

# INSPIRE + + +

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Who has inspired you? Like inspired you to actually change your life, to change something that you do. Not some celebrity, not an Instagram reel or a Facebook post. Like a person that you've honestly said, I want to be like them.

Joe was my high school gym teacher. And Joe was in his early 40s at that time, single gym coach, baseball coach, all around great guy, was whimsical and gregarious, was good looking, and was open with us at an all boys school about his faith and about his morality. Joe shared openly that he was still a virgin and was waiting until marriage. Now to do that in front of high school boys takes courage.

Joe was open about his life choices as where he hung out, who he hung out with, and what he did when he hung out. And said his faith is his guiding principle for what he does, how he lives, modest and generous to make a difference. And what I came to recognize years later was as I heard about Joe and heard from Joe and as Joe shared with me and with our friends, that Joe influenced me.

And later on I can today say that I, while I wasn't able to use these words yet, I can say that I wanted to be like Joe. I wanted to have a life where my morality, my principles, would guide my decisions.

As we've journeyed these past four weeks, we've talked about how we are helping and identifying for people who are fans of God or far from God and desiring to know that we have a role to help them become a follower of God. And this is MY4, where we've identified and we've included and we've invited. And today we're going to talk about what it looks like to inspire.

Not only do we inspire them, but then prayerfully they'll be inspired to go and inspire more. And if you haven't yet joined this MY4 journey, where we're praying on our app, I see it all the time as I'm praying, people have MY4, where they've identified people. If you haven't been able to do that, I'd invite you to do that because I know God has given you four people that are either far from Him or just fans of His, that He is saying I want to use you to make them followers of His.

And so join that journey together today, as today we look at what it looks like to be people who inspire. We look at what it looks like to say it's okay that I'm ordinary, that will actually be extraordinary. That we're going to talk about the power of your own story, your testimony.

That we're going to see that addition is actually multiplication. And finally, we're going to see that our God is a God who gives faith that falls to all. Because He desires all to be saved.

So let's jump in on our journey together today, as we think about what it means to inspire or to mimic, right? So when we do true inspiration, we begin to mimic those that we are inspired by. Those that have inspired us. Imitation is the highest form of flattery, as it is said.

And we see that there's a biblical call to this, right? In 1 Thessalonians 1, 6-8, it says these words, "And you became imitators, actually everyone everywhere say imitators, of us and of the Lord. For you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything."

So the imitation, the life that these people were living, as it was being talked about, was something that went everywhere. Everyone saw it, everyone knew it.

And here's the thing about your four. They are looking at your life. And they are wanting to imitate you. They are wanting to mimic you. They want to see what God is doing within you. And they want to have the same thing happen to them. God has set you up in their life to inspire them to become an imitator of you as a follower of Jesus.

Now, I get it. Right now, some of you might be saying to yourself, hold on, stop it right there. Because I think that, yes, we need to imitate people like Jesus, but my goodness, there are so many other better people that they can imitate than me. Let it be with someone else. Who am I? I'm just this ordinary Joe. Remember Joe? See what I did there?

You are. You're right. You're extraordinary. And that makes you perfect to be an extraordinary person to imitate. Acts 4.13 says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and they perceived that they were uneducated, common, everyone everywhere say common. Men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."

Notice this, Peter and John, ordinary common men. They're not rabbis. They're not great orators. They're not people that they're sitting there going, oh, there's Peter. There's John. They're not famous. They're uneducated common men.

But what is different about them? They had clearly been with Jesus. You see, God is setting you up as someone who has clearly been with Jesus. How is your life a life that is a reflection of someone who's clearly been with Jesus?

Because when we are ordinary common people, but we've been clearly with Jesus, it means people in R4 are attracted to us to say, I want to know more about you. There's something special about you. You're different, common, but yet uncommon.

A few weeks ago, I was talking with a person and I just said to them, I said, you know, I got to tell you, your kid inspires me. I watch your kid and I watch their decisions and their dedication. They're here every Sunday at the break of the day. They're here all through the services. They're here for student nights. They're here helping. They're here throughout the week. They're just constantly here.

And I said, you know, I think about me as a teenager and I was never at my church. I was never making decisions that were about what God would want me to do. And I said, your child is a child that I pray my children become like and my children's children.

And they said to me, they said, they said, you know what? It's fascinating. Like every time we're saying, where are you going? They say, we're going, I'm going to King of Kings. I'm going to do stuff at the church. I want to help out. Someone needs this. I want to do this.

And they said, it's been such a peace to know that where they're going is where they're being spiritually fed, but also serving and spiritually feeding others.

Clearly they've been with Jesus. And I am so proud to say that I hear story after story of our high school students, of our young adults, of our people that are in their teens and their twenties that are saying, I want to be where people have been with Jesus.

And they're coming here consistently, regularly. And they're wanting to say, how do I continue to make an impact and a difference in this world? Because I've been clearly with Jesus.

And I see that in my personal life as well, as both of my daughters are always saying, we want to come, we want to help, we want to be.

And that's what happens when we just live out our lives as those who've clearly been with Jesus. Because your story is a testimony. And there's so much power you have in your story.

Can I tell you right now that your story is what will help someone in your four that will help your four come to see and to say, I too want to be with Jesus.

Please hear me in this. It's not you sharing a Facebook post. It's not you sharing an Instagram reel. It's not you sharing a whimsical video of someone who's talking about Jesus. It's not you sharing some sort of apologist who's sharing why you have to believe Jesus.

It's not you sharing the astronaut's testimony. That's going to have them say, I want to have that. It's not. And I hate to say this, like it hurts me to say this. It's not even you sharing the best message from your pastor. That's not going to move those needles.

You know what will move the needle? You openly, honestly sharing your story saying, you got to know what God did for me.

Because the most powerful tool you have for your, my four is your very own story. And by the way, that's biblical. That's biblical.

In Revelation 12, 11, it says, "And they, they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony," everyone say testimony, "and they have not loved their lives even unto death."

The blood of the lamb. So the conquering, the salvation, the work comes through Jesus, his sacrifice on the cross and resurrection of the dead, his giving you the pass as the angel of death passes over those who've been covered by the blood of the lamb.

But the word of their testimony comes alongside you telling what God has done within you and within your life.

Now maybe you're saying today, you're going, okay, I hear you. Like I've got to be able to tell, I don't know my story. I don't even know how to begin. Like I don't even know how to say like, what has God done in my life? Like this is nice. And you're a pastor and you've been trained on this.

And I'll say this, I'm an LCMS pastor and the seminary didn't teach us to tell any of our faith expression. All right.

So it's not about that. Every one of us has a God working story in our lives because God is at work in every one of our lives. So how do you form and fashion your story?

I'm going to tell you how right now.

First, you're going to ask yourself before, say before, what was life like before Jesus became real to you? What were you carrying? What were you searching for? Where were you stuck? What was life like before Jesus became real?

I can tell you life before Jesus became real for me, my life was, it was just searching to be popular. It was searching to be liked. It was searching to have, before we called it FOMO, to not have FOMO.

It was to be at every party it could be at, to be the life of the party, to be the one that everyone said, I want to hang out with Greg, to drink with all those who were drinking, even though we weren't drinking, to do everything that we were thinking was fun.

To be honest, it was pathetic. It wasn't fun. And I was probably more than someone that they were saying he's charismatic and he's great to rather saying he was a clown.

But before Jesus became real, I thought that's what mattered. The opinions and the thoughts of others, that they would know my name and want me to be at whatever fun things they wanted to be at. But there was zero depth. There was zero fulfillment, zero satisfaction for them and for me.

So that was before. And that's what I was looking for and not finding.

And then the second step is, what's the turning point? Everyone everywhere say turning point.

So what happened? What shifted there when Jesus became real?

And it was my junior year of college. And I was empty. And I was searching and began to say, who am I and who do I want to be?

And I remember their inner struggle and inner turmoil. And it actually, it became where I said, like, for me to find out who I am and who I want to be, I've got to know my birth mother.

And so I hired a private investigator to find my birth mother. And after a few weeks, they said, we can't. We don't know anything. There's nothing to know.

And so it was that letdown. And then I found myself just lashing out at all those who were closest to me, like recognizing that I didn't like me.

So how could they like me? And I was putting that on them. And I found myself just drifting and empty and kind of, and actually at a point where I just said to myself, like, if this is what my life's going to be, I don't look forward to what it will be.

And then returning and saying, Jesus, if you're real, like, you've got to, you've got to rescue me. You've got to start to help me.

And then I started to find my identity. And it really began for me to see that it doesn't matter about who likes me. It mattered about Jesus loving me.

And that I didn't need to worry about being liked. I just needed to remember that I am loved by Jesus. And that would fill my inner, my inner hole, my inner emptiness.

And that would begin to help me know that I am excited about what the future will be and who I am, because now I know my identity.

And that shift happened in my junior year.

And then as you form and fashion your story, you're going to talk about after. Everyone everywhere say after.

So what's different in your life now? Now that Jesus is real, you've had that turning point, what's different? Not perfect, because we know that no one has a perfect life, but what did Jesus give you access to that you didn't have before?

And so my life, what's different is my confidence doesn't come in the opinions of others.

My confidence comes in the reality of the love of Jesus.

That my ability where Jesus has led me, my ability to say that I know, I know that I can share the gospel, that I can talk to people, that I can be fun, that I can be comfortable in my very own skin, is because I know who formed and fashioned me in the womb.

That my life verse became Galatians 1.10, "Am I a servant of, or am I trying to please God or man? If I'm trying to please man, then I would no longer be a servant of Christ."

And so now I can honestly say that if people are disappointed with me, it doesn't change my identity and it doesn't change who I'm trying to serve.

That I don't need to have everyone say, I like Greg, I just need to have Jesus say, I love Greg. He is my brother and my servant.

And that's how we begin to form and fashion our story before the turning point and after. And you have that.

And that story is what we see in the woman at the well.

We've journeyed with her for three weeks now and we're going to finish with her this week, John 4:39-42.

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony. Everyone everywhere say testimony.

"He told me all that I ever did."

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, to be with Jesus.

And they stayed there two days and many more believed because of his word.

And they said to the woman, "It's no longer because of what you said we believe, for we've heard ourselves and we know that this is indeed the savior of the world."

We've been with Jesus and what we see in the woman at the well is what we experience everywhere too and what you and I experience and your four will experience.

Your testimony will get them to the table, but Jesus keeps them there at the table.

And Jesus keeps them at the table because Jesus keeps them there with the power of his presence, which is his gospel alive with them.

That he loves them unconditionally, that his grace is sufficient for them and that he is the God who has better in store for them than anyone else in this world.

And that they're always welcome at his table.

And they will experience the same that you experience that you and your story is clearly a story where you've been with Jesus.

And they'll be inspired to be at his table.

And that is where we get to see that the table has additions by multiplication.

And it's so important for us to continue to multiply those who are invited and who are welcome to the table of God.

In Matthew 5:14 through 16, it says this:

"You are the light of the world." Everyone everywhere say light.

"A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand where it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they would see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Notice what it says. It doesn't say you will be a light to the world. It doesn't say you could be a light to the world. It doesn't say when you do good, you will be the light.

It says you are the light of the world.

You are the light of the world as a follower of Jesus Christ. You are the light.

And that light shines to all who will see your good works and give glory to God the Father who is in heaven.

Your works are a manifestation of the work of the Father within you, which then people inspired are inspired to be imitators of you and to then be imitators of Christ.

And what does that light do amongst others and within you?

In Philippians 2:14 and 16, it says,

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing that," like can I just read that again Christians?

"Do all things without grumbling or disputing that you would be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom the light, your light shines in the world holding fast to the word of life."

So here's the good news.

Your light doesn't have to be perfect. It holds the line. It holds fast.

Friends, here's what's happening.

Your four are watching you.

They want to know how is your light shining in the midst of adversity? Is it revealing fear and mistrust? How is your light shining amidst turmoil? How is your light shining amidst uncertainty? How is your light shining amidst disappointment? How is your light shining amidst success? How is your light shining amidst everything that comes at you?

They're watching you. And your life is an inspiration for them when your light shines to Jesus.

When I was in Michigan, we hired a guy and as I was doing his onboarding, I told him about how he could become a tither.

I said, here's how you can give and we can do it automatically, whatever you want.

And he said, Oh, I've already taken care of that.

He said, I've got 15% coming out before I even get my paycheck.

And I said, Oh, so that's awesome.

I said, but you know, a biblical tithe is 10%. And he said, yeah, that's why I've got 15.

And I was like, he was a worship person. I was like, bro, I get it. Your worship math's hard. I understand. Let me help you.

Like, 10% would be this, 15, he said, no, Greg, he said, he said, pastor, you should read the Bible.

It says they gave up their tithes and offerings.

He said, my 10% is my tithes, but the extra 5% is my offerings to the Lord.

He said, that's what I believe we're called to.

And I immediately wanted to say, I want to be an imitator of him.

And it began for us and for me, asking myself this question, what's it look like for our family when someday the largest expense we have will be our gifts to our church?

And we're so close to that.

Where our largest monthly giving will be to our church out of all our other bills.

My tithes and offerings are leading me.

And that's where God is calling you and I and our four to reach therefore and therefore to be imitators of Christ, to mimic Christ in all things, in our patterns and in our way of living.

And what they see, they begin to then share and to tell and to teach.

In 2 Timothy 2 verse 2, it says,

"And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses in trust to faithful people who will also be able to teach others as well."

And that's what you're doing in your, my four in 2 Timothy 2:2, right?

You're entrusting that to them over and over again. Just being entrusted.

And that's who we get to be.

Because we get to also then be those Acts 1:8 people.

If I could get that up onto the screen, that'd be great.

Acts 1:8, one more.

There we go. Thanks, guys.

"That you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come and upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the very ends of the earth."

And that's what happens with our my four as we continue to press in to sharing and bringing those who are far from God and fans of God to become followers of God.

And those four reach four who reach 16, who reach 32, who reach 64, who reach 128 and all the more.

As right now, across all three campuses, we have over 300 locks representing 1200 people who are being prayed for every day to become followers of Jesus, who are then invited to become also inspirations to four more and a four more and a four more.

And I want to invite you right now to stand up everywhere at all campuses.

And I'm going to invite you right now to pray for those four that you've identified.

I'm going to invite you to pray for those who have yet to be identified if you haven't done that.

And I'm going to invite you to continue to see that your life gets to be an inspiration.

Because God has commissioned you today everywhere here at King of Kings to reach four more who will reach four more who will multiply to four more so that heaven will have no one in it anymore.

Because of your four and your work through because it took one person to share with you one story to bring you to know one Lord and Savior to inspire you to reach one more so that all may call on the name of Jesus.

Father God, we lift before you each and every one of our four.

We entrust you to use your spirit and your power to bring them to salvation.

So that all would proclaim Jesus is Lord.

And that our four and therefore and therefore more and all the more for generations to come would shout and sing unending hymns and praise.

May we all be imitators of each other and followers of Christ as we imitate your love for each and every one of us and all God's people everywhere.