

STAND OUTS

Using Biblical Values to Stand Out

Introduction

Would people notice if you were no longer in your community unless you were physically present or spent money there? Are you known for being unique in some way, or do your values completely fit into the cultural and societal value structure? Do you stand out in any way other than how you look? What makes you different? Do your values and beliefs stand out among the people you are around? If so, how? Why? If not, what is the best way for you to stand out in a good way?

Jesus Christ was born into a religious culture. They knew the laws, regulations, and rituals required to be a good Israelite. They knew what to say, what to do, and when to do it. They even had people point out when people acted outside the societal and cultural norms among their people.

Fast forward. Look at today and where you live. What are those norms? How do people stand out? Are there people who try to keep people within social and societal norms and beliefs? What happens when someone steps outside those norms?

When we think of stepping outside the "norms" of where we live, we usually think about this in a negative way. For example, someone who is aggressive toward another person because they feel disrespected or were cut off while driving on the highway and it escalates into road rage, but what happens when someone goes above and beyond the norms by doing something extraordinary? What happens when someone is overly generous to someone struggling because of a lost job, or joyful somehow even in the loss of a spouse, or encouraging to someone who lost to someone who cheated during a game? Those are rare and uncommon values in American culture. They are values that many people respect and honor, even if they are rarely seen these days.

So, how or why do these people who have these "good" values come to have them? These people tend to be regarded with a lot of respect and honor. People are drawn to them for some reason. Why is that? They may be ordinary people, but they have something about them that really stands out.

Have you seen businesses that are the same way? When you walk into their location, how they treat each other or you is different than what you expected. You may have expected a "Welcome to XYZ Company. Who are you here to meet, and are they expecting you?" vs. "We are honored to have you here. So-and-so said you'd be here, and we are glad you could make it. I'll let them know you are here. May I take your coat or get you something to drink?"

The second version seems different. It takes extra work to make that happen. That's unique. I don't know about you, but I'd feel very welcome and respected for being there. I'd feel honored to be the one there with them. I might even go as far as to say I felt seen, cared for, and loved by someone who didn't even know me. Why would they do that?

It would likely be very difficult for every business to have that personal touch to their business. It's not a value that every person or business has built into their culture. If it is something we like, why doesn't everyone or every business do it?

For those that stand out like this, these are values that are intentional. They don't want to "fit in," but rather to stand out, and they understand that doing things the standard, normal way will yield standard, normal results.

These "standouts" had to define what makes them actually stand out amongst the people and businesses they are around. They have something or somethings that are not the same as cultural norms. They break the mold while also being quite normal for other things. If this is something you want to do, keep reading. If not, you probably didn't pick up this book to be "normal" or "regular." Let's dig into how you or your business can stand out.

Chapter 1: Which Values Do You Have?

If you were to define your personal, professional, or business values compared to cultural values, how would you define the differences?

Are you living with all the same values? How are they different? If you have any differences, which ones are different?

How do you or your business live out those values?

Most people haven't defined their values. It's a major exercise for businesses. Experts are brought in. Post-it notes are put on walls. Words or terms are voted on. Discussions are had regarding how a word or phrase will be further defined. For a really good business values exercise, each value is broken down and defined for how it can be lived out in that company by every employee. Have you been through an exercise like this before? By the end of it, many people are either exhausted or charged up and excited about implementing and using these newly defined and agreed-upon values.

Here's the challenge: How are the values defined any different than the cultural norms or expectations that your family, customers, vendors, shareholders, or employees have for being a good person? Do any of those values stand out, or are they the norm or expectation people have of you or the company? If you are only defining values and beliefs that are "normal" for your society, then your values are cultural norms and are merely expected by those around you. They aren't truly unique. They are only a reflection of what society expects.

So, I'll ask again: how do your values differ from cultural norms and expectations? How do you live so that others can see it rather than just read it on a plaque or in the hallway? They aren't just spoken; they need to be lived boldly, and in some cases in ways that challenge cultural norms.

We'll walk through how to define your values. You may even have values that are culturally expected ("assumed values"), but you live them out uniquely. That's wonderful, and congratulations! To have your primary values, however, all that is culturally acceptable is to

blend in and not stand out. You weren't designed by God to fit in. You were designed by God to stand out in a way that may go against some cultural norms. Let me explain.

If your values are equal to the cultural values, then you'll likely do okay in life or at work, but you won't stand out in ways that others will notice. Part of the reasoning for having your values written down and defined is to live differently, or, dare I say, uncommonly, in some ways.

Having all distinct values from cultural norms is not recommended. If that were you, you wouldn't fit in or be likely to be able to operate well in the culture in which you are living or working. You need some of your key values to fit within the cultural norms, but if every value does, then you will likely and easily emulate both the negative and positive values.

If all your values are culturally normal, then you are culturally normal. You may be louder, prettier, shorter, taller, stronger, or even have some unique interests, but you fit in. Now, I'm not saying normal is bad. It certainly isn't a bad thing, although I do think there are bad values and norms in every culture. Just in the USA, we could say materialism, personal fame, and being rich are values that are commonplace. These values have gotten a lot of people into trouble and led them down the wrong path, doing things they wouldn't be proud of.

I remember being part of keeping up with the Jones challenge. My reason for wanting a luxury car was a show of importance and money. The reason I wanted a house in a certain city was that it had a certain prestige that I wanted to have. The reason I wore certain clothes was to impress others. The desire to look good drove my values and what I did or said. Don't get me wrong: a nice car, a nice house in a great neighborhood, or even high-quality clothes are not bad things. Those "things" aren't bad. It's the value that drives you to have or do those things.

Please don't let my experiences stop you from knowing your values and intentionally living them out. Keep reading, please. By the end, you should have a good understanding of YOUR values, how they fit into or challenge cultural norms, and how you can live them out. In the next chapter, we'll start building this out.

Chapter 2: Negative Values

Let's start with the easy part of building new values. Most people start with what they like and want to be, but it's easier to figure out what they "don't" want and build from there. Let's jump right into it.

When you think about the negative values you've experienced where you live, how have they come across to you? Did they hurt? Were you offended? Did they make you feel small or insignificant? Was someone hurt personally or professionally by them? What actually happened? What happened to the person who caused it—the person who lived out that negative value? Is there a reason they live that way? Is there an advantage to having that value? Is there a disadvantage to living out that value? Is there a time or place when that value is not considered negative by those around you?

Many times, identifying the negative can truly be easier. Now, as you start to think through these things, complete the table below. Feel free to ask others about what they have experienced too. This is not a closed-book assignment, and working in groups can be very helpful as we all carry our own biases. Your turn.

What are the negative values you see or have experienced? Why are they negative? (What about the way the values are lived out makes them negative?) Answer those questions in the table below. List out as many as you can think of. Use extra paper or space if you need it. When listing the negative value description in the second column, you may find that the Negative Value actually shifts. That's okay. Find the right negative value and a description of it that makes sense to you.

Negative Values	Why is it negative?
<i>i.e. Me First</i>	<i>If they don't get their way, they are offended. Get angry fast and take it out on others. They seem to think of themselves as superior and make others feel small and unimportant, especially people of "lesser value."</i>

Ugh, right? It feels ugly, dirty, and emotional to write those down. My guess, you came up with some of those really quickly and then had to think about others more. These will be the starting point for figuring out what positive values you will want to emulate within the culture in which you live. If you come up with more later, please add them to the list.

If you've moved to another culture, city, or country, you may need help with this. Ask people around you what they have experienced. I don't recommend ending this exercise with just these questions and answers. Let them know you are trying to best understand their cultural values. You may also want to ask about the positive values if you are asking other people about this. You'll see more about where you are going in the next couple chapters. For now, though, let's move on and reverse what you've learned.

Chapter 3: The Opposite of the Negative Values

In Chapter 2, you identified your negative values. In this chapter, we will reverse those values and identify their opposite. This exercise will help you find positive values that can become your core values.

Take your Negative Values list from Chapter 2 and list them in the first column of the table below. In the second column, write the complete opposite of each negative value. For example, if your negative value is "Me First," the opposite might be "Selflessness." You may come up with multiple answers, but don't overthink it. Use a thesaurus if necessary, but make sure you understand the meaning of each word.

In the third column, explain why the opposite value is the opposite of the negative value. By doing so, you will get closer to the core of each value. These opposite values will likely be the "Positive Value" you are hoping to find. Again, many people see defining the negative first and the opposite as easier than using the terms "bad" and "good." We all have baggage from those words, which is why we are using "negative" and "opposite" language here.

Then, please elaborate on the "Why is this the Opposite?" column. The description may provide answers we'll use in Chapter 4. That said, longer answers are okay. You'll likely refer to it later.

Negative Value	The Opposite of the Negative Value (complete opposite)	Why is this the Opposite?
<i>i.e., Me First</i>	<i>Selflessness (patience, peacefulness)</i>	<i>They don't get offended easily. They put others before themselves in many cases. They help others who seem offended, even if it takes more time or is out of their way. In many ways, they are very generous, slow to respond, aware of others, and patient.</i>

Now, go back and star or circle 2-3 of the rows in the table that you feel most strongly. We'll refer to these as "Key Values" in the next chapter.

You may also be seeing that the values listed may be values you can use in your personal or business values. All of the values listed above may not be used, but you may identify 2-3 key values in Chapter 4 for further refinement.

Chapter 4 - Refining Key Values

You've come a long way already. Let's figure out how your Key Values are lived out. That's the challenge as we dig into this section. This is where you define "how you can live out your key values" in the culture in which you live.

Take the 2–3 values you starred or circled in Chapter 3 and copy the Negative Value and Opposite Value in the table below.

In column 3 of the table below, write down as many ways as you can think of how you can live out the Opposite Value as compared to the Negative Value. This may take some time. Be intentional here. Your responses here will help you truly implement these values in your life or work.

The ultimate goal of these values is to stand out. You don't want these to "fit in" to the culture; they should buck the system. You'll be swimming upstream with these. In fact, some people may not like that you have these values because they express how negative the negative values truly are. Hopefully those who have the Negative Value as a value in their lives don't respond negatively to you bringing the Opposite Value (Key Value) into the culture, but this could happen.

Let me explain and then refer you to a later chapter with examples (Chapter 7). Are you familiar with youtubeChick-fil-A? One of their values is their employees' health and wellbeing. The owners are Christian and value the Bible and the 10 Commandments. One of the 10 Commandments is to honor the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of rest from your work so that you can honor God and focus on Him. If their restaurants are open 7 days a week, there isn't a Sabbath for the company and its employees. That day off goes against the financial value of making as much as possible.

Many fast food restaurants make the most money on Sundays. Chick-fil-a is taking cultural criticism for being closed on that day. They want the restaurant to be open seven days per week. They consciously decided that the value of the Sabbath, their employees' health, and the ability to go to church were more important than the extra revenue that would be received by being open. This value has caused them to be honored by many, despised by others, but financially to be one of the fastest-growing and most profitable fast food restaurants in the United States.

Swimming upstream may mean some criticism, but it also has the opportunity for people to become raging fans because you not only express that value but you live it out. People can see it. They can feel it. And, regardless of the outcome, most people will respect your decision and the person or business you represent more because you live it.

Your turn. How can you live out the 2-3 Opposite Values that you are most drawn to investigate in Chapter 3? Outline your answers below in the table. Take more space if you need it. To be successful, it is critical to define how the value is actually lived out in detail.

Negative Value	Opposite Value	How Can You Live Out This Value?
<i>i.e. Me First</i>	<i>i.e. Selflessness</i>	<i>Asking more questions of others. Listening first. Be curious about others. Let others go in line before you if they look to be in a hurry or have fewer things to buy. Love others where they are. Show greater patience for people who seem crazy busy. Go the extra mile for someone. Schedule in "margin" in case something comes up. Help others in their time of need.</i>

Congratulations!! At this point, you have done some very hard work. I'm proud of you! The next thing to do is define all your values as you want them to be. These Key Values are part of them. As mentioned in Chapter 1, all your values cannot swim upstream to the culture. You do need to adhere to common values. That doesn't mean you only live out those values "commonly," but live them out exceptionally.

Chapter 5: All Your Key Values

All of your values will not be able to swim upstream with the culture. They cannot all have Opposite Values. You do need to adhere to common values, too. The values you live and exemplify should not be lived out "commonly," but exceptionally. Let's finish your list.

Who do you love most and why? If you are religious or believe in God, then studying the Bible or holy scriptures and applying what you learn may be valuable to you. By no means is this a "lesser" chapter. It is critical to understand what motivates you, what makes you tick, and what motivates you to be the best person or business you can be for those around you. Those people around you may be your customers and vendors. They may be your family and friends. Common values among these people are likely key to you as well.

Use the table below to create a list of values that you hold and wish to live your life by. Similar to what you did in Chapter 5, it's not enough to know their value; you also need to define how you will live them out. You may find that as you break down each of these values, some will sound or look similar. That's fine and common. Get the ideas out of your head so you can take the next step after you have them here.

Cultural Values	Define the Value? (What does it mean, or what doesn't it mean?)	How Can You Live Out This Value?
<i>i.e. Delivering as promised</i>	<i>i.e. Let my yes be yes and my no be no. If I say I am going to do something, then I will do it on time and deliver as I said I would.</i>	<i>Communicate with family and customers in a way that they know that what is said will happen. Confirm activity. Send emails or call when they're delivered. Call them to ensure that what was delivered is acceptable. Say thank you for the opportunity.</i>

Similar to Chapter 3, go back to the list you have in the table and circle the ones that you want to have in your list of values, no more than 6 and no less than 2. The grand total of your values should be between 3 and 7.

If you need to merge some of them because they are similar, you may. Go with the one that makes the most sense to you and your staff may. Ultimately, they do need to be lived out and implemented. They aren't meant to be hung on a wall or added to your website and then forgotten. The values need to be alive, breathing, and working in your life or company every day. You should be able to point to when you did or didn't live out those values. Goals can be set, raises can be given, and friends and customers should be able to point to examples of how you have lived out those values in their lives.

Once you have completed this section, we'll polish it all up and have one final list. We'll do that in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Merging and Finishing Your Values List

The goal is to demonstrate three to seven values. Take what you have for your top 1-3 values from Chapter 4 and then the values you starred or circled in Chapter 5 and add them to the table below.

It may sound odd right now, but the next step is to Order your values. When you have two values that are competing with each other and you need to make a decision about what is the best answer, you default to the value that is higher on the list here.

If your values are "open communication" and "follow-through," and you find yourself in a situation where you are unable to finish on time, open communication comes first, and you inform the person to whom you are unable to complete the project or fulfill a promise that you are unable to do so. This can be difficult when finances are involved, such as when deliveries are missed and money is lost as a result, or if you have "quality" as a value but know you can save money by using an inferior process or product and the client will most likely not find out.

Hopefully, you don't find yourself in this situation very often. Life does happen, and there are days when you will be challenged by your values due to circumstances you could not control or even some that you could. You will need a way to know how to make the best decision for yourself or the company. If you have a company, you certainly want your employees to know the best way to make decisions too. Your values should be a key indicator for how decisions are made.

Let's do it. Talk it out. Put those values against each other to see how you order them. You may find that, based on the order you use here, you are challenged with some more than others. You may also find that in reality, you or your company make decisions in a different order. If so, update the order.

Order	Value	Value Description	How to Live It Out

Congratulations once more! You've done it! You've worked your way through building your key values in a way that isn't "common" in the culture in which you live. Go! Live them to the fullest! Show them what you are made of and make your life, your community, and your culture a better place. Be the hands and feet of something greater than yourself. Make. It. Happen. I believe you can.

Chapter 7: Challenging Good Values Stories

This chapter has a list of stories that have been shared with me regarding Western Values that aren't so clear-cut. They are all true stories from people who have lived in other cultures to add some "gray" to what many people see as black and white.

Paying "Bribes"

Most Americans view paying bribes as dishonest. What if you are in Romania, and you want to get a container released from "customs"? The agent that is handling your import, is getting paid a non-living wage. It is expected that his position will allow him to make a living by receiving...extra gifts. A service charge, if you will. An ungodly economy has bribes being paid to teachers, nurses, doctors, and others. You could wave your flag of "I will not pay a bribe" or consider that as a service fee to get things done in the country, that allows the work of God to go forward, and that those agents [nurses, doctors, etc.] are getting something close to a living wage. [Many people use this option to assist us in navigating many contracts!]

Extra Insurance

In some countries, car theft can be very common. In fact, people in some countries are very good at it. "I believe that we lost 3–4 vehicles in only a few years. There is a mafia. You pay them "insurance," and they guarantee that if your car is stolen, they will find it and return it to you within 24 hours or pay the value of the vehicle. Now, they can do that, because THEY are stealing the cars! We did, in fact, have one vehicle returned! Yes, we paid the insurance, and just as a side note, they know that if you entered the country with a car, it is stamped in your passport. If your car is stolen, you can't prove it was stolen, so you have to pay sales tax on the vehicle's value or you can't leave the country. That was \$2,000 that someone we know had to pay to get his family out of the country after a 30+ thousand dollar loss. Should we pay insurance money to the Mafia?

Openness at Border Crossings

In the same country where "extra car insurance" exists, you are having a Southeastern women's retreat in the mountains, outside the capital of the country. There will be approximately 8 new cars parked there. Will you tell those attending to lie? Border agents will ask you, "Where are you going, and how long will you be there?" [All the better to find you, my dear. :-)] If you are coming from another country, you tell the border agents that you are driving through to another country. I admit to telling bold-faced lies and giving that advice...

Honesty

Is it cheating or dishonest to use two passports? If I use one to enter and leave Serbia, and a different one to enter and leave Kosovo, am I misrepresenting myself, or am I allowing myself to work in both locations?

Servant leadership

You must be very careful with this. Power distance is a big deal in many cultures. If you "overdo servant leadership," it is taken as a sign of weakness. Also, when giving guidance, Americans tend to give direction but not answers. I had a couple who came to us, and we rehearsed the issues, gave some parameters, and sent them away to seek the Lord about what they felt

comfortable doing. They later told us that initially they thought we did not love them enough to tell them what to do. Within each culture, there is a balance between servant leadership and directive leadership. It is very nuanced.

Generosity

Many countries often have strikes. In fact, the banks may go on strike too. While we were there, we were taking out our salary [at \$600 per day limit] to prepare to pay rent and other bills. One day I was unable to withdraw funds. Bummer. I had an appointment for coffee with my neighbor. We were discussing current events, and I mentioned [well, rather complained, to be honest!] that I couldn't withdraw funds due to the bank strike. She said to me, "You would tell me if you needed money, right? I have a business, and I always have access to funds. Please tell me if you need my help!" She was very insistent. Besides being a shock [we were relatively new neighbors], I realized that they are not as financially leveraged as many Americans are. I thought, not even my own family would have offered without my asking—not because they do not love me, but because they have nothing to offer! This was a personal challenge for me. How many times did I want to be generous, but I simply did not have anything to offer?

Enthusiasm

So needed, so great, so nuanced! If you go over their idea of "over the top," you will be discounted and called "so American." Joy is real. Enthusiasm and commitment are also real and necessary! How are they expressed? When you are in another culture, it may not feel like enthusiasm where you are from, but it may not be received that way. All that Italian zeal when it comes raging into Spain makes Spaniards cringe!

Respect

What does respect look like in your country? Defining that value [which is critical] will be very important. I will be very vulnerable here. If you know me, I am not one to tell anyone off, raise my voice at them, or bury them in judgment. I do sometimes sin in my heart, but I usually shut down and don't verbalize. I had a local leader in my home for dinner who insulted my senior leaders [I love and adore these leaders] and boasted about his arrogance. The lid came off, and I brought him [not so nicely] to the truth to show him the wickedness of his comments and tone. That's how publishing lies about my team without even going to them first was out of bounds, and there was even a bit of raising my voice! Well, I was right. I may have "won" the moment, but I fully lost his respect. I had shamed him by correcting him as a woman in his culture. When do we appeal to our brother or sister in a culturally appropriate way? In Spain, the result may have also been a failure, but I would have maintained my respect for having done it. How is respect manifested in your culture?

Community

In some southern European cultures, inviting someone to dinner at your home is NOT sharing community. It is an obligation to reciprocate, and often, people do not want that! If you bring someone cookies, a bottle of champagne might appear at your door. It takes time before others are willing to come to your home. In fact, it may need to start out as "coffee" in a neutral place.

That is common. There is no obligation for them or you to join your community until they are ready.

Appendix

Additional Resources:

Three Colors of Worldview - KnowledgeWorkx.com