

**October 1, 2023**  
**Braving Change: Week 4**

Our series has been driven by a Church Leadership book I read earlier in the year that compared where the church is today to the adventure of Lewis & Clark attempting to find the Northwest Passage.

There are a couple of HUGE hallmarks that stood out in that epic adventure:

1.) When they got to the Lemhi Pass and saw the Rocky Mountains for the first time, they discovered: The world in FRONT of them, was NOTHING like the world BEHIND them!

2.) Incredible Partnerships- Lewis wanted to find the best possible men he could and recruit them to join his expedition. Lewis & Clark were smart enough to know they couldn't do it alone! They had partners that were ALL IN!

This week I want to share 4 Challenges with ReaLife that I believe will guarantee us being a powerful force in our community for the next 15 years! But the only way I can guarantee it, is if we'll all commit to go ALL IN!

I. IN-vited

This is one of the core themes of the Gospel! I'm not sure if you've ever been Uninvited, but it's a terrible feeling!

Have you ever scrolled through Facebook and saw a picture of your whole tribe at some activity, but you never got the Invite?!

A friend of mine spoke at a smaller church when he was young in the ministry, and before he spoke, one of the elders encouraged him to do a good job because they got a call in the office on Friday that someone wanted to come and visit the church, and this rarely happened!

He was in the foyer when he saw a younger lady making her way to the door, and she didn't look like ANY of the ladies inside the church! They were all in nice dresses, nice shoes, carrying gigantic bibles, and this girl couldn't have been any more opposite!

When she walked through the doors, one of the ushers said to her, "Young lady, is that the best outfit you have?" He went on to say, "At this church we wear our best for God!" Well she did what you'd expect her to do, she turned right around and ran out of the building!

One of the greatest truths of the Gospel is that Jesus always INVited the people others rejected!

A. *Luke 7*- One day Jesus got invited to a Pharisee's house for dinner. This was a big deal because it was another opportunity for these religious leaders to show off their religious pedigree.

These dinners were usually held on a porch where the ordinary people could see this lavish gathering and hear the high and influential talk that would go on during gatherings like this!

And then, right in the middle of this influential party, a woman of the street walks in, and the Pharisee's all gasp! She definitely WASN'T on the invite list!

What I can piece together is, everywhere she went, everyday, men used her and abused her. Women glared hatefully, scorning her every step of the way. She would've felt unloved. She would've felt very ashamed. She would never be invited anywhere that mattered.

Here's something else I know, she might feel like some of us feel: not good enough, guilty, for where we've been, wondering how we ended up where we are today.

And so she pushes through a couple of guys that were there to stop people like her, and she falls down before Jesus and breaks open a jar of expensive perfume and begins to wash Jesus' feet!

Then Simon said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

WHY? Why did this woman walk out in public, bust into the most uninviting place in the world, to have her past declared so blatantly in front of everybody?

Luke doesn't give us a direct answer, but could it have been she watched from the back of the crowd the last few days as The God of Heaven takes time for down-trodden, and the down-cast?

Question: Could it be that Love, Grace, Mercy are what we need to be more known for?

## II. IN-valuable

You're not just valuable because of who you are. You're also valuable because you were created for a purpose.

The church at Corinth was primarily made up of slaves and those who were NOT born of noble birth, and so Paul gives not only THEM, but US, this understanding.

He compared US (the Church) to the human body. We're all different... BUT we're greater together!

What's the point? A single animal has one name, but a group together takes on a whole new identity!

Corinth was filled with sinners, slaves, losers, nobodies, but through the power of Christ that came into their lives, they now took on a whole new identity!

But let me caution us. NONE of us are any better than the other!

So understand what the Bible says... (1 Corinthians 12:22- Some parts of the body that seem the weakest and seem like they're least important are actually the most necessary!)

Those that other people overlook, those that never get any airtime, those that aren't out on the stage and most visible, are often the most necessary parts of the body because listen to me, all of us together, are Christ's body, and every single part matters. Your life matters to the heart of God, and it matters in this body!

### III. IN-fluencer

Back when I was growing up, an Influencer was your Parents, a Coach, or a Teacher! Today, that term has been hi-jacked to mean that you're a celebrity, a content creator, someone who has amassed a great number of followers on social media.

The problem with our current view of Influence is that it typically starts with a platform. The size of your platform determines the scope of your influence. But I think it starts with something different. I believe that true and lasting influence always starts with People before Platform.

We've talked about the start of ReaLife, how Debbie and I, and a handful of people got the ball rolling into everything we can enjoy today!

They kept introducing a young, punk kid to Jesus! 40 years later, when I look back at my life, I have to thank God for their influence in my life, and ReaLife is the harvest in which those seeds were sown! Just because you don't see a harvest doesn't mean that your seed didn't take root.

Question: So how brightly are you shining? We'll either CHANGE culture or culture will CHANGE us!

### IV. IN-vested

If ReaLife is going to be here in another 15 years, it's because we'll be invested to GIVE and to SERVE! There's no question our Commitment/Involvement is much greater when we're INVESTED!

The problem is, most of us, unfortunately, are invested in things that don't last. We're investing in things that don't really matter for very long at all.

*Matthew 6:19 (NIV)*

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”

He says don't store up, don't hoard what you have. Don't invest everything that you have in places that don't last and don't matter.

Here's a Key Truth: God has created us to POUR, not STORE. He wants you to POUR His BLESSINGS.

Question: Are you ALL IN?