



V.I.P.

“Welcome to our exclusive V.I.P. Suite.” This sign greeted me, not at an airport business lounge, but on my arrival at the Blood Transfusion Service building at the City Hospital – V.I.P. in this instance standing for “**V**ery **I**mportant **P**latelets”. As a partially sighted person, I have often encountered references to VIPs in correspondence from social services – referring, in this connection, to **V**isually **I**mpaired **P**ersons.

However, the most widely known meaning of the abbreviation V.I.P. is, of course, **V**ery **I**mportant **P**erson.

In 21st century Britain the exploits of the rich and famous fascinate so many. Celebrity magazines feed our voracious appetites to know every detail about their lives and loves, triumphs and tragedies. Whilst I would detest such unwarranted intrusion into my private life, others crave the wealth and public prominence that comes with being in the media spotlight. As the word “wannabe” (an abbreviation of “want to be”) has entered popular vocabulary, almost simultaneously the word “celebrity”, once synonymous with great prowess or achievement, seems increasingly cheapened. But, as we contrast today’s “celebrity culture” against the seeming ordinariness of our own lives, we can feel far from important. To the casual observer, this is exactly how things may appear. However, if we turn our gaze instead to the wisdom of Scripture, we discover a very different picture. I wish to consider four compelling reasons why each and every one of us is, a **V.I.P.**

1. You are **UNCONDITIONALLY LOVED** by God. Human love can be a very fickle thing. We can prefer or reject others on the basis of their looks, intellect, education, talents or social status – or perceived lack of some of these things. How different it is with God! “... The last shall be first.” (Matt 19:30) He actually *chooses* and *uses* weak things (see 1 Cor 1:26-29). The fires of human love can be fanned when we find loveliness and likeability in another person. Yet, though there was nothing lovely in us to merit God’s love, He loved us enough to send His only Son to die in our place that He might save us, give us eternal life, and be with us every day to help us through the challenges and difficulties of life. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) “... The love of Christ ... passeth knowledge ...” (Eph 3:19) Others may look down on us or put us down, but our value as human beings is not determined by the shifting sands of their opinions of us. The love of God in Christ is a compelling proof that every one of us is a **v**ery **i**mportant **p**erson to God. In the beautiful hymn “My song is love unknown” Samuel Crossman put it so eloquently: “Love to the loveless shown - that they might lovely be.”

2. You are **UNIQUELY GIFTED**. No two people are ever exactly alike - we are all wonderfully unique. God has given you gifts and abilities He hasn’t given me – and vice versa. You can do things that others cannot do, or cannot do well. He made you in a precise way, hand-crafting you for a specific purpose which no one else could fulfil, and providing you with the unique gifts, talents and abilities to do just that (Rom 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12:8-9). The reality is that God has given everyone at least one gift, and possibly many more. Have you identified *your* special gift or talent? Are you nurturing and developing that gift and using it for the help and betterment of others and for God’s glory? If not, Paul’s counsel to Timothy has equal relevance

today: "...stir up the gift of God, which is in thee ..." (2 Tim 1:6) and "neglect not the gift that is in thee ..." (1 Tim 4:14). Is not this surely timeless advice?

3. You have **UNLIMITED POTENTIAL**. Perhaps you are smiling as you read this, and thinking to yourself "This guy obviously knows a lot about me!" Ever since I was a child I have loved the story of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:5-14). At the centre of the story is a boy who gave the Lord Jesus all that he had – though it seemed insignificant to the disciples – five barley loaves and two small fishes. We all know how the story ends. The leftovers after 5,000 men (never mind women and children) had eaten were more than they had to begin with! It is a very familiar story, but sometimes that can make us forget the soul-thrilling lesson this story teaches. "Little is much when God is in it." What we may have to offer God may seem small, but when we place our gifts, talents and abilities into His hands, and ask Him to bless them, He can literally multiply the impact and influence of our work and witness (1 Chron 4:10). And, in serving Christ, despite our limitations, weakness and frailties, how comforting to us are Paul's words in Philippians 4:13 – "I can do *all* things through Christ who strengthens me".

4. You will be **ULTIMATELY REWARDED** for faithful service to Christ. When I started to seriously read the Bible after my own conversion, there were two questions that soon came to puzzle me: 1. Why has God included so many lists of genealogies (with unpronounceable names!)? 2. Why does the Bible include so much low-level information about what people *did* for God or *gave* to God? With the benefit of that extra bit of maturity I now know the answers to both questions. 1. God takes notice of *individuals*. There may be six billion people alive on Planet Earth today, but not one is ever overlooked, unnoticed or uncared for by God. 2. God not only *sees* but also *records* the detail. That time you quietly gave a cheque to a needy family down the street, God took notice of it. He heard your prayers on those occasions when you poured your heart out to Him in the quiet place, when perhaps no-one else knew you were even praying for a particular situation. Take courage, dear reader, and be not weary in well doing: for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not (Gal 6:9). Your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58), "for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name ..." (Heb 6:18). Serving Christ can feel a lonely and difficult station at times, but faithful service shall one day result in His saying to us "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt 25:21).

These truths on how we are viewed in God's eyes are hugely encouraging and reassuring. But there is one question I must ask you – "What think you of Christ?" (Matt 22:42) Is He a **Very Important Person** in your eyes? Do you love the One who first loved you? (1 John 4:19) Have you opened the door of your heart (Rev 3:20) to the One Who is the Door to Heaven (John 10:9)? If you haven't come as yet, even today His outstretched arms bid you welcome – with His nail-scarred hands bearing poignant, eternal witness to what a **very important person** you are to Him. May you trust Him too, that you may also prove the hymn writer's lovely words "No one ever cared for me like Jesus".