

THE BIG IDEA: Keeping in step with the Spirit requires not skipping steps along the way.

The Take-Off

For a few years in between youth pastoring and planting this church, I spent time on the road as a speaker. It was in these moments when I would often step off the platform and whisper to God that I was sorry for taking the money because I would do it for free.

Something beautiful happens when you find what you were made for, and communicating about Jesus and faith is it for me - esp. if it means I can slip in some stand up comedy in the process 😊

I remember one youth event when I killed it

- The jokes hit
- The stories were powerful
- I felt like I had the room (speakers love that feeling)

I told the last story - the one that I knew would close it out - and then I called the packed church to respond.

And that's when I heard it...

[Crickets chirping sound effect]

It. Was. Brutal.

I got in my car for the three-hour ride home and tears ran down my cheeks as I prayed, "God. I don't understand?"

Everything was so good until the altar call, and I failed. Please, God!! I don't want to be ineffective for You!"

Before I tell you what happened next, let me tell you why I told you that story: because there are people in this room right now who have prayed that same prayer.

"Please, God. I don't want to be ineffective."

Rarely do I hear a specific verse reference from God, but in that car I heard **2 Peter 1:8**, and when I read it, I almost wrecked the car: "For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, **they will keep you from being ineffective** and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let's look at three points and The Big Idea, and then I want to close by praying for one another.

1. Effectiveness comes from the Father's heart

- a. God wants you to be effective more than you want to be effective
- b. When we look at the context of our verse, we see the generous heart of God:
 - His righteousness gave us our faith (v. 1)
 - He gives us grace and peace in abundance (v. 2)
 - He's given us everything we need to live godly lives (v. 3)
 - He's given us promises - precious promises - that rescue us (v. 4)
- c. v. 5 / BECAUSE OF ALL THAT, He tells us to add the things that will keep us from being ineffective
- d. The word for "ineffective" means "idle, lazy, shunning the work which one ought to perform"
- e. It can also mean "barren"
- f. We know that from the beginning of the story - even before we messed it all up - the Father's heart has always been fruitfulness!
- g. Genesis 1:28 / be fruitful and multiply
- h. Ephesians 2:10 / now that we're in Christ, we've been made to do effective works
- i. Again, God wants us to be effective, and He provides what we need to be effective

2. Effectiveness comes from the Spirit's power

- a. Do you know why my call to respond fell flat when I was at the youth event?
- b. I forgot that I'm not the source of effectiveness - the Holy Spirit's power is
 - Acts 1:8 / The Holy Spirit fuels our faith and witness
 - 2 Peter 1:3 / God's divine power - that's the Holy Spirit
 - **Galatians 5:25** / If we live BY the Spirit (His power), then we'd better stay plugged in to the power!
 - Customer service top suggestion when things aren't working / "Is it plugged in?"

3. Effectiveness comes from writing a song more than visiting a buffet

- a. Keeping In step with the Spirit is the Bible's way of saying "trust the process"

- b. It's hard to trust the process when you're comparing it to another one's progress
- c. If we don't stay connected with the Spirit who is leading us to greater effectiveness, it's so easy to find ourselves sucked into the comparison game
- d. If someone did it better, we feel worse. If someone did it worse, we feel better.
- e. But that's the wrong scorecard. The right scorecard is, "Am I still connected to the Spirit? Am I still trusting Him in the process?"
- f. Keeping in step with the Spirit is hard: we get impatient, we start comparing, we birth an Ishmael instead of an Isaac (see Genesis 16 and Genesis 21)
- g. Here's The Big Idea: **keeping in step with the Spirit requires not skipping steps along the way**
 - 2 Peter 1:8 / if you possess these qualities
 - What qualities? Goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, love
 - We want to pick and choose things we like buffet-style, but the Greek word in verse 5 for adding is a musical term from which we get our words chorus and choreography
 - It's one layer on top of another, not just skipping to the fun parts of the song or the dance
 - Every part matters. Every season matters.

The Landing

We talk about this idea quite a bit, and you already know why... it's because it's so easy to try to skip the steps that seem pointless, or too hard, or too slow.

We want to preach the message that brings hundreds to the Lord, but we don't want to spend time in His presence in prayer or devotion.

We want to be anointed by Him publicly without being known by Him privately.

We can't skip the steps that grow healthy roots and still expect to produce healthy fruit.

Tonight at 6:30, the Chiefs and the 49ers will kickoff Super Bowl 57, and guess what? It won't be anybody's first football game.

Not only that, but during the 3 hour and 12 minutes that the game lasts, there will only be 11 minutes of actual play. In fact, there will be more time given to replays than real plays (17 min vs 11 min)

Why? Because the average play only lasts 4 sec.

And yet one team's 55 players will be world champs after those 11 minutes of play because they didn't skip the steps away from the action that got them ready for the action.

It takes work and effort to keep in step with the Spirit, not because He likes to play hide and seek, but because He usually goes slower than we want and to places we aren't comfortable.

But in the end, being ineffective isn't an option because this mission is too important.

Let's pray for a fresh touch of the Spirit's power so that we'll stay connected to Him, and keep in step with Him.