this world will require a dying to ourselves. The promise is that Jesus gives us new life. We all want the promise of new life. But before the promise there is a premise. We can't have the promise without the premise. The promise is new life but the premise is to die to the old one. Many people want the promise of new life but they're still alive to the old one. Many people want the promise of new life but they want to remain neutral and sit on the fence.

I often tell the story of the atheist who committed his life to Christ because of a dream he had. He said that in the dream there was a large group of people gathered. On one side of the group stood Jesus and on the other side stood Satan.

Separating them was a fence running through the group. The scene set, both Jesus and Satan began calling to people in the group. One by one, people began siding with Jesus or with Satan. This kept going for some time.

Soon enough, Jesus gathered those around Him and departed and Satan did the same leaving only the man sitting on the fence. As he sat there alone Satan reappeared as if looking for something he had lost.

The man said, "Have you lost something?" And Satan looked straight at him and replied, "No, there you are. Come with me."

The man said, "But I chose neither you nor Him. I sat on the fence."

"That's ok," said Satan, "You see, I own the fence."

In order to stand up and stand out for Jesus you need to make a choice. You need to choose to reject this world and the life that it promises in order to take hold of the Kingdom and the life Jesus promises. But listen carefully, Satan owns the fence and to not choose is to choose.

And this is something we see in every person who stands up and stand out for God. They chose to lay down their lives, their dreams, their wants, their desires, for God's plan.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life," (John 12:24-25 ESV).*

Jesus said that when we lay down our lives, we bear much fruit. Here's the scary truth nobody seems to be talking about. We talk about transformation, we talk about revival, and we might be tempted to think maybe my school could be reached if I was a more gifted individual, maybe my workplace could be reached if I was more eloquent, or knowledgeable. But what if what the world really needs are not more gifted people, not more knowledgeable people, (although there's nothing wrong with that). What if what the world really needs are more people who are dead to themselves and just willing to do whatever it takes to see the world won for Christ. People who aren't afraid to stand for truth because they know that one day Jesus is going to stand for them. People who aren't afraid to love the unloveable because they know that's who Jesus came to love. People who give radically of their resources because they know this life is a mere vapor compared to the life to come. People who live righteously because they've died to worldly pleasures. Gifts are great, understanding is great, but I believe revival comes when Christians die to themselves and the pleasures of this world and start living radically for the Kingdom.

If you look at all the times the king's heart was changed, or deliverance came, it was always preceded by a "death" of some sort. I'm not only talking about a physical death but a dying to self. Whether it was Daniel dying to his self-preservation and pleasure by rejecting the king's food to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego dying to themselves in order to stand against idolatry. Or Esther who died to her reputation and status in order to save her people. If any of these people had clung to their own lives the story would have been very very different.

### **Even if He Does Not**

In his book, *Discovering Daniel*, author Amir Tsarfati points to the response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as a model. Because each of us will face moments where we will have to make a choice to bow down and blend in or stand up and stand out. Our reputations may be at stake, our livelihood, or even our very lives. Upon the threat of death, this is how they responded.

*16 "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.*

In other words, you may be a king but there is still a higher power that we answer to. Whether it's your boss, a professor, or a powerful client, we still answer to a higher power.

*17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. 18 But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up,"*  
(Daniel 3:16-18 NIV).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego pledged undying allegiance to God and an unwavering belief in His ability to save them. But then they said, "But even if He does not," which at face value might seem like a cop-out or a statement of doubt. Many Christians are afraid to pray, "But even if He does not" prayers because we've read passages like James 1:6 that says,

*"But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind,"* (James 1:6 NIV).

As Amir Tsarfati writes,

*"'But if not' does not constitute a lack of faith but is rather a declaration of faith."*

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not doubt God's ability to save them but they also trusted in God's sovereign will. If God's plans and purpose would be better served by letting them die, they trusted that too. Are we willing to pray "But even if He does not prayers"?

Esther had the same resolve to pray for her deliverance but trusting in God's sovereign plan,

*"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish,"* (Esther 4:16 NIV).

Jesus Himself prayed a similar prayer before His crucifixion in the garden of Gethsemane.

*"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done,"*  
(Luke 22:42 NIV).

Jesus trusted that God could deliver Him at any point but He also trusted completely in the sovereign will of the Father. So to pray, “But even if He does not” is not a statement of doubt but rather complete trust in the will of the Father.

To stand boldly for God means we demonstrate an unwavering belief that He is able to deliver us from any and every difficult situation. It also means we have the faith that when God says, “No” or “Wait”, or when God’s plan looks different from what we expect, we still stand and trust in His sovereign plan.

We will face opportunities to pray this in so many areas of our life,

### **Work/Business**

Like Jonathan and Sarah Loren’s testimony. He was faced with a choice to lie about the insurance claim or tell the truth. He believed that God could provide but regardless of the outcome He stood firm in integrity and trusted God’s plan.

### **Finances**

God might be asking some of you to be obedient in your stewardship. You know He’s asking you to give or to give more of what He has entrusted to you. It doesn’t make sense on paper but can you pray, *“God, I know You are my provider, and I believe You can turn my situation around, but even if You don’t, I trust that You will meet my needs in ways I can’t yet see, and I’ll continue to honor You with what I have?”*

### **Relationships**

Some of you might be in an unhealthy relationship that you know is leading you away from God. Are you willing to be obedient and give God control trusting in His ability to transform lives but also in His sovereign timing?

### **Life Direction or Purpose:**

Maybe you have an opportunity for a school or job that is presenting itself but you know God is not opening the door. Will you pursue it anyway because it seems like the most logical choice or will you trust that if this door doesn’t open God has an even better one?

### **Persecution or Social Pressure:**

Maybe you’re in a spiritually hostile work or school environment and standing up for your faith will lead to backlash or social isolation? Can you say, ‘God, I know You can protect me from this rejection, but even if You don’t, I will not back down, and I trust Your presence with me in the midst of it?’”

### **The Writing on the Wall**

Whose favor do we desire most? God’s or man’s? Daniel knew the times he was living in and that the writing was on the wall (literally). In Daniel 5, Daniel is a much older man than when we saw him last serving under King Nebuchadnezzar. Now one of Nebuchadnezzar’s descendants, King Belshazzar now sits on the throne. King Belshazzar does not fear the Lord. In fact, he throws a great banquet in honor of his nobles and he demands that the sacred goblets that were stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem be brought in so that they can toast their pagan gods. And as they’re partying a human hand appears and begins writing on one of the walls! The Bible says the king’s face went pale, his legs became weak and his knees started knocking. In typical fashion, all of the enchanters, astrologers, and wise men of Babylon are summoned to interpret the writing.

*“Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom,”*

Says King Belshazzar. Eventually, when they all fail, Daniel is summoned and the king's offer stands.

*"Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means,"*  
(Daniel 5:17 NIV).

Daniel interprets the writing on the wall and tells the king that because he has not humbled himself, God has numbered his days and that his kingdom is at an end. That very night Belshazzar is slain and a new kingdom is established.

The king and many of his administration are slaughtered that night. Can you imagine if Daniel had received the king's offer? He would have been the third highest ranking official for a kingdom that was about to be conquered. He probably would have been killed. But his life is spared. Listen, the world and its leaders have been given authority to rule for a time. But make no mistake, the writing is on the wall, their days are numbered and a new Kingdom is about to be established. What good will the riches and the power of this world be then? Daniel knew Babylon's days were numbered and he lived in a light of a coming kingdom. I pray that we would have the same foresight. The kingdoms of this world are passing as we speak. Anything they have to offer will be of no benefit in the life to come. Live in light of the coming Kingdom.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think living as a disciple of Jesus and modeling a stand up, stand out life will require complete surrender and death to ourselves? In what areas might you still be holding onto control instead of fully surrendering to God's will?
2. Are there any situations where you are "sitting on the fence"? How is God calling you to make a choice and take a stand for Him in your relationships, work, finances, etc.?
3. How does the idea of praying "Even if He does not" challenge or encourage you in your current circumstances? Are there any circumstances where you need to trust in God's sovereign plan in the midst of uncertainty?