

INCLUDE + + +

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What if I told you, you have a superpower strength that you don't use a whole lot? I think that happens to all of us multiple times. And I remember the first person that I saw and I said, they have a superpower strength that I want to be like someday. He was a touchdown terror, a chase down fielder, and he was a bat over the knee breaker. Some of you, if you're over 35 years old, will remember the great Bo Jackson. And many of you will have to ask Google who he was. But he had this superpower strength, played both sports at a professional level, NFL and Major League Baseball.

I grew up watching him and idolizing him for the Oakland Raiders to the chagrin of my father and learning as a kid in California about this weird city called Kansas City with no idea where it was. But today, we're going to see how we can use that strength. But we're coming off an amazing Easter there where we rolled out our my four, which is where we get to identify and include, invite and inspire. And today we're talking about include.

But before we get to all of that, I just want you everywhere to recognize how powerful already God is working out of that Easter message, because we have hundreds of locks illustrated at every campus here. And each one of those locks illustrates four people that are either far from God or simply fans of God. And so what we have right now is the people of God praying for God to bring people from the pits and the gates of hell into the kingdom of God. How great is it that we're going to see the Holy Spirit doing amazing work in our midst? Amen. Amen.

And so today, what I want to invite us to do is include these four, your four, my four. I want to invite us to look at why that inclusion is necessary so that we don't miss, right? Because sometimes we can miss what's happening. I want to invite us to see what spiritual growth will happen. I want to invite us to understand and see what God is doing in our small steps of faith that will lead to spiritual stories of everlasting testimony. And then that we will see that intentional inclusion is inspiring for the whole body and for each and every one of us.

And so what are the pits that we don't want to miss? The things that we want to look at when we look at inclusion? And the first thing is, well, we've got to know something about those who are our four. We have to know what they like or what they want and who they are.

I want you to check out so you can get to know a little bit better Bo. Check out one of his greatest commercials ever, Bo Knows. Bo knows baseball. Bo knows football. Bo knows basketball, too. Bo knows tennis. Bo knows running. Bo knows running. Bo knows running. Bo knows running. Bo knows running. Bo, you don't know diddly.

Oh, man, for a guy my age to bring back all those stars and see all of that, just warms my heart. But I also love that, right? So again, music by Bo Diddley. And he concludes with, Bo, you don't know diddly. And we've got to know diddly about those that we've identified as my four.

I want to invite us to think about what we know about who we're praying for to move from being a fan of God or far from God into a disciple of Jesus, like you and like me.

In 2 Samuel 9, 1 through 6, we're going to see King David. And before we get here, a couple things. First, what I love is David is a prototype of Jesus. And so what that means is that in moments that we see David living and being a follower of Yahweh, we see what Jesus will do in fullness. So where we find what David glimpses of Christ, where we find in David illustrations or foreshadowing of who Christ is, we will see in fullness of Christ a full measure of what he does and his love for all people, including your four.

And so David in this story begins where he looks, actually two chapters earlier in chapter 7, he asks God, he says, What can I do for you, God? And he says, I want to build a temple for you. And so David begins with, I want to love you, God, with my whole heart, soul, and mind. And so I want to build you a temple where all of your people will come and worship you and praise you and receive your grace and your mercy and your favor.

And now in verse 9, he's asking the question, God, what can I do for others? As he wants to love his neighbor as himself. And so David said, is there still anyone left in the house of Saul that I would show him? You know, it's interesting because think about this for a minute. David is now the king and has replaced Saul. What he would normally do in that day is David would want to wipe out anyone left in the household of Saul.

So this question begs at first response to say, is this king wanting to say, is there anyone alive? Because if there is, they need to be removed because they're a threat to my kingdom. But again, David is not about his kingdom. And so he says, I want to show him kindness for Jonathan's sake.

Now there was a servant in the house of Saul whose name was Ziba and they called him to David. And the king said to him, are you Ziba? And he said, I am your servant. And the king said, is there not still someone in the house of Saul that I can show this to? And Ziba said, there still is a son of Jonathan. He is crippled in his feet.

And the king said to him, and Ziba said to the king, he is in the house of Makar, the son of Emiel at Lodabar. And then King David sent and brought him from the house of Makar, the son of Emiel at Lodabar. And interestingly here right now, we're not even seeing the name of this servant. He is so below Dabar, got it? That he doesn't even merit a name.

And Mophibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, Mophibosheth, the great king now identifies the name. And he answers, behold, I am your servant. And what he's going to do now is he's going to start to include, because he's identified, and he's going to start to include in his life one who he's identified to come and to experience the great king's favor.

But not just in David's kingdom, in the kingdom of Yahweh.

As you think about those four that you've identified, let me ask you, what do you know about those in your four? What do you know about them and what have you learned about them? What makes them tick? What are the things that they love? What are the hobbies and the interests and the passions that

they have? Where are their families and their rhythms and their routines? What for right now are their centers of their universe?

And I want you to remember, as you think about your four, that you're meeting them where they're at. You're not telling them to come meet you where you're at. You'll bring them there through the power of the Spirit over time. But right now, what are you knowing about them?

And the first thing I want to invite us to do as we include those in our my four, in your rhythms and routines of life, is I want to invite you to include them into prayers of abundance of blessings for them. Because don't forget, right, at this point and at this time, they're not walking in the faith relationship with you.

And so I think oftentimes what happens is we think, I want to help them come to know Jesus, and so I'm going to start praying for them. And we ask those who are far from God or fans of God, we say, what can I pray for you about? And the reality is they're not really often thinking about what they need prayers about. And we come to them wanting to meet them in a time of spiritual starvation where they think that they have something going on, and instead meet them in a time of favor and a blessing.

So what I like to encourage you to do today is just let them know that you're praying abundance of blessings and favor on their lives. It's just a simple message or talking of saying, hey, you know what, this week I'm actually praying that God would bless you with great favor. It doesn't matter where their faith journey is, no one turns down favor of blessings and favor. They're not going to say, oh, I actually don't want that. They're going to say, okay, thank you. That's kind of you.

And so begin to include them into your rhythm and routine of kindness of your life as you are beginning to know what they like and what they know. And you can start to invest in their interest and in their time. And what happens when you do that is they'll start to see that you actually have a genuine care for them. And you begin to build a relationship that will then spur them to say, I want to hear more about you as well.

And it opens that door as you include them in your favor and your blessings and your interests. And then that allows there to be growth for them, for you, beyond what you'll know or what you'll see.

Vincent Jackson was born the eighth out of 10 children in a three-bedroom home in Alabama to a single mother with an absent father in dire poverty.

And Vincent's life choices as a child were not good. He had a severe stuttering problem, which led him to being picked on early on and saying, I will go from the one picked on to become the one picking on. And so he became a self-acclaimed bully. He was a terror in the classroom. He was a terror on the streets, and he found all sorts of ways to get in trouble.

He earned himself the nickname Wild Boar Jackson. And then he doubled down on the nickname on the day that he threw rocks at a Baptist minister's pigs, killing them. And at that point in his life, his mom began to seriously consider reform school for him.

And it was at that time someone began to include Wild Boar Jackson into their rhythm and routine and focused him on his natural-born athlete ability. And he began to focus on football and baseball and became an acclaimed athlete and took on the nickname Bo instead of Wild Boar Jackson.

You see, someone invited him to focus and to hone in on something greater than what he was currently living.

And in 2 Samuel 9, David, we see that he included Mophibosheth in a great way. And he paid homage and said, And then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, Your master's grandson shall always eat at my table. Always eat at my table.

And once again, we see the prototype of Jesus here, and we see what happens in our own lives as we recognize that you and I, whether you're high or whether you're low, in the gift of Holy Communion, we get to always eat at the master's table, at the king's table.

Because now Ziba had 15 sons and 20 servants, and Ziba said to the king, So Mophibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons. You and I eat at the table of our Lord as his children. And as we've been included, he invites us to include others into coming to the king's table as a child of God.

And what happens when we include others is your life will grow. First of all, when you're including others, your own spiritual life will expand.

People will say to me all the time, they'll say, Pastor, I want to know, like, how can my spiritual life grow? And my first question always is, what are you praying about? And they'll say, what do you mean? I'll say, what are your prayers?

Well, I'm praying for, you know, Aunt Susie who's sick, and I'm praying for this, and I'm praying for that, and I'm praying that I would do well with this, and I'd be wise. I say, those are all fine things. But at the end of the day, the will of God is that all human beings would be saved.

So if you want your spiritual life to grow, start praying about the things that God really cares about. And at the end of the day, God cares about those who are going to hell. He wants them to come to heaven.

And so when you are including your my four in your life, your life, your spiritual faith, it will expand. Their spiritual faith will expand. You see, people far from God are being fans of God. They can't keep the Holy Spirit out of their hearts.

And so when you're including them, they will have the Spirit working upon them. So you just let that spiritual growth and life happen within them. And your love for others outside your four will expand as you're doing this.

You will start to see greater vision of how to reach people who are even further outside of your four. And lastly, your love for God will expand because you'll see God doing God things. And you'll see testimonies and stories of God things.

You see, when we focus and turn our attention and begin to include those in our rhythms and our routines, of our kindness and of our lives, we'll hone in on what God has called us to do. To make disciples of all nations. And to share the good news of the Easter victory.

And those small steps that we take will make a great spiritual story. As they'll share what God is doing and what is really important because it will be illuminated for us.

In January of 1991, Bo Jackson was playing in a playoff game for the Oakland Raiders, and he dislocated his hip and broke his pelvis. And after surgery, he ended up with a necrosis disease that ended up denying blood to his hip. And through severe arthritis and the death of his hip, he ended up having to have a full hip replacement.

His football career was over, but he continued to work and to rehabilitate. And in 1993, he stepped back onto the baseball field now for the Chicago White Sox. And in his first at-bat, back from this injury, he hit a home run.

And he went on to play over two more seasons, 160 games, and is still today the record holder for playing the most baseball games ever with an artificial hip. And he's got a great spiritual story out of that.

You see, Jesus meets us where we're at, and then gives us a great testimony as we see Jesus meeting a woman at the well in John 4.

Jacob's well was there, so Jesus was wearied as he was from his journey, and he was sitting beside the well, and it was about the sixth hour, and a woman from Samaria came to draw water.

And Jesus said to her, Give me a drink, for his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

And a Samaritan woman said to him, How is it that you, a Jew, would ask for a drink from me, a woman from Samaria? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

And Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.

The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw water with. The well is deep. Where do you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us a well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.

And Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. Jesus identified this woman and included her, as he includes you and me. And now as he invites us to include others, to meet their needs, to help them over their speed bumps and to see that there is a greater life ahead, filled with living water.

And your inclusion of your My4 is a small step of a faith journey for you as well as for them. And this is where we get to text them once in a while and say, today I'm praying for you, blessings and favor. Today I'm grateful for you as a friend or a family member. Today I want to encourage you and uplift you. Today I'm thankful for you.

That we then potentially move from that text to where we include them into our rhythms and routines, where we include them into invitations to come on over to dinner, to our house, to hang out at the backyard at a fire, to include them, to say let's go golf together or let's go and have dinner or let's go on a walk together.

But to include them. And to give them what they need, not ask them what they need. To put the onus on ourselves to be observant with what they need so that when we see they have a need, we bring a meal. Don't say, what do you need? What can I do? Or if their trash cans are blown out, we just go pick them up for them anyway if they live in our neighborhood.

Or if we just see in some way that maybe they're a little discouraged, we send them a text or a gift card. And we show them what that unstoppable love looks like as we include them in every rhythm and routine of kindness and of love that's beyond them, that says to them, you care about them.

And you do so much so that you know that right now they would spend eternity apart from you. So you're going to do everything you can in order for them to be included in the kingdom of God.

And that intentional inclusion, it's invigorating for them and for us because it sees that we can change a life. And it lets us know that there's a center of our universe that is different than what the world has and what the world sees.

I want you to hear from Bo Jackson today about how his life has changed over the years.

You know, everybody knows you with the baseball and the football. Hall of Fame was announced last night. If you were to go into a Hall of Fame, which one would you choose?

That's not for me to decide.

Yeah? That's not for me to decide. It wouldn't bother me one bit.

But like I said, I don't think I was put on this earth to go to Hall of Fame. And people say, man, I hate the fact that you got injured.

No, don't hate that. My life is laid out exactly how the man upstairs wanted it to lay out.

And I say this, God put speed bumps in everybody's road a lot. Period. What do you do when you're driving through your neighborhood coming from a speed bump?

You slow down, get over it, go on down the road. That's my life. That's my hip injury. It's a speed bump. I slowed down, got over that speed bump and moved on down the road.

Was it easy to get over the speed bump?

After the first 48 hours, yes.

The first 48 hours?

Because I accepted the fact that my football career was over. It took 48 hours for me to accept the fact that my football career was over.

But once it was over, I never looked back.

Wow.

I didn't sit up at Pine, cry, go sit at a bar and drink myself sick.

No.

Where do you get that from?

I moved on to the next chapter.

Where do you get that from that you're able to move on that quickly and not think back and reminisce or think about what could have been?

Football has never been the center of my universe. Baseball has never been the center of my universe.

Life, family, loved ones, friends. That's at the top.

Yeah.

Sports is probably a distant third in my life.

So it was easy.

But don't get me wrong. I was good for the sport, but the sport was great.

With 20 exclamation marks for Bo Jackson.

Wow.

It's opened doors for me.

For a nappy-haired kid, raised in a three-room house, grew up with a speech impediment, now battling chronic hiccups. Had them for four years.

But still able to use my platform, have come such a ways where I can use my platform to help save somebody's life somewhere down the road by going to get a simple PSA test. I'm blessed.

Think about it. How are you being used by God to include someone in that rhythm and routine? To let them see what it is to be invited into the very table of God and the kingdom of God.

I want to conclude today with Luke 5:29.

And in Luke 5:29, Levi made a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others included in a table to come and meet Jesus.

You see, Jesus included you when you had nothing to offer him, and now he invites you to include others. And you're my for today.

Because if you can save a life for eternity, it's worth it.

Will everyone at all campuses please stand and pray with me?

Father God, thank you so much for including us through your son Jesus into the very kingdom of God.

Let us now include others to come and to see and to meet you through rhythms and routines of kindness and grace through us that we've been extended through you.

Lord, today we pray for each and every one of the four that are on my four.

We ask your spirit to open their hearts and their minds to see there's a greater center of the universe, and it is Jesus.

And we ask for them to have an abundance of favor and of blessings.

And may that favor and blessings lead them to say, Why is it going so well?

And we can share and tell the story of the good news of the resurrection and the love and the life of Jesus.

And all God's people everywhere said, Amen.