

Do you want more of God's power in your life this year? More fruit, more holiness, more transformation?

The limiting factor is not God's ability. Most times, our "ask" is too small. So, why do we find it so difficult to ask for big things from our Heavenly Father?

I believe one of the reasons is lack of intimacy. We don't trust our Heavenly Father because we don't know Him. We have access to the throne room of God, but we wander around in the courtyard hoping to get some scraps.

Our effectiveness as Christians is directly proportional to our relationship with the Lord. As we walk with God, we will have an impact in our community.

God's priority for our lives is that we know Him and glorify Him with our lives. Our intimacy with God determines the impact of our lives.

Jesus modeled intimacy with the Father. Then he took twelve men and built an intimate relationship with them before sending them out (see Mark 3:14).

Fellowship with Jesus is essential if discipleship is to be effective. As believers, we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, enabling us to have a daily relationship with our Lord. The Holy Spirit is never unavailable or busy; we have free and instant access to the Spirit of Jesus.

There are two aspects to intimacy with Jesus:

1: Fellowship with Jesus

In his time on the earth, Jesus trained twelve men to go out and train others. He was equipping and sending them. He started by building a close relationship with them.

In our busy culture, we wrestle with this. In our minds, busyness equals effectiveness, but that is not the way of the Kingdom of God. Fellowship comes before effectiveness.

Your effectiveness for God is based on your fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not based on your eloquence, training, finances, or title.

No one is fit to serve God unless they have learned to fellowship with him. It might sound good to speak for Jesus, but if it is not coming from a place of intimacy, it will have no impact.

It is essential for every believer to have a time set aside each day for the purpose of meditating on the Word of God and prayer. The greatest need in a Christian's life is intimacy with Jesus.

2: Fellowship with his church

Fellowship with Jesus is primary, but we also need to prioritize fellowship with one another, the Body of Christ.

Jesus modeled this. It may seem strange to us, but Jesus needed relationships (see Luke 22:15). Jesus loved his disciples and demonstrated the importance and value of relationship in the body of Christ.

Sadly, we don't always value our church community. In fact, many people don't see the need to gather. Gathering as the church is seen as a convenience or a social construct that is helpful—but only if it is convenient.

So why don't we make fellowship a priority? Because we don't believe that intimacy leads to impact.

For Jesus and the disciples, the purpose for fellowship was preparation for ministry as we read in Mark 3:14-15, “...and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons”.

Jesus gave them authority and power from being in his presence. Many people want a shortcut to spiritual authority, but there is no such thing apart from intimacy with Jesus. God won't give power to someone who by-passes the fellowship with Jesus.

As we look at the state of Christianity in America today, why are churches dying? I believe it is because we have substituted activity for the one thing that is essential: being quiet before God (see Psalm 46:10 and Matthew 6:33).

As we serve the Lord in our daily lives, we need His strength and power to accomplish what He calls us to do. However, often we just go ahead and do “things” because we have the natural ability to do them. That can lead to us being ineffective as followers of Jesus.

We desperately need daily time with the Lord to live the life that He calls us to. You will never meet a person who is effective for God who doesn't have daily time set aside with God.

Walking with God must be fueled by being still before God.

Sitting and being quiet is counter-intuitive, but it is the most effective thing we can do with our time. Everything in the human mind repels this; we feel that we need to do something!!

To the carnal man, sitting and listening is a waste of time. That is why our prayer meetings are so poorly attended. If we are brutally honest, the reason people don't gather for prayer is that they don't believe that it accomplishes anything.

If we realized the power of prayer, our prayer meetings would be filled to capacity each week. But we have misdirected our priorities.

In Luke 10 we read the account of Jesus' interaction with Mary and Martha. Truthfully, we are more like Martha than Mary. We are so busy getting things done. We tell ourselves we will spend time with Jesus after we have all the projects done. But the fruit is irritation because we

are doing all the work by our own strength and power, and perhaps not even the work he has called us to!

If we put fellowship first, we will be less likely to get irritated in our service to others and to the Lord.

When you get so active that you don't have time to spend with Jesus, your problem is not your circumstances; it is your priorities. We were created to be in fellowship with Jesus.

The more we know and love Jesus, the more effective our service will be. The closer we draw to God, the more impact our lives will have.

At the beginning of the year, I want to challenge you to commit to prioritizing fellowship and intimacy with the Lord.

Intimacy leads to impact.