

CAN ONE PERSON MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Ministry: Movement or Monument?

2 Chronicles 26:1–21; Isaiah 42:5–8



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In Isaiah 40:3–5, Isaiah painted a grand mural of God's glorious coming to earth. The word picture of God's glory—His *kabod*—is vivid in Hebrew. In some contexts, this word means “to be heavy, weighty.”¹ God is heavy with splendor and magnificence.

In contrast, humanity's greatness is as insubstantial as a blade of grass that withers “when the breath of the LORD blows upon it” (Isaiah 40:7). Yet, how tempting it is to claim the credit ourselves for the mighty works God does in and around us.

Perhaps no one feels that temptation more than those who serve God in a public ministry—those who have been called to hold His glory in sacred trust. Whether their work becomes a movement of God or calcifies into a monument to themselves depends on one crucial factor: who gets the glory.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Simple Formula

In Isaiah 42, the Lord made several promises to His Servant, Messiah: He called Christ, promised to guide Him, and pledged to use Him as a light to the nations. As fellow servants with Christ, we carry on His ministry. We, too, are called, guided, protected, and used as lights to open eyes blinded by sin. But we must always keep in mind the Lord's next words:

“I am the LORD, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.” (Isaiah 42:8)

The elements of verse 8 contain a formula for keeping our ministries moving forward:

- First, remember His name.
- Second, reflect His character.
- Third, rejoice in His praises.



Quotable

*Ministry
monuments
result in disaster.*

Stay humble.

*Exalt God
alone.*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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No matter how gifted we are, no matter how many people hang on our words or listen to our songs or heed our counsel—we have no right to take God’s name lightly or attempt to eclipse His glory or steal His praise. As soon as we do, the movement of God halts and a monument to our glory is erected; and how quickly those monuments come crashing down, taking us with them. A tragic example of this rise and fall is found in the story of King Uzziah.

2. An Example to Learn From

Uzziah made his entrance onto the pages of Scripture with great fanfare. His father, Amaziah, was assassinated after turning away from the Lord, and the kingly mantle fell on Uzziah at age 16.

For many years, King Uzziah was committed to doing things God’s way. Because of Uzziah’s faith, God allowed him to prosper for 52 years—as a captain of the military, as a builder, and as a farmer. With God’s empowerment, Uzziah conquered the Philistines and Judah’s other enemies (2 Chronicles 26:6–8), constructed fortifications in Jerusalem (26:9–10), hewed cisterns and developed farming (26:10), and built a vast, well-equipped and highly trained army (26:11–15).

Slowly and secretly, though, pride had been slinking into his heart, and he had begun to polish his medals more than praise the Lord:

But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly. (26:16)

No longer did he see how the Lord helped him to get where he was. Once a movement of God, Uzziah’s kingdom became a monument to himself, and the Lord was about to remove its foundation of blessing.



LET’S LIVE IT

Five Signs of a Monument in the Making

- *When greater battles are fought within than without*
When any ministry leader no longer battles “Philistines” but becomes more and more self-preoccupied, a monument is starting to take shape.
- *When more attention is directed to the leader than to the Lord*
If people mention the leader’s name more than the Lord’s, if they cater to his or her whims without question, then the ministry is a monument to the leader and has slipped away from God’s favor.

Most prideful leaders don’t even realize what’s happening. They’re so accustomed to people giving them attention that they don’t smell the stink of arrogance rising from their me-first attitude. Egotism desensitizes them to their own foolishness.



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- *When God's help is nice but not essential*
After preaching one hundred sermons, it's easy to coast through number 101; when the songs have become old and familiar, it's easy to go through the motions one more time. Some leaders get so used to speaking for God that the Lord's glory loses its weight; they start throwing their own weight around.
- *When worthwhile reproofs are resisted rather than received*
According to Proverbs 9:7, "He who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself." Uzziah's anger pointed to the wickedness brewing inside him. If we truly desire to live God's way, we'll welcome correction with grace and humility.
- *When the consequences of sin are ignored*
Uzziah ended his magnificent reign cut off from the temple and the nation, quarantined as a leper in a separate house (2 Chronicles 26:21). Grasping for glory, Uzziah died in infamy. His story flashes a warning sign: Take seriously the consequences of sin. In arrogance, we tend to blame others for the backlash of our wrongdoing. However, as the New Testament writer James reminds us in James 1:14–15, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Ministry monuments result in disaster. Movements of God, however, accomplish amazing things.

You may be a minister, a church leader, a Sunday school teacher, or a counselor. God can do remarkable things through you as you depend upon His help. Always remember, though, who gets the glory!

Offer some examples of biblical characters who gave God glory. How were they blessed?

ENDNOTE

1. John N. Oswalt, "Kabod," in *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 426.



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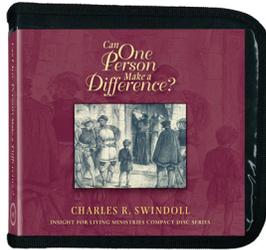
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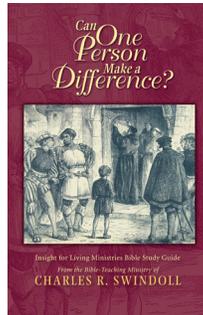


Tools for Digging Deeper



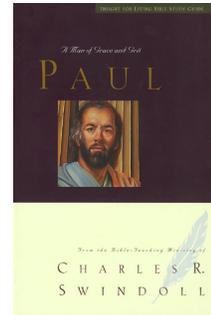
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