

Unspoken *IV*

Sometimes the simplest truths are the hardest to believe. God is love being chief among them. Yet, it's these fundamental principles that form the bedrock of faith — a foundation so secure, so sturdy that an ever-shifting culture can't change it, and the inevitable storms of life can't shake it. And that's the very lifeblood of Unspoken's fourth studio project, *IV*.

The fresh collection of originals serves as the long-awaited follow-up to 2019's *Reason*, whose title-cut became the band's biggest multi-format chart-topper to date. The album also produced a pair of Top 20 singles: "You've Always Been" and "Just Give Me Jesus." Since their self-titled debut in 2014, the group has charted a parade of hits led by Chad Mattson's unmistakable vocal, including "Who You Are," "Lift My Life Up," "Good Fight" and "Start A Fire," which became the collective's first No. 1. Along the way, Unspoken — comprised of Mattson (lead vocals), Jon Lowry (guitar, bass), Matthew Callaway (keys) and Ariel Munoz (drums) — has shared the stage with TobyMac, Casting Crowns, MercyMe and Big Daddy Weave, among other artists, living out their mission to be unspoken testimonies to God's love and power and to speak what oftentimes goes unsaid.

If *IV* has a theme, it is undeniably the love of God. "That's really the foundation of our whole life," Mattson offers. "It's amazing to me, after 21 years of walking with the Lord, how I still need to be reminded that He loves me."

The subject most obviously shows up on pop-centric "Loved By You" and celebratory lead single "Love Is Everything We Need," which affirms that loving our enemies is always the best course of action.

Anchor track "What He Says About You" expands on that seminal topic of God's love by challenging the false labels society places on us. Thinking about his young daughters and the message he wants etched on their impressionable hearts, Mattson wrote the driving, guitar-heavy selection with his bandmate Jon Lowry, alongside ace songwriters Ethan Hulse, Chris Stevens, Tedd T., Tony Wood and Tyrus Morgan over the course of six months as Mattson wrestled with the lyrics to get to the core of our identity in Christ, ultimately reminding listeners we are loved, chosen, held, forgiven and treasured by the Creator of the universe.

"It's really hard to differentiate the truth from how we feel or who culture says we should be. So I hope this song just washes over people's spirits and minds and hearts, reinforcing what the truth really is," Mattson says. "There's only one voice that matters, and it's the voice of God."

As he grappled with the song's lyrics, the father of three realized he was writing them for himself as much as his children. "The same stuff that's affecting my daughters is affecting me. I allow a lot more things from the outside world to inform my identity than I do Scripture. I often find myself on my phone more than I'm in the Word," he admits. "I think it's our job as parents to help our kids navigate these things and also limit, not only our children's exposure to it, but our own."

Like "What He Says About You," the selections on *IV* feel like they were written in real time in the midst of real life. Penning nearly 100 contenders over the course of the past five years, Mattson reflects, "I think we've just tried to write the songs that were in front of us."

One of those, "More Church Than Church," hinges on Mattson's continued sobriety journey that began more than two decades ago. The cleverly penned track features country music A-lister Walker Hayes, who — like Mattson — has been vocal about being in active recovery.

Together with co-writer Tyrus Morgan, the two former addicts wonder at the irony of how basement AA meetings often feel more honest than fancy stained-glass sanctuary gatherings on the lyrically rich, R&B-infused cut. The vulnerability of a 12-step program, they observe, is often absent underneath a steeple. “We — myself included — love to masquerade around, pretending that we have it all together, that we’re not struggling with sin, that we’re not dealing with depression,” Mattson offers. “But what I’ve found is there’s a healing that comes through transparency. There’s this powerful thing that happens through confession.”

Hayes is also credited as a co-writer on “Where My Joy Comes From.” “Our job as believers is to reflect Jesus to people, and one of the greatest ways we do that is through the joy we have in whatever circumstance we’re in,” Mattson says of the standout original that lives up to its name. “The world wants to tell us our joy comes from our circumstance, but we know that’s not true. How we live and how we respond to both joy and chaos are some of the greatest testimonies to the goodness of God.”

Talk to Mattson for five minutes, and it’s clear his natural response in both joy and chaos is the Word of God. This is because reading the Bible radically transformed the frontman from the inside out and helped him cultivate a genuine relationship with Jesus. In turn, he’s now helping others find hope through Bible studies he leads in partnership with Soldiers For Faith, a nondenominational ministry committed to facilitating phone-based studies and small groups around the world focused solely on teaching people the Word of God and how to apply it to their lives.

“Studying the Bible — that’s what changed my life,” Mattson shares. “So it’s so cool to now open this up to our fans. Come study the Bible with us!”

What Mattson is teaching, and subsequently what he’s also learning, in these weekly Bible studies easily spills over into his songs. The familiar Bible story of the man whose friends lowered him through the roof to Jesus was one of the passages that inspired “Say The Word,” a worshipful offering that calls us to bring whatever faith we can muster and place it in the capable hands of Jesus. “We are called to ask for things in faith and come alongside each other to bring the little faith that we do have; and sometimes it’s our faith that heals the people around us,” Mattson says of the message behind the fresh cut. “So if we just keep bringing our insufficient faith, our insufficient talents, whatever it may be, we can watch God make something amazing out of it.”

And, in a sense, that’s exactly what Unspoken did with *IV*. Mattson admits he doesn’t always hold his gifts in high regard, the way he should, especially when he starts comparing himself to others. But these days, he’s embracing the fact that our unique gifts create a colorful tapestry God weaves together to tell a story that’s bigger than any one talent, any one song or any one person.

“Recognizing your value and what you bring to the table, even though it might be different, is so important,” says Mattson. “We’re all bringing stuff to the table — that’s the body of Christ.”

And that’s really the heartbeat of *IV* — we’re all loved, we’re all chosen, we’re all enough. And those simple truths make all the difference in the world. “I just hope God takes the little that we have to bring and draws people to Himself,” Mattson says of this full-length collection Unspoken is finally releasing into the wild. “I hope people experience God in some way through the music.”