

We are in the last week of our series called Hoosiers. And throughout the month of June, you've been able to hear from some of my favorite Indiana preachers, men who have shaped my own faith through their teaching, but more importantly, through their lives and their friendship. Rounding out our series today is Kevin Bremner. Kevin serves as the lead minister of First Christian Church in Newburgh, Indiana. He and his wife, Julianne, have three adult children, Isaac, Elijah, and Naomi.

In 2004, Kevin hired me to serve as the middle school minister at Owensboro Christian Church. I had no business being handed the reins of this ministry that he had worked so hard to build up over the years. But Kevin saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. And so he took a chance on me, and I am forever grateful that he did. And then in 2013, Kevin took a chance on another young leader and hired Quentin Bemis to be the worship minister at First Christian in Newburgh.

In many ways, Quentin and I are both where we are today because Kevin believed in us, which means that you can either thank him or blame him, but either way, would you please welcome to Sherwood Oaks our friend, Kevin Bremner.

These guys you got working with you and for you and around you are pretty amazing people. It is remarkable the shadow that Sherwood cast over most of the state of Indiana, but definitely on southern Indiana. And just to see these guys up here doing the thing that they're doing with you in ministry is such, such a cool thing. And so I'm glad to be here. And I have a.

I have a ton of stories that are probably. Yeah, we won't share all of them, but I remember the first time I met Quentin. Let me. Let me go back to the first time I met Quentin. He.

I was at a retreat, and Tim Thompson was leading worship at this men's retreat at Camp Ilyana. You guys familiar with camp, right? So you guys go south, we go north. We kind of meet there in Washington. And we were looking for a worship guy.

I'd only been on staff maybe four months at the church in the role I was in. And I said, tim, I'd love to pick your brains. Who would you hire if you could? And he pointed to this guy in the back with a beanie playing guitar. And I'm like, anyone else?

Like, that's the guy. He said, well, yeah, you gotta get to know him. And you've. You've got some really incredible people around here, so it's pretty cool. And in terms of hiring, Sean, I've been doing middle school ministry for a long, long time, Sean, I just needed a live body.

And Sean was very willing. And I'm like, man, I could do this a lot longer now that Shawn's around. And he just brings life and enthusiasm and joy and peace into most every environment that he's a part of. And I really, really do like that. Really do like it.

So one of the things we're going to do, we just want to talk through for the next few minutes about. We're going to look at influence and how do you grow your influence, or how can you become influential? Sherwood Oaks, as a church possesses it, whatever that factor is, this church has it. You are a part of something that stretches far and wide, further than you'll ever know, into spaces of this part of the world and even beyond. As I'm listening to the Rafa opportunity coming up next summer, that you just extend influence all along the way.

And I want you to know that's not normal, and it's beautiful. So it's kind of one of those things where to talk about influence at a church like Sherwood is kind of raising the bar high. I want to encourage you along the way. I'm going to start with a question. When was the last time?

When was the last time that you were influenced by someone else to do something that they wanted you to do? All right, when was that last time? Now, if you're married, it's easy. You're thinking already about who you're married to and what they cornered you into. Honey, it's just going to be a small gathering of 500.

I promise. You're going to be fine. Or, babe, seriously, I'm only inviting one, two people over. It's nothing. Just throw out a little bit, and then it's 20, you know?

So you're thinking, when were you talked into something? So what was that like? What was the feeling of being influenced? The last thing I purchased was I was scrolling through TikTok. Don't judge me.

I was scrolling through TikTok and I found what I thought. You know, this is a very good solution. It was a canister set that made everything stackable. I like stackable things in my life. There's a lot of things I'm not in control of, but it shouldn't be the pantry.

That should be very controlled space. And so I texted my wife. She was working. I'm like, hey, just so you know, I ordered something off of TikTok. She goes, great.

What? You know, so I have a track record of not making necessarily the wisest decisions around that stuff. But I was influenced in the heat of the moment, the spur of the moment. I'm like, you know what? I can't live without this now I gotta have that.

And so I succumbed to the influence and bought this canister set. They're still around, so I guess they're working. It's just one of those things. When was the last time you talked someone else into doing something that you wanted to do? How did it go?

What were your techniques? How did you use them? Well, did you get manipulative? Did you cry? Cry?

Tears can go a long ways when you're trying to get what you want. And some of you know it, you're really good at it. You're just like, ah, well, you know, and I've went through some coaching sessions in different parts and I always had a, had a philosophy on how to, how to be a good coaching candidate. It was pathetic with a lot of potential. You know, if you combine those two, you can get a lot of places.

Oh, I feel sorry for that little bald man, but there's something about him that I can't take my eyes off of him. Maybe we should do something with this guy to help him out. Influence. We live in an age of influence. Influencers are happening.

Sound bites being pushed, promoted. Visuals, optics, images left and right, right, they're all around us, influencing us. This morning what I want to do is I want to take a look at Jesus initially because anytime we talk about Jesus, anytime we can see him, get a sense of who he is, kind of peel back some of the ways in which he operated. It's always a good Sunday to do that. So we're going to start there.

We're going to take an uncomfortable reality check where we look at what Jesus was doing and how he asks us to step into the same pattern. And then we get to check out with the apostle Paul from Colossians where he implements what Jesus said along the way. We'll tell a few stories and we'll laugh and it'll be a good morning. Influence. Jesus had a mindset that was unique.

While other people try to show up to get what they can get, to leverage power, to leverage position so that they might achieve and accomplish and continue to rise in the ranks, Jesus took a counter cultural approach. There's a story in scripture where a mom comes because moms are the most influential people at getting things done for their kids. Amen. That was more of a groan, but you're right, I hear you. Yeah, they can get, moms are really effective at getting things done and amen.

Somebody's going to get to eat lunch today. Good job. Moms can do this. A mom approaches Jesus, her two sons, followers of Jesus, James and John. You've probably heard of the story, but this is the story of a mom who says, I want my boys to be in the best possible position and I'm not above asking for it.

So she just unabashedly comes up and says, Jesus, whenever you step into the kingdom, I want my two boys to be the first and the second place in your kingdom. I want them to have influence that is authoritative and it's unquestioned, sanctioned, assigned the paperwork right now. So everybody knows Jesus, James and John. And she just pushes and she strikes out. She's not ashamed.

She doesn't seem to be uncomfortable with it either. It's probably not the first time this has happened. She just goes, Jesus mindset, when it comes to influence, is just the opposite. Jesus mindset. You don't show up to assume power.

You show up to serve others. Every room that he stepped into was less about him and more about service. In Matthew, chapter 20, verse 28, he says these words. He says, the son of man, he's referring to himself. The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, to give his life as a ransom for many.

Now at that point, Jesus is talking about ultimately, he's talking about the cross. He's pointing that way. But what he wants us to hear, or what I would like for us to maybe focus in on is Jesus mindset was never about being the best person in the room, in the meeting, in the space of whoever's gathered around. His whole mindset was, how can I serve? How can I serve?

How can I help? What can I do for you? That is a mindset of influence. And it's not an influence that forces its way upon you. It's an influence that just says, you know what?

I can pay attention to your motive and be at ease because you are for me. There's another mindset that Jesus had that was a very influential one. Jesus mindset was, you always speak from an overflowing heart. Always speak from an overflowing heart. In Matthew, chapter twelve, verses 34 and 35, he speaks these words.

He says, the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. The mouth speaks what the heart's full of. So if you're a good person, you're going to speak about the good things that have been stored up in you. And if you're not so good, that's going to come out as well, so the mindset of influence is, how do I speak? From the good, not from the evil.

Jesus did this because he was fueled and filled with a preoccupation with the father. He always spoke words that brought life because he always spent time with the father. He always knew where the father was. He always paid attention to what the father was calling to for him to do in any given moment. And when you're always locked in to what God's asking of you to do, whether you're at the office, whether you're at the neighborhood park, whatever you, whatever the sports environment is, maybe it's soccer, maybe it's tennis, baseball, wherever you happen to be, if you're always paying attention to what the father's been speaking to you, much better to speak that into the rest of the people around you.

Jesus time with the father was always fueled and filled in his heart. Here's the third gyp mindset that I wanna talk about with Jesus. Jesus mindset, when it came to influence is there's always room for one more. Always room for one more. Like the house can never be full enough, there's always room for one more.

In Luke, chapter 19, verse ten, it says these words, the son of man came to seek and save the lost. Now, that's in connection with the worst person in the community. It's a guy named Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector, and he totally took advantage of everybody around him, and they all knew it. And yet Jesus is at his house because there's always room for one more.

There's always room, no matter how far you are, no matter where your behavior has taken you, no matter what marks you remember emotionally, the scars, the conversations that become like, there's always room for one more to go around Jesus to be with Christ. And so these mindsets become very, very key for us when we think about influence.

To show up, to serve, to speak from an overflowing heart, to always allow room for one more person to step in, whether it's your small group, your Bible study, whether it's coming to church, being around the dinner table, whatever the thing is. And after all of this influence, Jesus, at the end of his life, do you know what happens? They crucify him.

He shows up to serve, and they kill him. He speaks from an overflowing heart of the father, and they nail him to a cross. He says, there's always room for one more, and they're not going to have any more of that.

So when Jesus is gone, the disciples get scared. In John, chapter 20, we see a little bit of the insight that they were feeling. It says in John, chapter 20, verses 19, starting there. It says, on the evening of that first day of the week after Jesus death, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus appears before them. And this is what he says, peace.

Peace be with you. I would love it if Jesus just stopped there. Like, wouldn't it be great if that's where Jesus just finished the sentence, peace be with you. And it just settles. My heart relaxes, my mind begins to settle.

But he doesn't stop there. He says these words, as the father has sent me, I'm sending you as God has called me and sent me to serve and to speak from an overflowing heart and to always invite one more in. I'm sending you to do the same thing. I'm sending you out into the world that crucified me, that you might serve, that you might speak, and that you might invite one more person in. This is how a church becomes as big as Sherwood oaks.

This is how a church wields influence, like Sherwood Oaks. This is what it means to be a disciple. Anthony Walker has this as a definition of a disciple. A disciple is one who learns to follow, follows to learn, and never quite arrives. A disciple is someone who learns to follow, follows to learn, and never quite arrives.

There's always movement. There's always a place. Paul picks up on this. Paul takes Jesus words very seriously, his mindset, and he says, if I am to live out what Jesus has called me to live out, I've got to figure out that piece of my life. I've got to recognize that God's called me to influence.

God's called me to change the culture at work. God's called me to shape the way my family operates. God's called me to influence and lean in on the relationships that I have at school, the people I play games with on the teams that I'm around, these things become big. So Paul, as he's working this, Paul is a guy who wrote majority of the New Testament in

Colossians chapter four. I just want to read a little snippet of how Paul began to talk to a church and lived out this influence mindset, that he might continue to help and strengthen others.

This is what he says in chapter four, verse two of Colossians. Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful, and pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders. Make the most of every opportunity.

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt so that you will know how to answer everyone.

I'm amazed at how Paul takes that. He just pushes it into some really good bite sized phrases. Paul just worried, processing. How can I make the most of the life that God's given me? How can I live not with regret, but with this incredible sense of accomplishment?

Because I helped someone else. I've made a way for others to find Christ. There's an inflection .5 of them that I want to talk about this morning that I think Paul would affirm in the words that we just read. But then also just inflection points because they underscore the mindset that Jesus had. And if you're willing, as you're thinking through these mindsets or these inflection points that we're going to go through, I just want you to pick one and imagine what would my week look like if I lived this and I lived this wholeheartedly?

Here's the first inflection point that I want to talk through. It's built on prayer because that's where Paul was. He says, pray, be watchful and thankful. Pray for us, too. Pray for opportunities and things like that.

He says, build a practice of praying for others by name and circumstance. Now, how many of you would say, I'm a person of prayer? You pray like, maybe it's out of crisis, fear, like anxiety, health issues, test, you know, all the things that come up. We pray about everything and we're supposed to. God says, there's not a prayer.

You could pray that you shouldn't pray. It doesn't mean he's gonna answer them all, but he's going to give us directions, like continue to foster that relationship. And so when I'm looking at influence from a prayer perspective, I'm going to pray for people by name, and not just by name, by circumstance. So I have names that are happening in my head right now as I'm talking. I did a funeral for a young man.

His name is Michael. Michael died of leukemia 30 years of age, five years into a marriage with a two year old little girl.

So I'm praying for Gabby and Avery and the ache that today they feel.

And I'm praying for Nathan and Bethany, who just got married yesterday outside. Don't get married outside on 29 June. Oh, my goodness. That's the word. Like it's a personal policy now.

Never to do a wedding outside in the month of June. Like, it was crazy because Michael was supposed to be the best man at the wedding.

So I pray for Nathan and Bethany by name, by circumstance.

Doors of influence and opportunity don't open automatically. They open because we pray that tough conversation gets easier because you prayed it into existence. The conversation you know that you want to have, but you don't want to have the one you need to have, but you know that it's like, ugh. This could go any number of directions, and most of them are south.

Prayer opens doors of opportunity. My wife is. Is beautiful and wonderful, and she's not with me, so I feel like I can tell you a story.

There was a new Hux gas station that was just put in down in Newburgh, Indiana. And Hux has those sliding doors. You know what I'm talking about, but they're both glass, so you never know which one to go to. My wife started walking confidently toward the gas station, and I'm like four or five steps behind her, and she goes to the wrong one, and it's like an abrupt stop, you know? And then she just sheepishly slideshen to the side that opens.

Now, what kind of pastor would I be if I didn't tell you that story? Because I laughed, like, wholeheartedly. Like, I'm like, this is crazy. She doesn't know what to do. When you see sliding glass doors anymore.

I have to be the first one through. She's like, why don't you just pick a door and I'll follow you? And so it's one of those things. But doors don't open automatically for us when it comes to influence. They didn't just open up because we showed up.

They opened up because we prayed for names and circumstances. God, give me the words to speak so that these doors of opportunity might open up. Here's the second inflection point. This inflection point is all about listening. We're always wanting to listen for the points of intersection between the person's story and the gospel.

Now, most of the time, the easier part is just listening to their story. Did you hear? Is a great way to start a conversation, right? Did you hear what happened? Did you hear?

And you're listening and you're listening, and you just keep taking all the data in. And it's good and it's fun and it's energizing. And then sometimes you maybe think, man, I'm so glad, God, that that's not my life. Which is a dangerous way to think. But you hear the stories and you hear the stories.

I think when our neighbors are talking to me, it's not so much that it's just to fill the space. It's that God has given me more opportunity to say, Kevin, this is where the gospel intersects with their life. Listening is very, very difficult in a world that just wants to be heard over and over. And as much as we have recorded of Jesus words and we hold on to each one of them. Can I.

Can I let you in on this?

Most of the words that Jesus preaches and speaks and talks are in relationship to the lives of the people he's interacting with.

He's not just throwing a topic out there that he wants to talk about. He's starting where they are and pulling it into a spiritual space. He begins with the other person because he's there to serve. He speaks with an overflowing heart. He says, yeah, you could be a part of this.

But he's always listening. He's always listening where their lives and the lives of humanity intersect with the gospel. Here's a third inflection point that. And we do this again and again, it just. Our influence just goes higher and higher.

The third one is this. We can deepen our relationships through the simplicity of a meal. There's something about being invited over for a meal. We invite people over to our little apartment all the time. We get invited different places.

It's good to share a meal. And regardless of where we land on, whatever team is going to win the Super bowl this year, regardless of where we land on who's going to be drafted within the first round or second round or whatever the event is, regardless of all those differences, a meal simply just deepens relationship. I would encourage you, if you haven't schedule a meal with someone this week, does that seem like an easy thing to do? Like, don't just like, well, you know, we'll happen to be someplace, schedule it, put it in the books, and just see how your relationship deepens with them. One of my friends, he used to be an elder at our church.

They moved to south side of Nashville, Franklin, Tennessee, and in that area, even further south in Spring Hill, he started a company, called it Mission Cigar and social. Mission cigar and social. It started when he was on a mission trip in Baja, California. And all he does is he opens up his shop. He's got a place where you can smoke a lot of different cigars, and got an open bar where you could have a rum or a beer or whatever just to sit there.

And he said, Kevin, I am amazed at the number of spiritual conversations I get into that are so related to church and Jesus and life. And it's the simplicity of a cigar that broke down all the barriers.

It's the simplicity of just like, you know what? We could talk about anything here.

Listening, simplicity of a meal, praying for a person by name, by circumstance. Here's the fourth one. When we radiate God's love, the best way to do that is through service.

The best way to radiate God's love is through service. And it's not service for the sake of service. It's not because you're trying to get community hours in so that you can, you know, get whatever the accolade is. It's. It's not service for that.

It's service simply so that I can help, so that I can be of a benefit to you. And the more we begin to find ways to serve, the more influence begins to happen. I've been praying for our neighbors, Ken and Andy, and Ken and Andy. Andy's had a lot of church hurt in her life, a lot of abuse when she was young. And she had first marriage was disastrous.

Left in the middle of the night with her little girl. Ken grew up in a very strict household. Ken's one that's just dealing with life. And so he asked, we'll do different things together. But he asked me, hey, would you help me with my jeep?

I'm the most non mechanical person you would ever want to help me with anything. But he just needed help getting the top off of it. And so I'm like, yeah, I can help with that, you know, and I thought, surely this is going to be easy. And it was. What was hard was just then listening for all these opportunities God was pushing out in front of me.

We talked about life and death and the passing of his dad. We talked about the dynamics of his work and trying to make ends meet financially. We talked about his kids and their raising.

Service opened the door for all of that. Service put us in a space for me to minister to kin.

I don't know who you get to serve and how you get to do it, but it's good. Here's the fifth inflection point. Share your story of trusting Jesus. Because your story, it matters. What God has done in your life is more than enough for you to influence someone else.

It's more than enough for you to take what God has done, the good news of his reality in your life being crucified and resurrected for you, that you can influence someone else's story. Sherwood is full of these stories. I want to share the story of a young lady, Tegan. So Teigen is on the screen here. I think we got a picture of her.

Tegan and Michaela. So Tegan is the one on the left. Earlier I said, she's the blonde. And that was a. Okay, smart moment there.

I was going to say then, well, she's the one in the blue t shirt, but that didn't make sense. She's the one on the left. Teagan just finished her senior year of high school. Last year, she accepted Jesus Christ for the first time. Just welcome to men.

Because her neighbors, Jim and Karen, who are in their seventies, simply prayed for her, served her. Her and her mom.

They spent time with them. They listened for where the gospel intersected. Now, the unique part of this story under this picture is that when Tegan last fall did like, one of those extra classes and went to university for just one class in that fall semester, she was so convinced that God had done such an incredible work in her life that she invited everyone in her college class to come to church with her. One person said yes, Michaela. So Michaela starts coming to church, and they sit right up here on the front and they sing.

And Michaela is figuring it out. Back in March, Michaela said yes to Jesus.

And Tegan's influence spilled over into one more life.

I would pray that each of you will at some point in this year, find yourself right here with your Michaela, with your kin, your neighbor, your co worker, the person on your team. That your influence would just grow, that Sherwood's influence would grow, that lives would be different. Let me pray for you, Father. It is heart level honesty that we need you to do so much in this world.

Father, forgive us where we have squandered influence, where maybe we've, we've used influence, but not for you, Father. Give us opportunities to share, to pray, to serve. Father, strengthen us as we trust you. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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