

## An Audience of One

Popularity seems to be the theme of the day. And there also seems to be much competition in that arena. The more "likes" you have on your Facebook page, the better. In theater, movies, public speaking, even preaching, the bigger the crowd the better. It is even possible that people are forming their speaking content around what they know will be popular - even if they don't believe in it themselves. Some will do or say anything to draw a crowd.

It is reasonable to want to reach the most people - especially if it affects your business. How can you sell something if no one knows about it? How can you communicate a truth if no one hears it? Bloggers seek to have a large number of readers to get their message across. Preachers utilize the internet, radio and television as well as their churches to share the message of the gospel with the most people.

There are even businesses built around the business of reaching the largest number of readers, customers, etc. Businesses hire web masters to construct their websites to attract the most people. Politicians hire publicists to reach the largest audience.

A problem arises when there is a tendency to do or say something just to please the crowd. Crowd pleasers want to be in the majority no matter what the issue.

As with many things in our world, our perspective in this area can be upside down. If we are constantly trying to please other people, our own values can get buried in the effort. It is possible to attend some churches where you can enter the church, be in a huge crowd, be entertained by the music and the message and leave without having really having turned your thoughts toward worshipping God. It is also possible to spend a day with coworkers and family and be so intent on pleasing them that by the end of the day, you discover that you have sacrificed not only your valid opinion, but also your convictions in an effort to be a part of the crowd.

The Bible gives us some great examples of those who had a right side up concept of an audience of One - focusing on pleasing God no matter what the crowd might think, do or say. Christian martyrs through the centuries have joined these great men and women found in scripture.

One such example was Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen was first in the list of seven men chosen to relieve the disciples from service that would hinder their ministry of the word of God. Stephen was referred to as a man "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" and "full of faith and power".

Stephen's dedication to Christ angered some so much that they brought false accusations against him. When given a chance to defend himself, Stephen recapped all that God had done for His chosen people, turning the table on his accusers by telling them that they had resisted the Holy Spirit of God, just as their fathers had done. Enraged, they *gnashed at Him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"* (Acts 7:54-56). With that, they stoned him. His last words were, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.... Lord, do not charge them with this sin*" (Acts 7:59-60).

Stephen, full of faith and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, focused on God and God alone.

On the cross, Jesus said, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" and "*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit*" (Luke 23:34, 46). With His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus' mission was complete and He is now sitting at the right hand of God - Mark 16:19, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 10:12. This passage in Acts where Stephen saw Jesus in glory is the only reference to Jesus **STANDING** at the right hand of God.

Often at a concert or a professional performance, those in attendance who stand at the end are signifying a job well done - a presentation worthy of recognition.

Stephen, his life focused on an audience of One, was rewarded not only with his Lord receiving his spirit, but seeing His Lord stand as Stephen passed from the presence of his accusers into the presence of his Lord.

*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5).*

We are not told exactly how Enoch pleased God, but we know he did - so much so that God spared him from physical death.

We do know how Stephen pleased God. God did not spare Stephen from physical death, but the way he died, his testimony before he died, and his Christ-like prayers when he died were evidence that he was only concerned with pleasing one Person. And he did. While Stephen was dying, Jesus was standing!

What we choose to do, how we choose to live, what we choose to say has a great deal to say about whom we choose to please. For you, will it be as large an audience as possible - a fickle crowd - or will it be an audience of One - Jesus, the one who died for you?

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