

What Was His Secret?*

He was born in an obscure village, the son of a peasant woman.

He grew up in another village, where he worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he became a wandering preacher, followed by a ragtag group of mostly fishermen and other blue-collar workers.

He never wrote a book. He never held public office. He never had a family or owned a house. He did not go to college, visit a big city, or travel two hundred miles from his hometown. He never did any of the things usually associated with greatness.

He had no credentials but himself.

But he shared incredible dreams with his simple followers. He said that he had been sent to establish a world-wide kingdom that would never end. He told them that they were the light of the world, and that they should go to every nation on earth and teach men and women to obey everything he had commanded them.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them betrayed him, another denied he even knew him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through a mockery of a trial. He was executed with two common criminals. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he owned. When he was dead he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

A totally insignificant life.

And yet, this man has shaken the world like no other person in all of human history. Two thousand years after he died, billions claim to follow him. His life has inspired the greatest works of art, magnificent oratorios, soaring cathedrals, sublime poetry. His followers have gone everywhere, planting schools, hospitals, orphanages, and churches in almost every country of the world.

This man was truly unique.

What was his secret?

* Freely adapted from a famous sermon entitled "One Solitary Life," by Dr. James Allan Francis (1864-1928).