

THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT PART 3

(The following ACTS article is a continuation of ["The Anointing of the Holy Spirit Part 1&2"](#))

III. WALKING IN THE ANOINTING

As we begin our study of learning to live daily in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, let us briefly review some critical principles.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is not a "spiritual badge" to attain. Nor is it just a familiarity with religious words or phrases. Rather, it is a living, growing relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Remember, the Holy Spirit is a Person, just as Jesus and the Father are Persons. Therefore, we can – and *must* – learn to walk in a daily, living relationship with the Holy Spirit.

We have learned that anointing is **not** some kind of mystical force or power for us to use or manipulate for selfish purposes. Anointing is, however, a divine power, ability and gifting directly linked to the Person of the Holy Spirit and His presence within our lives. The power that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit flows through our personal relationship with Him.

Anointing is the Person and presence of the Holy Spirit, bringing with His presence all of the necessary power, gifts and authority that are needed to fulfill the Father's will at a given moment of ministry or assignment.

OUR FIRST RESPONSIBILITY

We have learned that during the time of the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit of God "came upon" His prophets, priests, judges and other servants.

In the New Testament times and following – also known as *The Church Age* – the Holy Spirit has been poured out (Acts Chapter 2). God the Spirit lives *within* each genuine believer, to lead us, comfort us and minister through us to others (John 7:37-39; 14:16,17,26).

All believers in Jesus Christ have been given the Holy Spirit (1John 2:20,27). This is necessary because every believer is called to some form of expression of ministry as a member of the Body of Christ (Eph 4:12). We all need the help of the Holy Spirit every day!

But for those who are called to a particular ministry assignment, there is a specific and profound anointing available. This anointing is given by God in His sovereignty. One can either *receive* it and *grow* in it, or choose to *reject* it or *ignore* it.

This kind of anointing (divine empowerment by the Holy Spirit) is related directly to your gifts and calling. For example, a person called to fulfill the gift of evangelist (Eph 4:11) may not have the anointing for an apostolic gift. He will function best and be most fruitful when operating within the power, gifts and authority for which he has been anointed – in this case as an evangelist. However, in everyday, practical application, it may not be quite that simple. Though one might be called and anointed for a particular ministry task, each of us still has a *general* call as a believer in Christ to live and function daily as a participant in Christ's Body.

For instance, from what we can see in Scripture, Timothy was likely called to teach and pastor in the church. Yet he was also commanded by Paul to “*do the work of an evangelist*” (2Tim 4:5) – not to *be* an evangelist, but to at times do the work necessary to evangelize others.

Therefore, we see that as ministers of Christ, we all have general responsibilities and tasks to do that may not involve our specific calling. But they are, nonetheless, still necessary and important to the healthy function of Christ's Body.

Our first and primary responsibility as a believer in Jesus Christ, and as a church leader, is **obedience** to Christ. We must obey the Lord and live by the standards He has already given to us through the Word of God.

In Scripture, we see that believers have been assigned many responsibilities: to serve others, feed the poor, care for orphans, equip the saints, reach the

lost – the list goes on. There will be times and seasons in your life with Christ that you will need to devote time and effort to these forms of ministry outreach, in addition to your primary calling or assignment.

A good guideline to follow in discerning what you are to be doing in ministry is this: *“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might”* (Eccl 9:10; see also Colossians 3:23). Pray over every opportunity, and then be quick to obey the Lord as He calls you to serve others. It does not matter whether the task before you is great or small – what *is* important is that when the Lord asks you to do it, then obey Him!

Pastor To Pastor: My first official “position” as a licensed minister and Bible-school graduate was as a full-time janitor of a large church. I spent two years cleaning bathrooms, emptying trash, vacuuming meeting rooms, picking up the grounds and other dull but necessary tasks.

I did not really enjoy this job. It was not easy. And it was humbling. But I knew God had asked me to do it; and it was some of the best preparation for learning to serve the Body of Christ that I could ever have received. It was truly a test of my faithfulness.

My obedience to this assignment and diligence in carrying it out led to the open door for the next assignment, and so on with each ministry assignment through the years. I have pioneered churches, taught youth, pastored churches, spoken at conferences, led missions teams, evangelized, and much more. And somehow, by God’s grace, over that 30-year period, the Lord prepared me and led me to the place of now leading a worldwide ministry.

I fully believe I would not be leading World MAP today if I had not been willing to obey the Lord to the best of my ability all along the way – step by step, fulfilling each assignment – no matter what He asked me to do in His name. I did not always obey perfectly, and I have made mistakes along the way. But overall, I did my best to keep following the path of obedience that God had set before me.

God has a plan for your life. He knows best how to lead you to fulfill it. Our obedience to God and His Word is not an option – it’s a necessity!

OUR FIRST CALLING

No matter the level of leadership or influence, our **first calling is always to our relationship with Christ**. This relationship includes obedience, trust, service, personal holiness, humility, all the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22,23) and ongoing growth. These characteristics provide the foundation for a rich and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

One of the results of this solid foundation of personal relationship is the release of ministry through you, and the necessary anointing you will need to accomplish your ministry assignments.

With this basic review of key principles in mind, let us now look more closely at what it means to Walk In The Anointing.

A. PROTECTING THE ANOINTING

When the Holy Spirit anoints us for ministry, it is a sacred privilege. It is something we must foster and protect in our lives.

Of course, I do not mean that the Holy Spirit (the One who anoints us) somehow needs our protection. Rather, we must protect our **own** heart and life from the spiritual and moral pollution of this world (2Pet 1:2-4; 1John 2:15-17).

Solomon, the writer of Proverbs, exhorts: *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”* (Prov 4:23). It is through our life that the anointing of the Holy Spirit will flow in ministry to others. Thus our life, our heart, must be kept pure.

1. Rats In The Well

Paul states that each believer in Christ is a *“temple of the Holy Spirit”* (1Cor 6:19,20). As such, we are exhorted to not allow our “temple” to be defiled by participating in sin (see also Romans 6).

The Bible contains numerous exhortations about remaining pure in body, soul and spirit (1John 3:2,3). These passages are directed to every believer, and **especially to leaders in the Body of Christ!**

Why is personal purity so important? Because the Holy Spirit lives **within us** – each of us who have been redeemed *“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1Pet 1:19), not with the blood of

bulls and goats (Heb 9:13,14). When we participate in sinful actions or attitudes, the place where the Holy Spirit desires to dwell becomes defiled and polluted.

KEEPING PURE

Let us say that there is a farm or village with a single well of water available. Everyone uses that well and depends on the water from that well. The water is used for washing, cooking, laundering and drinking. Can you imagine needing to use this water, only to find that dead rats are floating in the well?

This provides a rather graphic picture of how our choices can impact the temple of the Holy Spirit within us. He is our greatest resource for all we need for daily life. But not just for us personally. The Spirit of God within us, as church leaders, helps us to be a godly resource for others.

Truly, in ministry we give to others out of what we are and what we receive (Matt 10:8). But what if we have allowed “rats” into our lives? Certainly the presence of sinful habits and attitudes will poison and pollute us, affecting our ministry, our relationships, our family, our jobs – everything we touch.

What are some of the more common “rats in the well”? The New Testament gives us several categories, and then gives lists of specifics within those groupings:

- Fruits of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21)
- Improper behavior based upon the deception of sin (Eph 4:17-32)
- Legalism, or the spirit of religion (Gal 5:1-6; Col 2:11-23)
- Striving for position, titles, power (Matt 6:1,2,5,16; 23:2-12)
- Using ministry to gather wealth and possessions (Matt 6:19-21,24; 1Tim 6:3-10; 2Tim 4:10)
- Being judgmental, bitter, unforgiving (Matt 7:1-6; 18:21-35; Col 3:12-19; Heb 12:15; Jas 3:13-18)
- False teaching, heresy (Matt 24:4,5,11,23-27; Gal 1:8; 2Cor 11:13-15; 1Tim 4:1-5, 2Tim 2:14-18; 2Pet 2:1-22; Jude 7-19)

This is just a brief representation of “rats” that can ruin the personal “well” of your heart, and also pollute others that are within the sphere of your influence of life and ministry.

As a leader in the Body of Christ, you have been called to a life of purity and holiness (Matt 5:8; 1Cor 9:24-27; Heb 12:14; 1Pet 1:13-19). The anointing that God gives His called servants is far more precious and sacred than the holy anointing oil of the Tabernacle of the Old Testament – for it is the very presence of the Holy Spirit Himself!

Our highest calling is to live in right relationship with God. This requires us to live a pure and undefiled life as a fit “temple” (1Cor 6:19,20), a place of residence for the Holy Spirit. A life of purity glorifies and pleases God our Father, and makes us far more trustworthy and usable in the Master’s hands.

Only **you** can keep *your* own well pure. Decide now to be a clean vessel from which flows the unhindered Spirit of God and the unadulterated Word of God. Become a purified ministry instrument, whom God can anoint to do great exploits for His glory and purposes! (1Cor 10:31; 2Tim 2:19-21)

A LESSON FROM FAILURE

Solomon was a king who was raised up by God and given exceptional gifting (1Kings 3:5-14; 4:29-34). He received two miraculous visitations from the Lord (see 1 Kings 3 and 9). Solomon was commanded to observe all of God’s ways and to obey His statutes and laws (3:14; 6:11-13; 9:4-9). And this Solomon did – for a time.

But we later read that Solomon’s rulership ended in destruction and ruin for him and for his entire kingdom (see 1 Kings 11).

Solomon, like so many leaders, started well but finished poorly. How did this happen? It can be summed up in one single word: *disobedience*.

A closer examination of the Book of 1 Kings reveals that Solomon was a brilliant person, “*wiser than all men*” (4:31). He acquired unparalleled wealth (10:11-29) and the praise and honor of men (10:1-9). But then Solomon began to violate God’s clear commands (11:1,2). And slowly, choice after choice, compromise after compromise, Solomon became consumed with himself, and with the blessings and privileges that were acquired because of God’s anointing and gifts. This path ended in the ruination of Solomon’s rule.

What, then, can we learn from Solomon's life and reign?

a. Distraction leads to laxity (lack of discipline and diligence).

Solomon wrote that it is *"the little foxes that spoil the vines"* (Song 2:15). Solomon's court was filled with wealth and opportunity, and many people who would do anything to be near him.

Do you think that God knows the capacity of the human heart to be distracted, even by seemingly innocent pleasures – then to be led into undiscipline, and ultimately disobedience? I am sure God does. Knowing this, He spoke repeatedly to Solomon to obey **all** that He commanded him (1Kings 6:12; 9:4). But Solomon did not heed the Lord, especially once he became "successful".

Pastor To Pastor: Church leader, even the ministry can become a distraction if it becomes your consuming passion – pulling you away from time in God's presence due to being overly busy, or to pressure from the constant needs of others. Jesus, while on this earth, modeled for us the need to take time to hear from His Father and to be spiritually refreshed (Mark 1:35-39; Luke 5:16; 6:12).

We must never forget that the Lord is the fountain and source for the anointing of His Spirit and for our understanding of His Word (John 1:33; 6:63,68). It comes from HIM! Truly fruitful ministry is the outflow of what we receive at the feet of Jesus in prayer, waiting upon Him and studying His Word (Luke 10:41,42; John 15:16). Most of us know this very simple and basic truth. The problem occurs when we fail to daily **apply** this fundamental principle for power-filled life and ministry.

Let us be on guard against the kinds of distractions that drain us, or that lead us to compromise and sin. Solomon's heart was pulled away from God by that which he allowed in his life (1Kings 11:1-4,9). His loyalty and obedience to God were diluted with worldly pursuits, to the point of his own destruction and the ruination of all that God had set him over.

Some good questions to ask yourself about ANY activity in your life are these: "Is this activity or attitude leading me closer to God and His purposes for my life? Or is it leading me away?"

b. The praise of men is a deadly pitfall.

Teaching or preaching for the praise of men is a trap that leads to deception. It is God *alone* who can accomplish things of eternal worth (Zech 4:6). Yes, God does desire to use us as vessels through whom He can work. But the power and glory belong to God alone for anything good that is done through us. For without Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

God has revealed in His Word that He will share His glory with no man (Isa 42:8; 48:11). We must not seek glory or praise from men for the work of ministry (John 7:18).

One of the sharpest criticisms that Jesus made was of the Scribes and Pharisees. He rebuked them for their love of the praise of men (Matt 23:5-12; John 5:41-44). Even though they knew the Scriptures and were familiar with God's ways, their pride led them to be unwilling to accept or believe in Jesus Christ as their Messiah (John 5:39,40). **Following In His Footsteps**

Jesus was given the Holy Spirit's anointing without measure (John 3:34,35). He was and is the King over all kings, and the Lord over all lords. Yet, for our sake, He made Himself a humble Servant (Matt 20:28; Phil 2:3-11).

Truly, as leaders in the Body of Christ, we should: *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..."* (Phil 2:5). We have **not** been given the Holy Spirit without measure as Jesus was. But we do have all of His resources available to us, as we live in obedient relationship to Him and to the Holy Spirit (2Pet 1:2-4).

Of course, even with these resources, we are not above or better than our Master. But instead, we are to be like Him (John 13:12-17), using what God provides to humbly serve others.

Therefore, we should never think too highly of ourselves when God uses us in ministry. We must guard against pride – the sin of the devil (1Tim 3:6).

THE MOST DANGEROUS OF SINS

Pride is a deadly sin that can slowly poison even the most committed leader and block the flow of the Holy Spirit's anointing. A church leader may have great skill, wisdom or knowledge. But to take pride in these things is folly. First, because all that we have comes from God. Second, because all of our

wisdom, skill and ability are really nothing compared to both the anointing of God's Spirit and what God alone can do (Matt 7:21-23; 1Cor 3:18-21; 4:20; 8:1-3)!

Pride is likely the most dangerous of sins. It was the fundamental sin of Satan (Isa 14:12-14). Pride can make us decide we can do things better than God, and will ultimately lead us into rebellion against God.

When we begin to make our own plans apart from submission to God, we are actually in rebellion against God. When we are not fully yielded to Him, we become separated from Him, for, *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble"* (Jas 4:6).

Pride leads us to feel self-sufficient and self-dependent. Consequently, we believe we no longer need to be taught by either God or man. We resist feeling that we need anything from God, and we quit asking; so we also quit receiving (Jas 4:1,2). It requires humble, childlike faith to either ask of or learn from our Father in Heaven (Matt 18:3,4).

God is the supplier of all that we need. We must humbly recognize that we need Him and what He has provided for us, or we will never receive anything. Pride keeps us from this kind of humility, thus robbing us of the blessings of God's Kingdom, including His anointing.

TRUST IN THE LORD ALONE

Imagine for moment a coin. On one side is stamped "pride". On the other side is stamped "the fear of man". These two sins of the flesh often manifest together in a person's life.

"The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe" (Prov 29:25). The *"fear of man"* wears many faces. Some common ways in which pastors are snared in this trap are:

- Fear of displeasing or upsetting people in the congregation (even to the point of condoning their sin)
- Showing extra favor to those who give money or who have influence
- Saying or doing things to try and win approval from (or be perceived as better than) fellow pastors or other believers

There are many other ways in which we can be ensnared by the fear of man. But regardless of the method, when you give place to the fear of man you become *trapped into doing the will of other people*. You are ensnared by their opinions and judgments. How can you then serve the Lord with a full heart, when you are busy serving the opinions of men? One cannot serve two masters (Matt 6:24); one cannot stand when the heart is divided (Ps 86:11; Mark 3:24,25).

Jesus also faced this problem, through the selfish desires of people (Mark 1:35-39; John 6:15,22-40); the judgment of the Pharisees (Matt 22:15-22; Luke 7:36-50); or even the demands of His own earthly family (Matt 12:46-50; John 7:1-9).

In all of these points and more, Jesus did not cater to the opinions of people. Rather, Jesus kept His focus on doing only the will of God above all else and regardless of the cost.

Even when people believed in Jesus and seemed to follow Him, He knew how fickle men's hearts could be (John 2:23-25). Jesus warned His followers to not trust in or seek for the praises of men (Luke 6:26). For if it is the high opinion of men that we seek, our hearts will not be disposed to serving only the Lord.

The Lord is looking for people whose hearts are *totally* and *only* loyal to Him. It is through such people that He will do great things (2Chr 16:9) and upon whom He will pour out His anointing!

Notice what will keep us safe from the fear of man: It is **trust** in the Lord (Prov 29:25). When we know the Lord, when we have sought Him for His will, when we act in obedience to what He has said because we fully trust Him – it matters not what men may think.

Our trust must be in the Lord! When we are most concerned with what HE thinks, we will not be caught in the trap of fearing what people think.

c. Greater compromise begins with the “little foxes” of smaller compromises (Song 2:15)

There is a common problem among leaders whom God is using in a significant way. They may begin to feel they are so important that they no longer need to obey **all** of God's principles and standards. They might know

about them and be able to teach them; but they no longer believe they personally need to *live* by them.

This is what I have termed the “Leadership Exception Clause”. It is when leaders feel they have become so important that they no longer need to be humble, or serve, or be patient with others, or self-sacrificing, etc. In their minds, they become the “exception” to God’s standards; they see the pursuit of their selfish and fleshly ways as excusable because of their “importance” or “success”. They accept the world’s way of thinking, that somehow their success in ministry is because of their great abilities and talents – and they begin to live as though they are a celebrity!

Because God is faithful to often continue to minister through them (Rom 11:29), these leaders begin to presume upon God’s goodness. They slowly begin to adopt attitudes and behaviors that will eventually lead them into outright sin. This will result in their failure in ministry, even to the point of destroying their faith (1Tim 1:19) or searing their conscience (1Tim 4:2).

It will also lead to a *grieving* (Eph 4:30) and a *quenching* (1Thess 5:19) of the Holy Spirit of God. And eventually it will stop the flow of God’s anointing altogether.

As church leaders, we are called to be an **example** of Christ’s character to the Body of Christ. We are **not** to be the **exception!** We must know the Word of God and live by it, to the very best of our ability. If we do fail, we must be quick to repent (2Cor 7:10; Rev 3:19).

Let each of us take heed to the warnings of Scripture: “...and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num 32:23; see also Galatians 6:7,8; 1 Timothy 5:24,25).

GUARDING YOUR HEART

The Bible exhorts: “*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life*” (Prov 4:23). Solomon wrote this verse, perhaps after he had already destroyed his relationship with God and ruined his kingship. We do not know for sure. But the truth of what Solomon wrote by the Spirit of God still speaks clearly to us today.

The devil has many “rats” that he would use to tempt us. Our own flesh also has many misplaced and sinful desires. But these things can come in and pollute the well of our life only **if** we open the door to them. They can corrupt

the habitation of our heart – the dwelling place for the Spirit of God – only **if** we let them in and give place to sin.

So what can we do to keep our “well” pure? As we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19,20), there are some practical steps we can take. Let us look at those now.

2. The Pathway To Purity

a. Live by the standards of God’s Word.

The Psalmist asks a profoundly critical question, and then answers it. *“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word”* (Ps 119:9).

Through Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus, the Holy Spirit gives clear directions to **all** pastors. These three “Pastoral Epistles” (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) were written to pastors (Timothy and Titus) about pastoral matters. It is in the letters to Timothy that we read that the Word of God – not the opinions of men – is our guide for all we do, say, become and minister (1Tim 4:12-16; 2Tim 2:15-18; 3:16,17).

Jesus speaks of God’s Word being our standard for life. He states that to do less than following all of the Word is a failure that risks judgment (Matt 5:17-20). The Word of God is inspired by the Holy Spirit (2Tim 3:16; 2Pet 1:19-21) and is affirmed by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; Heb 4:12,13).

Men’s opinions and ideas, no matter how well-intended or attractive, are **not** our guide for life. They are also not what we should teach to our congregations about life in God’s Kingdom. We must be **very careful** about the opinions of men (1Cor 2:1-16) – even if we happen to agree with them. For men, even those whom we respect and trust, are only that: *just men*.

It is true that some people can help us. They can teach us what they have learned. Their knowledge of the Word of God and their experience may be beneficial to us. But that goes only so far, and is helpful only as it fully agrees with the Word of God!

Our lives cannot be purified by people’s opinions or the latest trends in ministry. We can walk uprightly before the Lord only as we follow Him and obey His Word.

There is **one** Holy Spirit and only **one** source for God's eternal Word – the Bible! So read it, meditate on it, study it, memorize it, obey it, live it, preach it, teach it! Amen!

b. The Holy Spirit works in prayer.

“The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart” (Prov 20:27). Our times of prayer are both a source of blessing and instruction, and a place of communion. Prayer can also be a powerful weapon when directed by the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, in the busy activities of life, church leaders like you and I often neglect vital times of simply waiting upon the Lord. But it is only as we give time to wait and listen that the Holy Spirit can truly **work** in our hearts.

Each of us needs a regular and thorough “heart examination” by the Holy Spirit. As we pray and then wait upon the Lord, He can reveal hidden motives, places of impurity or areas of weakness. In His love for us and for Christ's Body, the Holy Spirit wants to convict and shape us, so that we will take care of the very things that otherwise will hamper or even destroy our lives and ministries.

GUARDING AGAINST SELF-DECEPTION

The simple fact that we are active in ministry, know about the Bible and can teach others does not mean we are perfect. If anything, those things should make us *more aware* of the capacity of the human heart to be deceived and to make excuses for sin!

Please take a moment even now and read the following scriptures:

- Proverbs 16:2,25; 28:26
- Jeremiah 17:9,10
- 1 Corinthians 10:12,13

There are many more scriptures that clearly reveal our need to open our hearts before the Holy Spirit. The Lord already knows our areas of struggle; we cannot hide them from Him. But we can deceive ourselves and allow sin, fleshly desires or brokenness due to sinful behavior to continue until they bear the fruit of unrighteousness in our lives.

The Lord is looking for hearts that are kept clean from sin. He desires that nothing hinder His anointing, or the fruitfulness of our lives and ministries. As you humbly show yourself trustworthy to guard your heart from sin and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse you from within, God's anointing can be poured out without limitation.

Pastor To Pastor: The longer we walk with the Lord, the easier it is to *no longer sense the need* for the shaping work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Sadly, for church leaders this is especially true. We are so busy learning about and teaching the Word of God that we begin to assume that we are also *applying* it daily to our own lives. We are so intent on praying for our ministry and for others that we neglect spending time just waiting upon the Lord to hear from Him *for our own sake*. We learn to keep smiling and acting like everything is fine, even if we are struggling with sin or brokenness on the inside. Can you admit that this can sometimes be true?

Jesus declared that our righteousness must be a righteousness **of the heart**. It must exceed the limited, outwardly-religious form of the Pharisees (Matt 5:20).

Please remember that Jesus did not die for mankind in order to start a new religion. He gave His life so that we could be restored to God, and then be continuously transformed more and more into the image of what man was originally created to be before sin so brutally marred us (Matt 15:10-20; 23:23-28; Rom 12:1,2; 2Cor 3:18; 1John 3:1-3). We have already learned that this is a lifelong process, even for us as leaders.

If we neglect the inner condition of our heart, it becomes far too easy to fall prey to sin. The problems may start out small, but small compromises always lead to greater and more destructive ones. That is why it is essential that we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts daily, to convict us and stop the problems before they lead to sin.

“SEARCH ME, O GOD...”

We desperately need the Holy Spirit to be a lamp shining into our soul and spirit. We need Him to reveal the condition of our hearts, that we may be purified, renewed and transformed. This is God's will for our lives! (Phil 1:6; 2Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29)

As we cooperate with this work of the Spirit in prayer, we will be grown into “vessels of honor” (2Tim 2:20,21). Then God can freely pour out the anointing of His Holy Spirit, releasing more of who He is both in us and through us to others in ministry.

Let our daily prayer be as David’s: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Ps 139:23,24).

c. Walk in obedience.

“And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32).

We have already discussed the place of the Word of God and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the personal life of the pastor. These are vital keys to living a life of purity.

However, these can both be made ineffective in our lives – if we refuse to **obey**.

We *disobey* when we ignore God’s commands or simply neglect to follow through on what the Holy Spirit has revealed to our heart (Jas 1:21-25). Saul is a clear example of this type of failure (see 1 Samuel 15:1-35). David learned well from Saul’s failures, and wrote about this critical principle (see Psalm 40:6-8).

Church leaders are often willing to serve and even sacrifice for the ministry. That is not wrong. But God desires something more important than sacrifice; He requires our humble and yielded **obedience** (1Sam 15:22,23).

We have already studied the importance of obedience to the Lord and His Word in matters of our inner motives, attitudes and daily behavior. But the work of the Spirit also requires our **obedience in matters of the Lord’s work** – in both what we do, and how we do it.

ALIGNED THROUGH OBEDIENCE

Moses learned an immensely painful lesson regarding obedience to the leading of God (Num 20:7-13). Moses was commanded by God to *“speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water”* (v.8). But instead,

Moses **struck** the rock (v.11). The result was that Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land (v.12; see also Deuteronomy 31:1,2; 32:48-52). Why would Moses disobey this clear command of the Lord? The children of Israel had faced drought and thirst in the wilderness twice before (Ex 15:22-26; Ex 17:1-7). On the first occasion, God led Moses to cast a tree into bitter, undrinkable water, and the water became sweet. On the second occasion, God had told Moses to strike a rock, and fresh water came forth.

But this third time, God asked Moses to do something different. He asked Moses to *speak* to the rock. But instead, Moses fell back upon a previous method, and struck the rock. Perhaps Moses was not open to this new way in which God wanted to move. Maybe Moses was angry or impatient with the complaining children of Israel. We do not know for sure. But we do know this: Moses' disobedience displeased the Lord (Num 20:12).

The important lesson is this: The *outcome* in this situation was not as important as the *method*! The children of Israel did get their desired water. But God's measure of obedience did not consist in the result; rather, it consisted in his servant **completely fulfilling God's way of accomplishing His purpose**. This is the essence of obedience!

We are to follow God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit, even if we do not understand why with our limited minds (see Isaiah 55:8,9; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25). God has given us His Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. We, as the children of God, are called to trust and obey Him (Rom 8:14).

Please understand that obedience is **not** a matter of earning God's blessing or anointing. However, when we walk in obedience, we align ourselves with the Lord and the principles of His Word. As we do so, more of God's anointing power is available to us.

This principle was addressed by Paul: *"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become **disqualified**"* (1Cor 9:27). Paul was fully aware that his personal behavior was directly linked to the ministry God had given him.

NEW TESTAMENT STANDARDS

A pastor has two basic aspects to his life: the private/personal life and the public/ministry life. God's expectation for obedience involves both areas. A

pastor's life, both personal and public, must be under the discipline and development of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

If a church leader is dedicated to obedience in all areas of his life, the anointing of God's Spirit will flow into every area as well.

It is a mistake to believe that anointing is just for public ministry. The Lord is equally concerned for your effectiveness in family and personal life, as well as how He might use you in a secular job or other circumstance.

The requirements in the New Testament for church leaders (read 1 Timothy 3:1-7) are also **our standards** as pastors. The early Church elders *were the pastors* of the local churches. Thus, the guidelines and standards for their personal and public lives are **the standards for pastors today**.

THE BIBLICAL ORDER

Too many pastors neglect these standards, especially as they relate to the needs of their wives and children. They think it is somehow godly to neglect their families in order to devote all of their time to ministry. The Word of God makes it very clear that this is NOT what God has called pastors to do!

A husband (including a pastor) is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church, lavishly and sacrificially. A pastor and his wife are to have respect and love for one another, praying for and serving each other. The children are not to be spoiled, nor treated as servants. Rather, they are to be nurtured and cherished, raised in a godly and loving manner. We are to be examples to our children of the character of Christ and their loving heavenly Father. (See Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:7.)

Our families are to be a priority, and providing for them is a responsibility we cannot ignore: *"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"* (1Tim 5:8). The biblical order is: our relationship with God first; our family second; ministry and other responsibilities after those two.

A pastor's handling of finances should also be guided by the principles of God's Word and the Holy Spirit. The resources God provides for the pastor personally should be used to:

- bless the Lord through tithes and offerings;

- bless our family through providing for them;
- bless others as we share out of what God has provided to us.

ALL THE HELP WE NEED

A pastor's public ministry is also to be fulfilled in obedience to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will help us and often guide us as to what He would have us do in our specific ministry situations.

As we dedicate and discipline ourselves, listen to godly counsel, study God's Word, pray regularly while following the Holy Spirit's leading, we will grow and mature as Christian leaders. As we do, we can expect an ever-increasing flow of God's anointing upon our lives and through our ministry (see Paul's exhortations to Timothy: 1 Timothy 4:12-16; 6:11,12,20; 2 Timothy 1:6,7,13,14; 2:1,15,16,22-25; 4:1-5). This is God's desire for us! He makes available **all** the help that we need to serve Him faithfully, and to live according to His ways. But we must choose to obey!

Pastor To Pastor: If a pastor or church leader violates or continually ignores these basic principles concerning their private and public life, the anointing of God will be *quenched*. There will be the loss of fruitfulness both at home and in ministry.

Unless there is full repentance and a genuine recommitment to God's purposes, the leader risks destruction both personally and in ministry. This destruction may take time, but be assured that we all reap what we sow (Gal 6:7,8).

Sadly, there are gifted and powerfully anointed leaders in the Church today who begin to lead hypocritical lives. In other words, they teach one thing, but have begun to live another way.

We will all fail at times, and none of us is sinlessly perfect. But I am not addressing an occasional point of failure, after which comes quick repentance. Rather, I am referring to an ongoing, flagrant violation of the standards of God's Word in a leader's personal life.

God our Father and the name of Jesus Christ are dishonored by this. People in the world are turned away from salvation through Christ by this hypocrisy. Those in the Church or our own families also become disillusioned with the

things of God due to this lack of integrity in the personal lives of church leaders.

This is wrong, and if your behavior causes another to stumble, Jesus warns of certain judgment (Luke 17:1,2). God's judgment upon our works will be sure (1Cor 3:11-15).

THE LORD OF ALL OF OUR LIFE

The Holy Spirit dwells within us as believers; He anoints us for the purposes of God to be fulfilled. His desire is to fill our lives totally, not just as it relates to ministry. Jesus is to be the Lord of *all of our life* – of our *whole heart*, not just a part (1Pet 3:15). We must obey the Lord and His Word in all areas of our lives, that He may receive glory and that we may be effective instruments for His purposes!

d. We need peer relationships.

Pastors and leaders are often reluctant to reveal things about their lives. Their insecurities can give rise to jealousy or competition with one another. Satan plays upon these tendencies in order to keep the Body of Christ, and especially leaders, divided and fearful of one another.

A large part of our effectiveness as church leaders will be lost without healthy relationships with other leaders. *We need one another*, probably more than we realize or want to admit.

Believers, including pastors, are **family** (brothers and sisters). This is a far more important factor than what comes from titles, positions, denominational affiliation or the size of your church.

The various gifts and roles in the Body of Christ are given in order for us to work effectively together (Rom 12:3-8; 1Cor 12). No one of us has what it takes to be effective in ministry without the partnership of other believers and leaders. But this kind of unity requires maturity, love, servanthood and humility.

STRONG SUPPORT

Pastors especially need one another. We must make room for and pursue relationships with other pastors and godly leaders. The primary purpose of this is to create **mutual accountability**. We must have this for our spiritual health and protection from failure.

Such relationships should allow genuine openness, a place to share our challenges, difficulties and triumphs in life and ministry. In this circle of friendship and relationship, we can *receive* ministry, prayer and biblical counsel.

God intends this kind of relationship for our growth and maturity: *“As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend”* (Prov 27:17). These trusted relationships can provide a secure place to share our fears, concerns and temptations. We can confess our faults and sins (Jas 5:16), and receive ministry and encouragement.

Every person in ministry needs encouragement. The devil works hard to tempt leaders to fall into personal failure or to quit the ministry. Sometimes people – even those in our own congregations – may misunderstand or oppose us, or even act hatefully toward us. We need the support of spiritually strong and trustworthy friends to help us through such times, in order to emerge as victors through Christ!

Pastor To Pastor: Do not believe the lie that it is more “spiritual” to not need other people in your life. Rather, the more mature we become, the more we will recognize our need for holy relationships in the Body of Christ. Paul tells us that together we form the temple of God filled with the Holy Spirit (1Cor 3:16,17).

These friendship and accountability groups should be chosen prayerfully and carefully. Not everyone you know will be a compatible partner for prayer, nor will everyone have the maturity to be trustworthy. Find those whom you respect and can trust. Look for those with the maturity, wisdom and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to genuinely speak the truth in love.

Prayer should be the primary focus of your time in such a group. Also, these groups should involve fellowship only with people of the same gender – men with men, women with women.

These vital relationships will keep us “sharpened” and firmly established on the pathway of growth, purity and greater anointing!

3. Seven Characteristics Of Genuine Anointing

Confusion regarding the nature and purpose of anointing is often due to a single or short-term exposure to a ministry event. It might be a powerful sermon, a moving prayer, or the presence of signs or miracles at a meeting.

This short-term view can lead to misunderstanding in two ways. First, it is easy to misperceive anointing as enthusiasm, talent, gifts, style or skill in ministry. Second, we might think that a peak moment of supernatural manifestation is the sum purpose of anointing.

Though these miraculous or exciting moments can truly be the result of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we must remember that there is more to anointing than that.

It is important that we develop a *long-term view* of anointing. This is the understanding that genuine anointing will result in the *transformed lives of people* (Rom 12:1,2).

By *transformed lives*, I mean lives that are solidly grounded in the Word of God and prayer. People living transformed lives are reaching out to the world around them through witnessing and loving service. They are resisting sin and the works of the flesh, walking in humility and repentance. They are active in the Body of Christ; having discovered their spiritual gifts, they are using them in ministry. They are becoming more Christ-like all the time!

These things *should be true of a transformed leader*, as well as those to whom an anointed church leader is ministering.

Truly anointed ministry will be consistently fruitful, with the ongoing result of lives being saved and disciplined to be followers of Christ.

Anointed ministry is not a pathway to recognition, wealth or ease. The apostle Paul was a profoundly anointed man, greatly used of God. Yet he suffered intensely, was poor and often persecuted, spent times in prison, and was even despised by the church he sought to serve (2Cor 4:8-15; 7:2-6; 11:23-33). Paul's life was ended by the axe of an executioner when he was beheaded in Rome. Yet just before his death, Paul declared that his total reward was a "*crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing*" (2Tim 4:8).

Paul's life did not amount to much according to the world's standards of "success". Even some Christians today might not think Paul was much of an apostle.

But Paul's reputation was that he boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:1-6). He was known as a man of authority and power, even by the demonic realm (Acts 19:15). He taught and disciplined others, and planted churches. Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write what became a full one-third of our New Testament (mostly done while in prison for his faith). And the apostle Paul was a primary agent for spreading the Gospel throughout the then-known world. Paul was *truly* anointed of God, full of the power of the Holy Spirit! (Colossians 1:24-29)

We must be clear about the purpose of God's anointing. We are not given God's anointing for our personal gain or for other people's entertainment. It is for the purposes of God to be fulfilled! It is to minister in such a way that the lives of people are transformed by the Word and the power of God!

TESTING OURSELVES

We must use discernment in these days, to perceive what is of God and what is of man. We must discern what is from the Spirit of God, and what is from a different spirit (2Cor 11:4). The Bible tells us that, as time advances, the demonic realm will increasingly seek to lead people astray. Even Christians will be deceived and led astray, rejecting what is truly from God (2Tim 3:1-9; 4:3,4).

We must "test the spirits" (1John 4:1-6), because the devil actively seeks to deceive and destroy people (2Cor 2:11; 10:1-5; 11:14; 1Pet 5:8). Also, evil men will seek to use God and spiritual things to serve themselves (2Cor 11:13-15; Phil 1:15,16; 2Peter 2).

How, then, can we know what is truly the anointing of the Holy Spirit? And by what measure can we test *ourselves* to ensure that we are walking faithfully and obediently to Christ regarding anointing?

Here are seven characteristics that will be evident in regard to the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The genuine anointing of the Holy Spirit:

- 1) will always glorify Jesus (John 16:14), not men or even the ministry;
- 2) will be true to and consistent with the whole counsel of the Word of God (John 14:26), since the Holy Spirit will *never* violate God's written Word;
- 3) will cause spiritual life to happen in those exposed to or receiving ministry (John 6:63) – people will be more committed to Jesus, His Word and His ways;
- 4) will direct people to Jesus and His salvation, not to another person or to signs and wonders (John 15:26);
- 5) will promote peace and unity in the Body of Christ (1Cor 12:1-14) among those who love the Lord and His Church more than their own point of view;
- 6) will have life-transforming power (1Cor 2:4,5; 4:20; 1Thess 1:5), which is the product of anointed ministry;
- 7) will produce the character of Christ in people (Gal 5:16-24; 2Cor 3:18) – this is God's will for every Christ follower!

The presence of these seven important characteristics of genuine anointing will be a mark of those who minister in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. These characteristics also help us to see the need for a *long-term* view of anointing. There can be short-term or *spontaneous anointing* for a specific moment of ministry. But as shepherds of Christ's Body, we are anointed to *make disciples and equip God's people – long-term work* – not just have occasional moments of exciting ministry.

Use the list above to examine your own ministry. As a church leader, you have a precious and important call to shepherd the people in Christ's Body. Christ is our Chief Shepherd. He has called you as an undershepherd. It will be to Him that you will give an account for how you fulfilled His charge to care for His sheep (1Pet 5:1-4).

CAN WE RECEIVE MORE?

It is our role to diligently and faithfully follow Christ. We must apply the standards and principles of God's Word to our lives, and constantly grow in our ability to be led by His Spirit.

The ministry call that God has given you is not *your* ministry. It is **HIS** ministry that He desires to do through you! Ministry, when done God's way, will lead to great fruitfulness (John 15:14-16) and will be accompanied by His anointing. We have established that the anointing of the Holy Spirit is sovereignly appointed by God. It will be consistent with our calling and gifting. This anointing is not subject to human will, other than our ability to either *receive* it or *reject* it.

If you are like me, you desire more of God's anointing in your life and ministry. Your heart's cry is to be an effective vessel through which God's Kingdom purposes can be fulfilled.

So is it possible to not only receive God's anointing, but also grow in the anointing that God gives to us? Can we receive more than we have now? Let us briefly look at these questions.

B. GROWING IN ANOINTING

It is the Lord's desire that you have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is also His desire that you *grow in your ability* to live and minister in the Holy Spirit's anointing.

There are no shortcuts to growing in God's anointing. Nor is the anointing ours to grab and use in order to be powerful in ministry for our own gain.

Remember that God's power is not separate from His person. The anointing *is* the presence of the Holy Spirit – which will always be subject to God's will and purpose, not our own.

1. Character And Anointing

It is important to realize that as you grow in the character of Christ, so also will you grow in anointing. Our character will either complement and release the anointing through our lives – or it will block and hinder the work of the Holy Spirit through us (see Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

Remember that we are first and foremost God's sons and daughters. Christ's sacrificial work made it possible for us to be restored to relationship with our Father in Heaven.

Jesus Christ, as Head of the Church (Col 1:18; 2:19), has called us and given us spiritual gifts – so that, as sons and daughters of God, we might serve the

Body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16; 2Tim 1:9). These spiritual gifts and callings will function *fully* and *correctly* only when empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit (1Cor 12:7 – all gifts operate on this principle).

This is why we can say that *all truly anointed ministry flows from relationship*. Our submitted and growing relationship with Christ is the basis upon which life-transforming ministry works.

Regardless of your level of maturity or experience with the Lord, this is still true. Never forget that effective ministry flows from maintaining a fresh and ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ!

Pastor To Pastor: It is all too easy in ministry to neglect our relationship with the Lord. We might begin to think that yesterday's "manna" from HHim is sufficient for today. But it is not!

Jesus gives a powerful warning that illustrates this problem. Read Matthew 7:21-23. The people being described in this verse are people *in the Church* – people with prophetic ministries, deliverance ministries, those who minister in signs and wonders, etc.

But these leaders have, at some point along the way, left their "first love" (Rev 2:1-5). They have become deceived, thinking that maintaining a successful *appearance* in ministry (having the outward form) is enough. They might even be able to quote scripture passages and use the authority of Jesus' name. Yet they are not walking in a genuine, obedient and fresh relationship with the Lord. They do not know Him, and He does not know them. Their end is terrible (Matt 7:23).

SATAN'S STRATEGY

As we have learned, one of the works of the Spirit in our lives after salvation is our personal transformation (Rom 8:29; 2Cor 3:18). It is our lifelong cooperation with this work – along with our daily obedience to the Word of God and time in His presence – which develops within us *godly character*.

Satan actively resists the growth of godly character in church leaders. The devil cannot corrupt or steal from us the Holy Spirit's anointing and gifts. Rather, the opposite is true: *"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"* (1John 3:8; see also Luke 10:17-

20; Romans 8:37-39; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Colossians 2:14,15; Hebrews 2:14).

Because the devil has no power to harm or corrupt the anointing and gifts of the Holy Spirit, his primary target is *you!* Satan actively seeks to rob, kill and destroy the saints (John 10:10). One of the ways he does this is by attempting to undermine godly character, especially in the leaders of the Church.

The devil seeks to corrupt church leaders and make them unfit for the purposes of God (1Cor 9:24-27; 2Tim 2:19-22). He does this through temptation, deception, fear, intimidation, division, pride, selfishness – whatever the sin, and Satan will be the source!

Satan's temptations usually begin in small ways. He will begin to appeal to our fleshly desires and selfish nature. The devil has had centuries to observe human behavior, and to develop ways to try and make us fall. We do not need to fear him – but we certainly must be wary and on our guard at all times! (1 Peter 5:8,9)

Please note that we are most vulnerable to the wiles of the devil when we neglect our continual and growing relationship with Jesus Christ (1Tim 4:1,2; 2Tim 1:1-9; Heb 2:1-3). Without nearness to Christ, we will be far more tempted to make exceptions for ourselves, excuse lapses in behavior, entertain lustful thoughts – all of which will lead to sin, deception and failure (Jas 1:13-15).

It is God's desire that His anointing penetrate our character. Godly character (or the lack of it) will directly impact our fruitfulness and effectiveness in ministry. God wants His anointing to flow in and through our lives, without the hindrance of ungodliness. It is no exaggeration to say that the anointing is as much about character (ours) as it is about power (God's).

Let us take a moment now to learn from the life of the most anointed man who ever lived.

2. The Master's Footsteps

Truly Jesus Christ was the most anointed person to ever walk the earth. He had the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:33-35). His unmatched anointing was prophesied centuries before His birth (Isa 61:1-3). Jesus affirmed this prophecy at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 4:17-20).

Jesus' ministry on earth confirmed that He was truly THE Anointed One. A quick look at the Gospel of Luke (chapters 4 and 5) reveals His mighty power from the very beginning of His ministry. Jesus was anointed to:

- Cast out demons (4:33-37, 41)
- Teach with authority (4:22,32)
- Heal the sick (4:38-40;5:15)
- Call people to repentance (5:17-26,31,32)
- Perform signs and wonders (5:4-9)
- Prophetically call people to ministry (5:10,27)
- Develop a core leadership group (5:11)
- Heal a leper, which was astounding for those times (5:12-15)

This is just a sampling of how Jesus *began* His earthly ministry. He accomplished **so much more** than this. There is only **one** Son of God who came to earth, died for us, then rose again to show that He was truly God!

Jesus is the One who has called us (1Cor 1:26-31). He has given us all the necessary gifts (Eph 4:11-16) and the power (John 16:7) to fulfill His will (John 15:16).

Christ commissioned His Church to carry on His work (Acts 1:4-8). It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit of God that we can fully accomplish this. This same Spirit that anointed Jesus has now been poured out upon this earth, available to all who believe in Jesus Christ for salvation! (Romans 8:14-17) Hallelujah!

WALKING IN JESUS' FOOTSTEPS

God is looking for those who are loyal to Him (2Chr 16:9). Jesus showed Himself to be loyal to God and pleasing to Him (Matt 3:17). Jesus was obedient to the Father's will in all things (Heb 10:5-7). Though Jesus was capable of sin, He never once sinned (Heb 4:15).

Since He is our example in all things, what can we learn from the life of Jesus Christ in regard to growing in anointing? Let us walk in His footsteps for a moment to gain the lessons that will promote growth in our character and in spiritual matters.

a. Jesus was subject to authority.

Jesus chose to be subject to the authorities that were set over Him. Even as a young boy, He was submitted to His parents and other authorities in His community (Luke 2:41-51). And throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus was continually submitted to His Father in Heaven.

The Bible teaches us that we as leaders are also subject to authority structures in our lives. There are governments, denominations, churches, jobs – all have structures of authority.

We may find safety and comfort in having those authorities over us. However, in some instances, we may not completely agree with them. We might even find ourselves subject to those who are ungodly, selfish or tyrannical.

It is likely that during our lifetime we will serve under both benevolent and seemingly unreasonable authority figures. But whatever the nature of those authority figures, the Word of God instructs us concerning the importance of submission as a pattern for life. This includes submission to:

- God (Jas 4:7)
- Governmental authorities (Rom 13:1-7; 1Pet 2:13-17; also, see note below)
- Leadership in the Body of Christ (1Cor 16:15,16; 1Thess 5:12,13; Heb 13:7,17)
- One another in the Body of Christ (Eph 5:21; 1Pet 5:5)
- Husbands, by their wives (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18)
- Parents, by their children (Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20)
- Employer, by their employees (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; 1Pet 2:18-21)

NOTE: As Christians, we are to bear with our government wherever possible. Jesus did not call for the overthrow of Rome, even though at the time it oppressed Israel terribly. But if a government or leader denies people the liberty to worship and obey God, we must continue to serve God – even though it may bring persecution (1Pet 4:12-19).

The only time you may consider *not* submitting to authorities set over you is if they command you to violate the Scriptures, or to violate a principle of moral conduct (i.e., by lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, etc).

For instance, if a governmental authority commands you to stop preaching the Gospel or to refrain from speaking in Jesus' name, Christ's overriding command compels you to speak out anyway. The apostles continued to preach in this manner (Acts 4:1-31; 5:17-42; 8:1-4). If you face this kind of situation, it will require much caution, wisdom and courage. Be led by the Holy Spirit, and God will be glorified! (Mark 13:9-13)

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBMISSION

Submission is a fundamental principle of the believer's life, and especially the life of a church leader. We must submit to God, first and foremost, in everything. Then we must choose to submit to those in authority over us – whether in our community, denomination, job or other situation. Even if we do not agree with them, like them or respect them, we must remain submitted in our attitude and actions.

The only exception is if, in their role of authority, they require you to violate the Word of God or if they are leading others to do the same.

Pastor To Pastor: There are times when we might have difficulty with an authority figure. We may feel that we are not being treated fairly or given appropriate respect or acknowledgment.

Jesus' example to us in those situations is that He "*made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant*" (Phil 2:7). Christ did not seek the approval or praise of men, in part because He knew how futile it is; people can quickly change their opinions (John 2:23-25; 6:15,26,60-66).

Instead, Jesus Christ sought the pleasure of His Father in Heaven. He also chose the role of a servant (Matt 20:28). Out of His heart of submission and service came both salvation for us and great glory for God (Phil 2:7-11).

As church leaders, we will at times be placed in positions of authority. In order to effectively lead with authority, we must first learn to live and walk **under authority!** That means we must understand how to live in the principle of submission.

If you are having a problem with a leader in authority, there are some practical steps to take. First, **pray daily** for the person. This will help you to gain God's perspective on them. Next, seek the Lord as to His solution to your conflict. Search the Scriptures, and wait upon the Lord for His answer.

You may need to go to the person and share your concerns in a humble manner (Matt 5:23,24). You can also seek out counsel from those who are wise and objective, who will help you to resolve the problem and will not simply side with you.

Finally, keep your own heart right (which includes no complaining or gossip) and trust God to be your defender (Ps 5:1; 7:10; 31:2; 59:16,17; etc). This is exemplified in the life of David, who chose to honor God and wait on His timing even though Saul's behavior was difficult and at times ungodly (read 1 Samuel 16-24).

God may not be the author of a trial or difficulty in our life. But He does promise to use *every* situation in our life for good; that “*good*” is the shaping of **us** into the image of Christ (Rom 8:28,29).

Sometimes God will use the difficulties that we face to test our hearts (Ex 20:20; 1Chr 29:17). At other times, a challenging relationship may force us to mature. Choosing godly responses in the midst of difficulty will always cause us to grow in character.

If we choose to adopt Christ's attitude and heart in the midst of trials, this will often lead to God entrusting us with a greater measure of His authority, influence and anointing.

b. Jesus grew into maturity.

Jesus gave Himself to a steady, balanced pattern of growth (Luke 2:52). Though this verse likely involves Jesus' youth, it still sets an example for us of a healthy pattern of personal growth and maturity.

1) “*increased in wisdom*” – A primary source of wisdom is the Word of God. As you read and study it, ask the Holy Spirit to open your understanding and speak to you regarding truth (2Tim 2:15).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit “*will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things I said to you*” (John 14:26). The Spirit of God will *quicken* (make alive and relevant) the words of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit will draw from the Word of God which we have *deposited* into our lives. We make these deposits when we read and study the Bible, as well as through listening to or studying sound biblical teachings and sermons.

As church leaders, we must fully give ourselves to the study, memorization and application of the Scriptures in order to grow in wisdom. This reading and studying, however, is **not** for making sermons! It is for our personal growth. Then, from this ever-deepening well of the rich deposits of God's Word in our lives, we can draw out those truths that the Lord quickens in our hearts as we minister to others. This will hold great personal blessing for us, as well as for those to whom we minister (1Tim 4:12-16).

2) "*increased in...stature*" – We have learned that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:12-20; 1Thess 4:1-8). Therefore, we need to be good stewards of the bodies God has given to us. Our physical health can have a direct impact upon our ability to be effectively used by God in ministry.

We are all aware of the obvious abuses of our physical body that should be avoided: drunkenness or drug abuse (Eph 5:18); sexual misconduct (1Thess 4:3-5); gluttony (1Cor 6:12,13; 9:24-27). Let us instead use our bodies in the service of the Lord!

The Bible does tell us that bodily exercise has *less* value than godliness (1Tim 4:8); but exercise still has some value. However, we should maintain our priorities, not being more concerned with our physical condition than with our spiritual condition.

Moderate daily exercise is good for our health. Doing our best to eat healthy foods is also important. We should watch over our schedules to ensure that we are getting adequate sleep. These matters can contribute to our effectiveness and longevity, increasing the number of years that God can use us and receive glory from our service to Him!

3) "*increased... in favor with God*" – Jesus walked in *obedience* to the Father's will. His entire ministry was to do what God the Father wanted Him to do (John 5:19,30). Jesus spoke what God the Father was saying (John 8:26,28) and performed the works of God (John 5:17; 9:4; 14:10).

Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father's will, so much so that He could say, "*The Father has not left me alone, for I **always** do those things that please Him*" (John 8:29; see also John 4:34; 6:38).

But beyond His obedience, Jesus also walked in a close and intimate relationship with the Father by the Spirit. Jesus often went alone to pray (Luke

5:16). The original Greek verb tense in this verse reveals that spending time alone in prayer was a **regular habit** for Jesus.

The obedience of Jesus did not *earn* God's love or favor. But it did ensure that no sin or compromise would violate His relationship with the Father. This is of profound importance for us, for Jesus extends the *same promise* of intimate relationship to us!

Jesus promises to "*manifest*" (reveal) Himself to us as we walk in obedience to His commands (John 14:21-24). Our obedience to Christ and His Word, in big things and small, will help position us spiritually to walk more closely with our Lord.

Our obedience does not *earn* the Lord's favor. But it does allow for an ever-deepening relationship and communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And it is from this place of intimate relationship that the anointing of the Holy Spirit will flow in and through us in an ever-increasing way.

4) "*increased... in favor with... men*" – This does not imply that Jesus sought the praise or favorable opinion of men. Jesus did choose, however, to not act in arrogance, even though He was truly superior to all men! Instead, Jesus spoke and acted **with love**.

GRACE AND TRUTH

Jesus modeled for us the perfect balance of God's character: "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14); "*for the law was given through Moses, but **grace and truth** through Jesus Christ*" (v.17).

Jesus spent time with sinners (Matt 9:9-13) *and* with the religious (Luke 7:36-50). He spoke of God's love and purpose to any who would listen. Jesus did not seek men's approval or praise, but He did seek to reveal the heart and the Word of God the Father in every situation.

Jesus taught that God expects us to keep our relationships with one another pure and undefiled. The Bible clearly reveals a host of fleshly and sinful behaviors that are unacceptable to God in our relationships, including: unforgiveness, bitterness, anger, envy, jealousy, strife, gossip, being judgmental, etc. (Matt 5:21-24, 43-48; 6:12,14,15; 7:1-6; 18:21-35; Rom 12:9-

21; Gal 5:13-15, 19-21; 1John 2:9,10; 3:10-18 – these are just a few of the many references that illustrate God’s strong emphasis on our having right relationship with one another).

We cannot control the attitudes or behavior of others; but we *can* decide what our own will be. And oftentimes, our attitude of “grace and truth” will open the way for reconciliation and peace with others.

When we work toward right relationships, filled with God’s “grace and truth”, it facilitates **unity**. Greater unity in the Body of Christ is a key to releasing the anointing presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, our churches and our communities. It is also a witness to the world of the genuine truth of the Gospel (John 17:20,21).

c. Jesus walked in humility.

Without doubt, God the Son was the most humble of all men. Jesus was fully God, yet He took on the form of a man and the role of a lowly servant, that He might lay down His life for us all (Phil 2:7,8). If we are to walk in His footsteps, we must walk in humility.

Jesus began His ministry by humbling Himself, even when it did not appear to be necessary. We see this when Jesus came to John the Baptist as John was baptizing people for repentance from sin (Matt 3:13-17).

Obviously, Jesus did not need to repent, for He was without sin (Heb 4:15). John even tried to dissuade Jesus, knowing that Jesus was sinless and his superior (Matt 3:14). Yet Jesus still requested to be baptized by John: *“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness”* (v.15).

Why did Jesus ask to be baptized? This event marked the inauguration, the beginning, of the ministry of Jesus. Accordingly, Jesus chose in this act of submission to water baptism to *identify Himself with sinners* – people like you and me.

Jesus, the sinless Son of God, chose to put Himself alongside sinful humanity in His mission to bring the hope of salvation to all mankind. In order to *“fulfill all righteousness”*, Jesus acknowledged God’s will that He take on the burden of humanity’s sins and be their Redeemer and Savior.

THE SERVANT OF SERVANTS

Jesus knew that His God-appointed mission was to be a humble servant to humanity (Matt 20:28). He was aware of it even at twelve years old (Luke 2:41-50). It was affirmed again by what took place immediately following His water baptism.

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Matt 3:16,17).

Three things happened to Jesus as He humbly obeyed the Father’s will in baptism:

- 1) *“the heavens were opened”* (v.16b) – This symbolized God revealing Himself and His purposes in a new and powerful way through His Son. Jesus was and is God (Col 1:15,16,19; Heb 1:3). To see Him, hear Him and know Him is to truly know God. In Jesus, God had revealed Himself to sinful man in a clearer way than ever before.
- 2) *“the Spirit of God descending”* (v.16c) – Jesus received a powerful, unlimited anointing of the Holy Spirit. This enabled Him to fulfill God’s purpose and will, revealing the heart of God more fully and opening the way of salvation to all. In receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has become the One who baptizes the believer with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16).
- 3) *“My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (v.17) – Most assuredly, God spoke in profound revelation to affirm Christ’s identity. But this declaration carries with it an even deeper meaning.

There are two parts to this statement that are from Old Testament prophetic passages about the Messiah. *“This is My beloved Son...”* is from Psalm 2:7. The Jews historically accepted this entire Psalm as a prophetic description of the coming Messiah.

The second part, *“in whom I am well pleased,”* is from Isaiah 42:1. This entire chapter of Isaiah, along with Chapter 43, prophesies of the Messiah as the Suffering Servant, the Redeemer who will bring God’s justice, mercy and salvation to all mankind.

When God spoke those words, He affirmed that truly Jesus is the long-awaited and prophesied Messiah. He is the Chosen One of God to be the Savior, King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

This also affirmed that the way to the eternal, divine crown was only through the cross. The King of kings was first to be the Servant of all (Phil 2:5-11). His pathway to the throne was obedience to the Father (Heb 5:8). Jesus would fulfill the mission that was motivated by love (John 3:16).

JESUS REACHED TO ALL

From these events surrounding the baptism of Jesus, we can learn important lessons regarding anointing. First, the willing obedience of Jesus to humble Himself, even when it was not necessary, released more of what God intended *for* Him and desired to do *through* Him. Jesus reached to **all**, without condemnation, offering the love, forgiveness and salvation of God (John 8:1-11). **He led by example** in humility (John 13:1-17), ultimately revealing God's heart of love at the cross (1John 4:9,10).

Pastor To Pastor: Church leader, we too must walk in humble obedience to God. We must humbly reach out to *all* with the Gospel. These truths may seem obvious. But that does not mean we are doing them! Humbling ourselves is often a very great challenge.

Humility is directly linked to our character. And our character is a critical factor for growth and fruitfulness in functioning in the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

God resists the proud; but He gives *grace* to the humble. Who of us does not need more of the grace of God in our lives? It is released to us through our humility.

This humility is not a groveling or self-hatred designed to impress others with how "spiritual" we are. The truly humble person does not need to show off his humility to others. When someone pretends to be humble, the result is as distasteful as a show of pride. True humility is a matter of the heart. It is an attitude of unselfish concern for others. It is a total absence of arrogance or conceit.

Let me recommend several godly attitudes and actions that will help us to walk in obedient humility. It would be wise to make these daily habits:

- Ask forgiveness of those we have hurt or offended.
- Give forgiveness from our hearts, even when it is not asked for.
- Love someone who seems to us to be unlovable or undeserving.
- Ask for help, and accept it.
- Decline titles, positions or privileges whose only use is to set us “above” others.
- Choose a task of service that brings no notice, no praise, no honor and no immediate reward.
- Let others receive the credit that might rightfully be yours.

Jesus taught often about humility, knowing our human tendencies toward pride (Matt 6:1-15; 18:1-4; 20:20-28). If we desire to receive the genuine anointing of the Holy Spirit – which results in the fruitfulness of transformed lives – then we must walk as Jesus walked.

It is a walk of humble obedience and faithfulness to God’s revealed will in His Word; it is a walk according to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit every day (Micah 6:8).

d. Jesus understood testing.

Immediately following His baptism, Jesus was “*led by the Spirit*” into the wilderness to fast, pray and do battle with Satan (Luke 4:1-12). One might think that after His experience of being baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit, Jesus would be sent right into powerful, visible ministry. But God’s wisdom is far beyond ours (Isa 55:8,9) and His purposes are designed with an eternal view in mind. It is clear that Jesus’ testing was according to God’s plan (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1).

Pastor To Pastor: As church leaders, we face multiple and unique trials, tribulations and temptations. Being a leader in the Church can send us from the highest pinnacles of joy to the lowest depths of frustration and defeat – and oftentimes, that is just from one Sunday to the next!

Fellow pastor, as a leader in the church, you are a target for hell’s attacks. You might feel alone in your struggles, thinking no one else understands. It can be tempting to think that if you were more mature or spiritual, you would

not go through such difficult times. You might even be tempted to give up and quit the ministry. These lies of the devil are meant to discourage you – do not believe them!

The truth is that anyone who attempts to serve the Lord will face persecution, trials and temptations (2Tim 3:12) – including Jesus. His life is an example to us of how we can face and endure trials with an overriding sense of victory and trust in God.

Jesus knew that God would not leave Him or forsake Him. He knew that God is faithful and that His promises are true. He knew that He could fulfill the Father's will, with the power of the Holy Spirit and God's help: *"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it"* (1Thess 5:24). I recommend that you memorize this scripture, and think upon it when you face challenge or difficulty. Then take time to carefully study the insights and principles below from the life of Jesus; these will also help you during challenging times.

There is much to learn from the attitudes adopted by Jesus during His time of trial and testing. He did not grumble or complain. He did not give in to fear or confusion. Throughout the trial and with its subsequent victory, Jesus placed His full trust in God the Father.

Jesus did not question why this was happening to Him. Rather, Jesus endured the test, trusting that something of God's purpose was being accomplished both in and through His life. Jesus found peace and strength in His submission to God and His trust in the unchanging power of God's Word.

ARMOR THAT FITS

When God brings us to a new level of responsibility or releases fresh anointing into our lives, He often allows a period of testing to follow. Let us look at some of the reasons why this testing can be so important:

1) We need to "grow into" the anointing God gives us.

God will stretch us spiritually for our good. But growth can be uncomfortable; we may be tempted to resent or resist it. However, because God knows what our future holds, He will seek to prepare us for victory rather than defeat. This requires us to be strengthened and matured, and requires that we yield to the process.

We can see a foretype of this principle in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 17:38,39). David is about to face the giant, Goliath. Saul wants David to wear his personal armor. But David rejects Saul's armor, declaring, "*I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them*" (v.39).

David could not effectively use armor that did not quite fit him and that he was unaccustomed to wearing. Though the armor worked well for Saul, it was untried and unfamiliar to David.

In the same way, the anointing and gifts that we are called to walk in should be **ours** – not someone else's. It is too easy to place our confidence and trust in another person's gifting and anointing. We might try to emulate them, even preaching their sermons or mimicking their style. We try to function in "armor" that is not our own!

Trying to function in someone else's anointing is a problem because God has called *you*. He wants to use *you*. The anointing He has given to you is meant for *you*. You are a unique vessel whom God desires to use in a particular way. The assignment He has is for *you*, and the anointing He gives you will perfectly fit your assignment.

But it often takes time to understand and "grow into" your calling, your assignment, and your anointing. Sometimes, God will use a season of testing or trial to help you develop and "fit into the armor" God has for you. When you yield to God in such seasons, He will cause you to grow so that you will become strong and capable of functioning in your own "armor" – your anointing He has given to you – that you might be victorious and fruitful in His calling.

2) We must learn to draw upon the resources He has given us.

Trials will often reveal to us our inadequacies. In difficult times, we recognize more than ever how much we need the Lord and what He alone can provide.

We already learned the importance of having a *godly kind of weakness*, one that increases our dependence upon God (2Cor 12:7-10). This kind of weakness allows us to be vessels through which the anointing of the Holy Spirit can flow.

OUR CONTINUED NEED OF GOD

When we are filled with God's anointing, and functioning in confidence and faith (which is based upon obedience), there is still a danger of which we need to be aware. This danger is that, little by little, we can begin to rely upon ourselves and our accumulated experience and skill. We then depend less and less upon the Lord or upon the power of the Holy Spirit. This does not *need* to happen; but it can happen if we are not careful.

Jesus said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides [remains, tarries, dwells, takes up residence] in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

Let me emphasize here that the *anointing of the Holy Spirit* is all about Jesus. It is not about gifts, power or ministry. It is not even about the people to whom we are ministering – it is about Jesus! The seven characteristics of true anointing had one thing in common: They ALL pointed to Jesus.

It is only in Him, by the Spirit of God, that we *"live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28). No matter how much God is using us, and no matter how much experience we gain, we must *always* maintain a simple, childlike faith. This kind of faith involves humble trust in and deepening dependence upon the Lord.

Our human nature can lead us toward selfishness and a feeling of independence from God. But trials and tests will remind us of our continual need for Him, and for His grace and touch upon our lives.

3) We need purifying in order to set us free to receive more of His anointing.

Jesus said, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63).

The presence of the Spirit of God in our lives will cause our sin nature to be uncomfortable – as it should! For the Spirit and the flesh (sin nature) are at war with each other, or *"contrary"* to one another (Gal 5:16,17; see also James 4:1-10; 1 Peter 2:11).

God knows the things in our hearts, minds and personalities that will hinder or block the anointing of His Holy Spirit. Testing and trials will often act as *purging agents*, forcing our weaknesses to the surface in order for them to be dealt with.

PURGING OUR IMPURITIES

Artisans who work with silver and gold will tell you that the ore, when first mined, is full of impurities. It has to be heated and melted in order to force the impurities to rise to the surface. Then the dross (waste material) is skillfully skimmed from the liquid metal (Prov 25:4). This process is usually repeated over and over, until the metal is purified and usable. Those heating the ore know the exact moment to remove the precious metal from the flame, in order to avoid damaging it.

In a similar fashion, God will use the trials that may come into our lives to cause the impurities in us to be “brought to the surface” and exposed. They can then be recognized – and removed by means of repentance, healing, and deliverance, bringing freedom from the bondages of our sin nature.

Pastor To Pastor: Church leader, what rises to the surface in your life when circumstances “heat up” (intensify) or when you feel pressured? How do you react, or what do you turn to for relief? Does what rises to the surface reveal an attitude or behavior that God may want to cleanse, heal or remove from your life? Could there be something He might want to teach you in the midst of your trial or difficulty?

These times when we are confronted with our weaknesses and impurities are not to be feared. God, in His love, will use tests, trials and tribulations to cleanse and shape us. He will also give us revelation, understanding, sovereign touches of His love and grace, and insights into His Word. He uses these occasions to stretch our faith and to transform our character so that we will be more effective and useful vessels.

WISDOM UNDER TRIAL

God uses trials to purify and strengthen us. God does not test us in order to make us feel like failures or because we are “not good enough”. No! God allows testing and trials in our lives to increase our strength; for He does not want us to be weak in the times when we will need strength (Prov 24:10; Jer 12:5). God uses trials to prepare us to be able to receive, and be faithful with, more of His anointing!

This is why James exhorts us to “*count it all joy when you fall into various trials*” (Jas 1:2). The Scriptures go on to encourage us to patiently endure the

trial (vs.3,4), knowing and trusting that our faithful God will use it for our good and His glory. This is His promise to us (Rom 8:28,29).

James goes on to counsel us to also ask for wisdom (Jas 1:5-8) – and, with faith, expect to hear from God. Why do we need this wisdom? Is it just to escape the trial? No, but instead it is to give us discernment and understanding so that, regardless of the source of the trial, we will know what to do while God is at work in us.

NEED FOR A PROVEN HISTORY

God desires to give us more of His Spirit. But that often requires that we have the strength of character and the maturity to not waste or misuse His gifts. You would not give a car to a five-year-old child, no matter how much they felt they were ready, would you? They would not have the maturity to handle the responsibility. They first need to grow up physically, mentally and emotionally.

This same principle is true in the Kingdom of God. Look at Paul's instructions to Timothy about the appointing of elders and deacons (1Tim 3:1-13). It is commendable and good if someone wants to be a leader. But they must have a proven history of godly behavior and character, and maturity in life.

Specifically, Paul instructs Timothy that a new convert should not be appointed as an elder, for new converts do not yet have that kind of maturity.

STANDING UP UNDER TEMPTATION

Our God is perfect in holiness. He will **never** commit an act of evil, nor will God ever tempt us – the objects of His love – to do evil or sin (Job 34:10-12; Jas 1:13-18).

It is Satan who is the author of evil, the one who seeks to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). The devil *cannot* ruin or limit our gifts or anointing directly. Those are under the sovereign rule of God alone. But Satan will tempt us in the area of our character. He will try to attack, deceive, pollute or disqualify us as God's instruments. If he can persuade us to choose sinful behavior or attitudes, then the work of God through our lives can be hindered or destroyed through our own personal failure.

What then should we do since our *“adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1Pet 5:8)? We should deal with temptation the same way that Jesus did in the wilderness (Luke 4:3-12). The methods to resist the works of the devil are summarized for us also in James 4:7-10. Read that portion of Scripture, and let us study it together for a moment.

- *“Submit to God”* – obey and trust the Lord. Obedience to His Word will keep us away from places or situations of temptation. Also, run to Him **first** in prayer when you are being tempted; do not try to resist temptation without God’s help
- *“Resist the devil”* – use the Word of God and your spiritual prayer language (“tongues” – 1 Corinthians 12 and 14); join in prayer with someone you trust.
- *“Draw near to God”* – bring your entire situation to God in prayer and allow Him to shine the light of His Spirit and His Word into your heart. Be patient and wait upon Him to do what only He can do. Resist the temptation to take matters into your own hands and try to resolve or fix the situation yourself.
- *“Cleanse your hands”, “purify your hearts”, “humble yourselves”* – as the Holy Spirit reveals or convicts you of areas of bondage, sin and weakness in your life, bring those to God in prayer with a humble and repentant heart; confess your failings and your need for God’s cleansing work, His forgiveness, healing and deliverance.

GRACE TO BE OVERCOMERS

In addition, there is another powerful list of instructions to help us know how to engage in spiritual battles. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. This instructs us to put on our armor, take up the Sword of the Spirit (God’s Word) and be “bathed” in prayer. Then, after having done all you can, **stand firm** in your faith, trust and submission to God. You **can** resist the devil and his works, and he must flee! God will give you the victory today!

The enemy does not give up. He will try again, since his goal is your destruction. This was true even with Jesus. Though He faced a great trial in the wilderness – and won a sound victory – it was not His final encounter with the enemy (see Luke 4:13; see also Matthew 16:23; Luke 22:1-6). But with every temptation, Jesus did not give in to sin.

Remember that God is completely for you (Rom 8:31). He has even promised that He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can resist; He will **always** provide a way of escape (1Cor 10:13; 2Pet 2:9).

Let us rejoice, therefore, that we have a King who intimately knows and understands our struggles. This just and loving Savior freely invites us to receive His strength, power and grace to be overcomers like Him (Hebrews 4:14-16)

4) We must pursue a lifelong pattern of reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus returned from forty days in the wilderness, the Bible records the following: *“Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region”* (Luke 4:14).

Jesus came to His home town of Nazareth. This was the place where He had grown up and where He went to the synagogue for the Sabbath (Luke 4:16-30). It was there that He stood up to read, choosing from the whole of Scripture this passage from Isaiah 61:1,2: *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD”* (Luke 4:18,19).

Jesus declared that His Messianic work was to be accomplished by *“the Spirit of the Lord”*. Jesus was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. It was only by this anointing that He could do all that He prophetically declared regarding His ministry.

FULL DEPENDENCE UPON THE LORD

In this passage, Jesus is setting the perfect pattern for how we can carry out the Father’s will. As we know, Jesus came only to do the Father’s will, not His own. Likewise, you and I are called to do the Father’s will and not our own. We are not called to carry out “our program”, regardless of how good we think it might be. Instead, we are called, authorized and empowered to carry out the will of One Person – God. And to do *God’s will*, we need *God’s power!*

As we have learned, our great challenge as we mature in the things of God is how to become *more and more* dependent upon God and the power of the

Holy Spirit. It is too easy to begin to depend upon our growing gifts and abilities. We may have some success, so we back away from concerted prayer or study of the Bible. We may not feel as spiritually hungry, or as desperate to see God work in people's lives or our community. Our trust is then placed more on our accumulated experience and skill, and less on the anointing power of the Spirit of God.

In these instances, difficulties and trials can bring us back to our knees, back to our place of dependency upon the Lord for **all** that we need in life and ministry.

We can see, in the life of Jesus, times of great miracles and ministry, and times of great trial and opposition. But either way, the sinless Son of God was totally dependent upon the enabling power of God's Spirit.

Jesus chose to take on the limitations of a human body and to empty Himself of His divine privileges (Phil 2:7). Because of this, Jesus allowed himself to be fully dependent upon the Father's will and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. This carried Him through life on this earth, through His ministry, even through His death and subsequent glorious resurrection!

If Jesus, God the Son, needed the power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Father's will – **how much more** so do you and I?

TRIALS: GOD'S INSTRUMENTS TO SHAPE US

God will use trials in our lives. He is **not** punishing us in these times. Just the opposite is true. **Because** God loves us, He disciplines us (Heb 12:3-11). **Because** we are truly His sons and daughters (Rom 8:14-16), He does what is necessary to shape us and cause us to grow into His image (2Cor 3:18). **Because** we are fellow-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17), and are destined to rule and reign with Him (2Tim 2:12; Rev 5:10), we will go through testing to prepare us for what is to come (Rom 8:18; 2Cor 4:17).

Let us not fear or flee from the trials and difficulties that will come to each of us. But instead, as James writes, "*count it all joy when you fall into various trials*" (Jas 1:2). For these are the very instruments that God will use to shape, transform and prepare us for His use and glory!

3. Pursuit Of The Person Of God

As we have seen, there are many principles and lessons to be learned from the life and ministry of Jesus. Unquestionably, no one has ever taught like Him (Luke 4:32). Jesus performed signs, wonders and miracles throughout His ministry – so many, in fact, that John the apostle declares that they were too numerous to record! (John 21:25)

Since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8), **the works that He did during His earthly ministry are still being done today.** These great works and miracles are being done by the Holy Spirit, through the members of Christ's Body. This means that the ministry Jesus began while on earth, He has now given to His followers to continue (Acts 1:1-8).

We have not, of course, been given His mission to die on the cross for the sins of humanity. That was Christ's mission alone. Eternal salvation is only through *His* sacrifice (Acts 4:12). There is nothing we can do to add to that great and finished work. We are only to **receive** it!

Pastor To Pastor: Please understand that Jesus' ministry was **not** cut short by His crucifixion. The primary focus of Jesus' mission here on earth was His death on the cross for the salvation of mankind. This salvation was gloriously accomplished through His death, and subsequent resurrection (John 19:30; Eph 1:17-23; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 9:11-15).

So we can say with confidence that no one killed or murdered Jesus against His will. Rather, Christ's death for our sins was part of God's foreordained purpose for Him (John 1:29; 12:27; 19:5-11; Acts 2:22-24,33). Jesus willingly received and fully accomplished this mission.

GREATER WORKS

Those of us who have received salvation through Jesus Christ have been given the ministry of Jesus to **carry forward**, even *"to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). We have been given the Holy Spirit to enable us to fulfill this blessed command.

Jesus also said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father"* (John 14:12). In this verse, we see clearly that Jesus has called us to carry on His works.

However, we **must** understand that this does not mean our works will somehow be superior to Christ's. Nor can we ever become Christ's equal in any way (Matt 10:24,25; John 13:16). For only Jesus was and is God; and only Jesus is One in essence with God the Father and the Holy Spirit (John 10:30).

When Jesus said "*greater works*", He was referring to the fact that we will do works that are *greater in number and scope*. The length of the ministry of Jesus was approximately three and a half years. Our ministry can span our entire lifetime.

The earthly ministry of Jesus was geographically confined to a small area and to a relatively small number of people. This is limited when compared to the millions of Christ-followers and our calling to go to "*the end of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). We are to "*preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15) and "*make disciples of all the nations*" (Matt 28:19). So those are the "greater works" that we will do!

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL

It has been the plan in the heart of Father God to bring salvation to all people. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, this is now possible. But this wonderful Good News must be told to all the nations (Matt 24:14; John 4:35). How will they know unless someone tells them? (Rom 10:14,15)

It is the assignment of every believer to make the Good News of salvation through Christ known to all people. But in order to accomplish this, we need the power and enablement of God's Holy Spirit!

By the power of the Holy Spirit, "*He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*" (John 16:7-11). It is also by the Holy Spirit that signs and wonders were done by the first apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12; etc). These same Holy Spirit-empowered signs and wonders have continued through the Church Age, and are available to us today (1Cor 12:9,10).

Most pastors and church leaders today hunger to see more of God's evident power through their ministries. We desire to see the sick healed, demons cast out, the dead raised – and more – all to the glory of Jesus!

These works are certainly available to us today by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus did them in His ministry by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:22). And He

has promised that we will also do them (John 14:12) by the same Holy Spirit (1Cor 12:11).

We can and should expect – and believe in faith for – God to confirm the preaching of the Gospel with miracle power through our ministries (Mark 16:19,20). This He *will do* by the power of the Holy Spirit, according to His will. Hallelujah!

SIGNS POINT TO GOD

Here we must bring a balancing and cautionary perspective. The focus or goal of our ministry *should never be miracles, signs and wonders*. Nor should those things become our heart's desire.

It is true that God is doing many marvelous and miraculous things in the world today. But what is the **purpose** of these mighty signs, wonders and miracles? A “sign” or “wonder” is an abnormal or very unusual event or occurrence. A sign is designed by God to get our attention. For instance, a burning bush in the desert may not be that unusual. However, when that bush continues to have a burning appearance for a lengthy time *but is not consumed*, it certainly gains our attention and notice! (See Exodus 3:1-3.)

But a sign is more than just an unusual phenomenon. The primary purpose of signs or miracles is that they are **designed to point to something**. Whatever the sign or wonder is pointing to will determine its validity.

All signs and wonders done by the Holy Spirit will always and in every case point people to God the Father or God the Son – Jesus. The sign itself is not the “end destination” or the focal point. Instead, the sign should lead a person *to the destination*.

God got Moses' attention with a burning bush that was not consumed. But once God had Moses' attention, He began to reveal Himself (Ex 3:4-6) and His purpose for His people (Ex 3:7-4:17).

Which was more important? God making a bush burn continuously, or what He revealed about Himself and His purpose?

IS THE GOSPEL CLEARLY PREACHED?

The basis for judging signs and wonders, prophetic words, visions, and similar spiritual occurrences is not whether they are unusual or supernatural. Even the devil can use deception to perform limited supernatural signs and wonders (2Cor 11:14). Satan's works in this regard will increase as we enter the end times (Matt 24:23-25; 2Thess 2:8-10; Rev 13:13,14; 16:14; 19:20).

The demonic realm will attempt to produce counterfeit miracles in order to deceive people, leading them away from the truth of the Gospel and Jesus as the only way of salvation. But even this negative example shows that signs and wonders can gain the attention of people.

Thus, the true basis for judging signs and wonders by the Holy Spirit is this: Does this occurrence **glorify Jesus**? Does it direct people to **Him**? Does it move people to respond to **Him** – to love, worship, obey and follow Jesus Christ? Is the Gospel being clearly preached, so that the unsaved have an opportunity to repent? Is the name of Jesus being lifted up above all other names? These are the questions we must answer as we seek discernment and understanding on this issue of signs and wonders.

A BRIEF LOOK AT SIGNS AND WONDERS

Signs, wonders and miracles from God are good, and are something we should expect to see today. They did not cease with the death of the first apostles (c. A.D. 100). Nor did they stop when the New Testament Scriptures were “canonized” (the term used to signify an official recognition by Church leadership of the apostolic writings as inspired by God – c. A.D. 300).

The Holy Spirit is still today doing the works that Jesus began almost 2,000 years ago! Jesus is the *“same yesterday, today, and forever”* (Heb 13:8). And He is the One who has called us to carry on with His works (John 14:12), by the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, as exciting as signs, wonders and miracles are, there is a limit to what they can accomplish. We have established that signs exist to capture people's attention. And they should always direct people to Jesus.

This is critical, because **signs and wonders do not cause “saving faith” to grow in a person's heart**. Faith built only on a sign or miracle will tend to be shallow and not lasting. (For an example of this, read John 6, particularly verses 14, 15, 26-35, 60-64.)

Ultimately, to enter into salvation, a person must choose to respond to the truth of Jesus Christ – who He is and what He did for them on the cross. They must believe in Him, repent from their sins and receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

THE FIRST PLACE BELONGS TO JESUS

Jesus, early in His ministry, understood the wicked and shallow nature of the human heart (Jer 17:9). Jesus did not entrust or “commit” Himself to the people who were following Him (John 2:23-25). He discerned that they had only a superficial faith in Him, arising “*when they saw the signs which He did*” (v.23).

Miracles, signs and wonders done by the power of the Holy Spirit are legitimate and valid. God uses them to get people’s attention. But lasting faith *must* be built on something – Someone! – far more eternal and solid: Jesus Christ!

A faith that is built upon the Person of Christ and His sacrifice for their sins is a solid, lasting, saving faith. This is the kind of life-transforming faith that will remain strong and grow, in spite of adversity and trial. This is the kind of faith that can last a lifetime – and into eternity!

The Holy Spirit does use signs, wonders and miracles to capture people’s attention. But He does so in order to lead them to an opportunity to choose to believe on Christ for salvation. Let us look at two examples of this.

In the first example (John 9:1-41), Jesus heals a man who was born blind. The man is healed, but then Jesus confronts him with the opportunity to believe in Him (9:35-38).

In the second example (Acts 13:4-12), Paul confronts a wicked sorcerer. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Paul speaks a prophetic judgment upon the sorcerer (vs.9-11). A proconsul who sees this demonstration of power is convinced that what Paul has taught him about Christ is true (v.12).

You will notice that in both cases, the faith in Christ was not based on the sign itself. It was based upon the question of whether or not they believed in Jesus Christ (John 9:35-38; Acts 13:12). The sign or wonder simply acted to validate the truth and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Church leader, signs and wonders should have a place in your ministry. But the *first place* in all things belongs to Jesus; everything else should simply and very clearly point people to Him.

Jesus is their Savior! Jesus is their Lord! All praise and glory to Him!

NO OTHER GODS

This brings us to one of the **key principles** of walking, ministering and growing in the anointing of the Holy Spirit:

Are we seeking God for what He will do for us? Or are we seeking God for who He is, and seeking Him out of our desire for relationship with Him – desiring only to know Him and to make Him known?

We have established that the power of God is not separate from the person of God. God's anointing *is* God's Spirit working in and through a yielded human vessel.

But what happens when someone loses their focus upon God, or misdirects their hunger for spiritual things away from Him? We can see the disastrous results of this among the Jewish religious leaders in Jesus' day.

Jesus confronts these religious leaders who desired to kill Him (John 5:16-18). They were men of deep and profound learning, but had lost their way in spite of their knowledge.

Jesus rebukes them for having lost sight of the very point of all their learning: *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to me that you may have life"* (John 5:39,40).

The Jewish leaders knew the Scriptures. But they had missed the **Living Word** – Jesus, who was standing right in front of them! (John 1:1-5,14) Later, Jesus again rebuked the religious elite for always seeking a sign, though they had already witnessed many such signs (Matt 12:38,39). And Jesus rebuked them a third time when addressing the blindness of the Pharisees, scribes and lawyers who were asking for yet another sign (Matt 16:1-4).

Then toward the end of Jesus' ministry, when the Pharisees' willful blindness to the truth remained unchanged, Jesus pronounced judgment upon them (Matt 23:37-39).

What was the point that Jesus was trying to make? There are many lessons to be learned from Jesus' encounters with the religious leaders of His day. But essentially, Jesus was pointing out that the Jews were **seeking for what they wanted God to do for them – but not for God Himself!**

This is one of the reasons they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. He would not give them what they wanted, which was that He would right then begin a Kingdom on earth where the Pharisees, scribes and lawyers would be among the privileged leaders. They desired power, influence and material wealth. They had become comfortable with their positions, titles of respect and social status (Matt 6:2,5, 6,16-18; 23:2-7; John 12:42,43; etc). They had missed the point entirely, thinking only of themselves. Jesus, of course, condemned this attitude of self-service and religious pride.

The religious leaders had forgotten a fundamental truth about the God whom they said they served. *“You shall have no other gods before Me... For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God”* (Ex 20:3,5).

God is righteously jealous for our love and devotion. First, because He alone in all the universe is *worthy of our love and worship*. Second, because God is our creator and we owe our existence as a living human race to Him (Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; John 1:3). Third, because He gave His Son to redeem us – the objects of His perfect love – from sin and death (Col 2:11-15; 1John 4:9,10).

This truth is affirmed again in the New Testament: *“The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”* (Jas 4:5). This statement is made during a rebuke to early Christians who were attempting to use God to fulfill their selfish desires (Jas 4:1-4). They are called *“adulterers and adulteresses”* (v.4) because they were betraying their committed and holy relationship with their Savior in order to pursue the fleshly, passing pleasures of this world.

But even then, God did not reject them. Rather, He yearned jealously for them, for He alone truly loved them. God will receive back and forgive the truly repentant adulterer (Jas 4:6-10).

It is clear, then, that we are not to violate our love and service to God by becoming enamored with any other things.

AVOID BEING DRAWN AWAY

In our role as pastors and leaders in the Body of Christ, there is to be only One who holds our loyalty, allegiance, desire and hope – **Jesus!**

- Not signs, wonders or miracles
- Not a big ministry, or those who have one
- Not gifts, callings, abilities, positions or titles
- Not even His blessings

It has been said that the greatest obstacles for believers are often the blessings that God gives to His people. Why would that be so? Because our attention and desires can easily be moved away from God, and instead become fixed on His blessings. Our hearts are deceitfully selfish (Jer 17:9). Though we may be saved, we are still very prone to sin (1John 1:8).

Pastor To Pastor: Friend and church leader, please understand that it is not wrong to want the anointing presence of the Holy Spirit poured out upon you and your ministry. It is God's great desire for you to have this!

But if we are not wise and cautious, our hearts can be **seduced**. In our desire for success in ministry, we can begin to focus on what God can do for us, instead of on our love for Him for who He is alone.

Slowly and subtly, we can be drawn away from a righteous **pursuit of the Person of God to instead hungering for what He can do for us**. This is precisely what happened to the Pharisees. They substituted their knowledge *about* God for a genuine, submitted relationship *with* God. They knew a lot about the Scriptures and religious matters, but they did not *know Him*. They did not desire God Himself, but sought what He could do for them.

Some leaders today, instead of being drawn to God, become drawn to the supernatural phenomena that often accompany the moving of the Holy Spirit. This is like someone who wants to marry a rich man or woman because of the riches they possess. They desire the person's wealth and what it can do for them more than they desire the person. What a terrible and selfish attitude!

When we covet supernatural experiences, our love for God Himself can become less than pure – even cold (Matt 24:12). This is similar to the attitude revealed in Simon the sorcerer, who sought the miracle power of the Holy Spirit for his own gain (Acts 8:9-24).

Our God is jealous for us. He desires our loyalty, our love and our devotion because He loves *us* with an everlasting love (Rom 5:5; 1John 3:1). Those who have set their whole heart upon the Lord are the kind of people for which He looks. It is through devoted children of His that He can manifest Himself in powerful ways (Dan 11:32).

OUR FIRST CALLING

Many times in Scripture, we are exhorted to seek the “*face*” of God (2Chr 7:14; Hos 5:15; Ps 27:8; etc). The face of God as spoken of in Scripture represents God’s Person, His heart.

However, nowhere in Scripture are we exhorted to seek the “*hand*” of God. The “*hand*” of God, or the “*hand of the Lord*”, refers to His works, His deeds, His blessings. We can see the results of God’s working (His hand) through what He does. And it is not wrong to want to see those results in and through our ministry.

But please understand: It is when we seek God’s face (His heart, Himself) that we discover the will of God and what He desires to do. **As we follow and obey His will**, then we *will* see God’s mighty hand by His Spirit at work!

Seeking God, and our relationship with Him, must always be our first priority. It is from this place that everything of worth in ministry will flow.

TRUE SONS, TRUE SERVANTS

Jesus said, *“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor”* (John 12:26).

Notice that in this verse, Jesus is in the first position. Jesus is the Lord of the Church (Eph 1:22); we are to *follow Him*. He is not following us around in ministry to bless what we ask Him to bless.

Our first calling as church leaders is a daily relationship of seeking the Lord – knowing Him, loving Him, worshipping Him, communing with Him (Ps 63:1-8). It is from this place that we will truly discover His will and plans for our lives, our ministries and all else.

It is God's desire to pour out His blessing, His anointing, His signs and wonders upon His Church, and upon you as His called leader. But can He trust you with that? Do you have the maturity, the strength of character and the wisdom to stay loyal only to Him?

God promises to release more of His “hand” if our hearts belong solely to Him. *“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal [fully committed, obedient] to Him”* (2Chr 16:9). He jealously wants our hearts with a righteous jealousy, for He loves us with His everlasting love (Rom 8:31-39).

Pastor To Pastor: God absolutely and unconditionally loves you! Regardless of your imperfections, He loves you deeply, personally and eternally. You were not created for ministry service alone.

If God had wanted more servants, He would have simply made more angels. But He made you because He wanted sons and daughters who walk in relationship with Him. The angels are unable to have this kind of relationship with their Creator – only we humans can experience this (Heb 2:14-18; 1Pet 1:12).

Christ did not give His life so you could be in the ministry. He died to be the sacrifice for your sins, in order that you could be restored to a relationship to God.

We are not *just* servants of the Lord. We are the friends of Christ (John 15:15) and co-heirs with Him (Rom 8:17). We are sons and daughters of the Living God (Rom 8:15,16). We have the *privilege* and opportunity to serve the Lord and His Body out of our love and gratitude for Him!

DAILY IN HIS PRESENCE

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is directly related to our constant priority of seeking the Person of God. King David, whom the Lord referred to as *“a man after My [God's] own heart”* (Acts 13:22), gives us direction for relationship

with God: “When you said, ‘Seek my face,’ my heart said to you, ‘Your face, LORD, I will seek’” (Ps 27:8).

To “seek” means to earnestly, diligently, persistently look for and search until the object of our seeking is found. Jesus spoke of this principle as well (Matt 6:33; 13:44-46; Luke 11:9-13).

Seeking for God costs time and energy. We may have to give up some comfort, privilege or activities. But it is through seeking God that we come to know Him. Out of that close relationship, we begin to know His will for our lives and ministries. As we walk in obedience to His will, He releases His anointing upon and through us.

Let us always place as our first priority a daily time in the Lord’s presence. It is there that we receive that which is truly eternal in substance, which will not diminish or fade (Luke 10:38-42). Decide today, and every day: “Your face, Lord, will I seek”.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude this section, “Growing In The Anointing”, please remember that each of us **can and should grow** in the anointing power of the Holy Spirit. This includes you (as the pastor and leader) – **and** the people you lead! You have responsibilities as an *undershepherd* (1Pet 5:2-4) of God’s people. These include ensuring that every person you lead is both growing in their understanding of God’s Word *and* growing in their ability to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the scriptural pattern for healthy growth in the Body of Christ (see Ephesians 4:11-16, especially verse 12).

The pathway to growing in anointing is perhaps somewhat different than you may have expected. Let us review the key principles vital to growth in anointing:

- Purity
- Godly weakness
- Humility
- Submission to authority
- Right response to testing

- A heart for God alone
- Walking and growing in daily relationship with God

Jesus was our example of every one of these characteristics. He was the most anointed Man to ever walk the earth. He invites us to walk in His footsteps on the pathway of God's anointing. As we do, we will receive a full measure of everything we need in order to fulfill the Lord's high calling for us!

C. RECEIVING HIS ANOINTING

I was part of the ministry team at a Pastor's Conference in Cuba. Near the end of the conference, there was time given for testimonies from those attending. An elderly, rather frail gentleman, who was obviously blind, was helped along as he slowly came to the platform.

This elder brother began his testimony by sharing that he had served the Lord all of his life; the members of his family were also serving the Lord. He informed the crowd about the many churches he had planted over his lifetime, including the six churches he had planted within that year!

He talked about losing his eyesight and how challenging that was, including the need to have someone read the Bible to him every day.

Then he paused for a moment, and bowed his head. The auditorium of more than 1,000 pastors became silent. Suddenly, the man raised his hands in a gesture of triumph and shouted, "I have lost my sight, but not the fire!" The entire assembly erupted into cheers and worship to God.

What would keep a 76-year-old man "on fire" – and still preaching, teaching, evangelizing and planting churches? Only the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the man's dedication to be used by God for His purposes and glory!

TREASURE IN A CLAY POT

My hope is that God will use me effectively every day of my life until He takes me to my heavenly home. But it does not take long in ministry to realize that serving in the ministry can be wearying and exhausting at every level – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

This is not all bad, for we are not to be selfish with the gifts, power and anointing of God. We are to continually give away what God has given to us.

Neither are we to be lazy or undisciplined in ministry (Luke 9:62; Eccl 9:10; Col 3:23); rather we are to give every effort to the cause of Christ.

However, if we become too tired, “burned out” or exhausted, it can potentially create serious problems. God knows that we are finite, and limited in our strength. So He does offer to us His strength, wisdom, grace, abilities and power in order for us to do His will – and we desperately need those things. For without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

Paul understood this need when he wrote: *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us”* (2Cor 4:7). As an experienced and widely accomplished apostle of Christ, Paul knew that the power and drive to do the will of God is not within man’s natural abilities or capacity. Rather, *“this treasure”* within the “clay pot” of our lives – which gives us all that we need – is the anointing of the Holy Spirit! (Read 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:18.)

HE SUPPLIES OUR NEED

The requirements of ministry (or just living as a Christian in today’s world) can deplete us of God’s power and strength. Jesus Himself needed to be refreshed spiritually, receiving ministry from God’s Spirit.

A study of the Gospels will reveal the many times that Jesus drew away to lonely places to pray (for example, Luke 4:42; 5:16; 6:12). After these times of prayer, Jesus would work powerfully, make important decisions in His ministry, be equipped to endure trials, etc.

What is being revealed to us by Jesus’ example? To answer this question, let us look at two Scripture passages.

1. **Be Filled!**

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18).

There are three significant principles that come from the original Greek language structure for the phrase, *“be filled with the Spirit”*.

a. This phrase is in the *present tense* form.

This means that it is happening now and continually. In other words, “*be filled with the Spirit*” means we are to be **continually filled** with the Holy Spirit. This is wonderful news! To be continually filled means that we can be filled not just once, but **over and over again!**

We receive the Holy Spirit at salvation (Rom 8:15,16; Eph 1:13-15). This is a general anointing given to all believers (1John 2:20,27). When we are sovereignly called for ministry assignments, God makes additional anointing available to us that will help us function fruitfully in that assignment.

God gives to us of His Person, power and gifts. But as we give this away in ministry, we can be drained or spiritually depleted. So God has made it possible for us to be filled with His Holy Spirit *again and again*, as often as we need!

This pattern is clearly seen in the ministry of the early Church. The Book of Acts records some of these instances for us:

- Peter was filled to preach the Gospel and defend the faith (Acts 4:8).
- The disciples received boldness and power to preach the Gospel, in spite of persecution (Acts 4:31).
- Paul was initially filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), then *filled again* as he was about to confront demonic powers (Acts 13:9).
- Following a confrontation with religious leaders, the disciples were filled again with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:42-52).
- Stephen was filled, and filled again (Acts 6:5; 7:55).
- Barnabas was also refilled (Acts 13:52).

This repeated filling with the Holy Spirit brought great power to the preaching and teaching of these disciples. Their bold declarations of the Gospel were also accompanied by signs and wonders (Acts 5:12).

Some may believe that such miracles occurred only through the original apostles. But the Book of Acts reveals that signs and wonders by the Holy Spirit were being done through whomever He chose.

For example: Stephen, who had been appointed to wait on tables (Acts 6:8); and “*the brethren*” (Acts 14:1-7). Paul writes about the fact that the Holy Spirit can move miraculously through **anyone** He might choose to empower and direct (see 1 Corinthians 12:1-11).

INCREASE THROUGH GIVING

There is an added benefit to being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit. As we “freely receive and freely give” (Matt 10:8), our **capacity** to receive more of His anointing is **increased!** This principle of God’s Kingdom is true in finances, time, service and other areas – the more we give, the more we receive.

We are *growing* every time we minister, giving away the Holy Spirit’s life and power to others. This means we can then *receive* more, and thus have more to *give away*.

This blessed process of receiving and giving, receiving and giving, is a benefit to all concerned. God is blessed and glorified because His will is being fulfilled. The members of Christ’s Body are blessed, and growing into strong disciples (Eph 6:12-16). You, as a minister, are being blessed – as a powerful and faithful servant of the Lord, fulfilling His calling and growing in your capacity to both give in ministry and receive more from the Holy Spirit!

All of this is dependent upon being filled with the Holy Spirit – *continually*. This is a separate process from receiving the sovereign gift of the Holy Spirit at salvation, or then being baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-7). We are to live in a way that we are **continually filled** with the Holy Spirit, again and again!

b. The phrase “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph 5:18) is also set in the *imperative mood*.

This means that this phrase is a *command*, **not** a *suggestion*! God knows far better than we do how much we need His power and ability. Truly, we need the Holy Spirit in order to live as a victorious overcomer in daily life. But even more so, we need an *overflowing* presence of His Spirit in order to be fruitful and effective in ministry.

When God makes a command, it is ***always***:

- righteous and reasonable
- for His glory
- for our good
- made possible by His provision!

God, by His sovereign will, has made possible for us the unlimited provision of the Holy Spirit. And He *commands* that we be *continually filled* with His divine provision of the Holy Spirit. Hallelujah!

This is a command that we should be rushing to obey every day, and at every moment of need.

c. This phrase is also written in the *passive voice*.

This means that these fresh and continual fillings of the Holy Spirit cannot be achieved by our efforts. We cannot earn them or work to be worthy to receive them. They are a gift of God to us. We can only open our hearts and *receive* what He desires to give us.

However, we must be *positioned* to receive them! Herein is a ***primary key*** of living the Spirit-filled life and having a Spirit-filled ministry.

Have you ever wondered why some people seem to always be filled with the Holy Spirit, moving in gifts, wisdom, power, etc. – while others do not seem to function this way?

The way to position yourself to be continually filled with God's Holy Spirit is to **yield**. This means that everything in your life must be submitted and surrendered to God – your will, your plans, your weaknesses and, most especially, your strengths. When you do this, you are yielding your entire being to the Holy Spirit and to His desires for you.

Yielding our lives to the Holy Spirit puts us in a spiritual position to more readily and freely receive what He desires to give us.

However, please note that yielding our lives to the Holy Spirit is not the same thing as being *possessed*. Demons are the only ones who try to take over a person's will and personality (Luke 8:29-38a). Leaders in cults and false religions may also try to control or subjugate other people, because they are functioning in demonic deception.

We are not called to be religious “puppets” without a mind or the ability to make choices. Instead, we are called to a relationship of love, trust and cooperation with the presence of the Holy Spirit living within us. He is there to work *within* us, to transform and purify us; and to work *through* us as

ministering vessels for the Lord God. When we yield our lives to God and His work in this way, we will be positioned to receive fresh and continuous fillings of anointing.

Pastor To Pastor: As sons of our heavenly Father, we are to be led by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:14). The word “*led*” in this verse is ***present participle***. This means that we are to be *continuously led*.

This *continuous leading* of the Holy Spirit includes, but is not limited to, a formal knowledge of the commands and principles of Scripture – and our obedience to them. This is a primary way to be led by the Holy Spirit, since God has already revealed to us in His Word how we are to live day to day.

But being *continuously led* by the Holy Spirit also involves developing sensitivity to His promptings, which can come at any time. The Holy Spirit may prompt you about your ministry, your personal life, someone else’s point of need, or many other things. He is ever-present, and with you to help guide you in this life. The Holy Spirit will also help you know how to cooperate with Him in ministering to the needs of others.

If a prompting is from the Holy Spirit, it will **always** lead you to obey the commands and moral standards of God’s written Word. If you feel led by the Holy Spirit to make a major change or to do something out of the ordinary for you, it is wise to follow the exhortations of Scripture and seek out spiritually mature counselors (Prov 11:14; 24:6). They can help to confirm that what you are sensing is indeed from the Holy Spirit – or indicate that it might not be. This will help guard you against error or deception.

SUMMARY

We have learned three important principles regarding the biblical phrase, “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Eph 5:18).

- We **can** be continually filled, beyond just a one-time experience.
- We **must** be continually filled, as God has commanded us.
- We can **receive** God’s continual filling and anointing of the Holy Spirit only through Him – it is a gift from Him that we position ourselves to receive by yielding our lives to Him.

2. Seek God!

You may be asking yourself right now, “What must I do to receive these fresh fillings (anointings) of the Holy Spirit of God? Do I go to a special place? Say particular words? Seek out someone to pray for me? Must I go to special meetings?”

This sacred Scripture passage reveals how and when we can receive more of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said this: *“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”* (Luke 11:9-13).

In this passage, Jesus gives us very simple direction for how we can be freshly filled, again and again, with the Holy Spirit.

a. We are to ask, seek, knock.

God is the Giver of the Holy Spirit (v.13). The admonition in this verse to pursue the Lord – ask, seek, knock – is written in *present tense* in the original Greek language.

This word structure means to keep doing it, even now. We are to keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking – until we have received an answer from our loving Lord.

We are promised, *“everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened”* (v.10) Hallelujah! God delights in pouring out His Spirit upon us; ours is but to ask of Him.

Jesus used three examples of pursuing the Holy Spirit – asking, seeking, knocking. He is **not** revealing three separate mechanisms or methods. Rather, He is exhorting us to pursue God in earnest, and with sincerity.

You will notice that there is no mention of *begging* or of trying to *prove your worthiness* to receive. These efforts are not necessary; in fact, they are attitudes that can actually block our ability to simply receive by faith as God’s beloved sons and daughters.

b. The Holy Spirit is for sons and daughters.

Those who are sons and daughters of God, made so by spiritual rebirth (John 1:12,13; 3:5-8), *do not have to beg* their loving heavenly Father for His promised blessings.

Jesus illustrates this great truth with the analogy of how we as parents would respond to our own children (vs.11,12). Then Jesus goes on to compare our parental role with God's place as our heavenly Father (v.13).

Jesus then contrasts our limited, sinful nature with God's unlimited perfection and love. If we, as "evil" (sinful) parents, would not deny our children good gifts, why would we think our perfect and holy heavenly Father would do that to His children? (For more about God's heart toward us, read Romans 5:6-10; 8:31-39; 1 John 3:1; 4:10,12-19).

We are **not** beggars who must plead and beg with a reluctant God. We are **sons and daughters** of the Most High God, and He delights in filling us with His Holy Spirit!

Truly, we should ask with humility and a total surrender of our lives. Yet we, as His sons and daughters, may *"therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb 4:16; see also Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:19-22).

c. What can prevent us from receiving?

There are problems that can hinder us from being continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

1) The presence of sin or compromise in our lives (Rom 6:12-14; 1Cor 5:6,7). The Bible teaches that we will never be sinlessly perfect in this life (1John 1:8). We will all have occasional points of failure, for which we must quickly repent and receive God's forgiveness.

However, we are not to indulge in ongoing compromise with the world, the flesh and the devil. The Bible refers to such behavior as the *"practice"* of sin (Gal 5:21). This means to engage in sin as a regular habit or to perform it repeatedly.

Such ongoing sin will disqualify us from being fit vessels for the Master's use (1Cor 9:24-27; 2Tim 2:19-21). Our God is a holy God and calls us to also be holy, by the power of His Spirit and His grace working within us (1Pet 1:13-19).

The Spirit, who is holy (Rom 1:4), desires to work through instruments that are also holy.

2) The presence of self-serving motives, such as ego or pride (Matt 7:21-23; Phil 2:3,4; 1Tim 6:3-5). We have already studied the sin of pride and its dangers. As church leaders, we are to be like Jesus, who is "meek" and "lowly" (Matt 11:29).

God will not anoint those who are serving with the wrong motives (Jas 4:6). We must allow our hearts to be searched by the Holy Spirit (Prov 16:2) and cleansed of the desire for our own glory. Here are some Bible verses for you to read and mediate upon: 2 Chronicles 16:9; Proverbs 13:10; 16:5,18; Matthew 23:8-14; Galatians 5:20; Philippians 1:15,16; 1 Timothy 3:6; James 3:14-4:4.

3) A lack of full surrender of your entire life (Rom 12:1,2; Gal 2:20). I have already written about the importance of yielding your entire life to God. However, let me point out that the anointing of the Holy Spirit is given so that the yielded servant of God will have power *in* and *for* **service**. If we desire God's power for any reason other than to serve Him and others, we cannot expect His anointing in our lives.

Our yielded service is to be directed by God, for He knows best how to use us in Christ's Body. We do not necessarily get to choose what we will do for God. Our hearts should desire to do whatever He might ask of us.

Our position of complete yieldedness is necessary in order to receive power from God and know His will. Then we must choose to obey Him. This is how we can be genuinely fruitful in ministry.

4) A faith that is weak or lacking (Heb 11:6; Jas 1:6). "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Rom 10:17). We must learn from the Scriptures what God has made available for us, or our faith will be weak. As you have gone through this biblical study of anointing, you have learned that the power of the Holy Spirit is available to you today. And not just a little

bit, like a drop of water in the desert. The Holy Spirit is to flow through you like **RIVERS!** (John 7:37-39)

God is a loving Father, who delights in giving of His life and power to His children. But we need to *ask in faith*, trusting in Him to answer our heart's cry (Ps 138:3).

If you are worried that your faith is weak or small, then remember what Jesus said regarding faith: “...if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt 17:20b).

Jesus disclosed that our faith can be small, but still effective – **IF it is directed toward God!** We are not to put our faith in ourselves, or in the amount of faith we have. We are to put our faith *in God* and in His Word. For what He says, He will do! We can trust that He will fulfill His Word, and we can thus put our faith fully in Him.

Therefore, strengthen your faith in the Word of God. Trust what is revealed in the Word about the One who is your Creator, your Savior, your King! Go to Him often, seek His face – and He will answer you (Jer 29:11-13).

5) A lack of spiritual hunger (Ps 63:1,2; 84:1,2; Matt 5:6; John 6:35,48; 7:37-39). God always responds to a spiritual hunger for more of Him. A lack of spiritual hunger can be caused by many things, such as:

- Tragedy, sorrow or death (as in the loss of a family member) causing an emotional or spiritual dullness
- Discouragement, failure or weariness, making you feel hopeless or unmotivated to seek the Lord
- Anger, bitterness or unforgiveness toward others – including God or even yourself – quenching the desire for God
- Pleasures and distractions of this world, or laziness and complacency, blocking or even destroying a righteous hunger for more of God

Life on earth can be difficult and full of challenges to overcome. But we can be encouraged that God has provided ways to get beyond any sorrow, heartache or failure that we may have experienced. God's healing and delivering power, His love and forgiveness, His mercy and grace – and His anointing – are ours if we will but come to Him.

The apostle Paul gives us insight into how he moved beyond the things that could potentially hinder his pursuit of and hunger for God. He wrote to the Philippians (3:12-14):

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected...” (v.12a). Paul humbly recognized his weakness and failures.

...but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me...” (v.12b). Paul knew that he couldn't give up; he must go on, for the sake of the Gospel.

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended...” (v.13a). Paul did not understand everything, including all that had happened to him.

“...but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind...” (v.13b) Paul made a conscious decision to **let go** of the pain or hurt, success or failure – all that was past.

“...and reaching forward to those things which are ahead...” (v.13c). Paul chose to let go of the past, and instead **reach toward** God's purposes for him. *“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* (v.14). Paul decided to keep pursuing God, and God's will, no matter what.

Through every kind of adversity and trial, every joy and victory, Paul followed the Lord with all of his heart. Breaking up the fallow ground of our hearts (Hos 10:12) is not always a short or easy process. But if we will bring ourselves openly to God – the One who made us, who saved us, who loves us – we can receive a renewed heart and a fresh hunger for the Lord (Ezek 36:26,27).

d. We must wait upon the Lord.

Scripture exhorts us often to “wait upon the Lord” (Ps 25:5; 27:14; 37:7,9,34; Isa 30:18; 40:31; Lam 3:25,26; etc). This is an important principle of the Christian life. There are always blessings that come from waiting upon the Lord.

However, it is not always in our nature to wait. We become impatient, fearful or forgetful. Our busy lives, the work of ministry, pressure to make a decision – many things press in upon us and make demands upon our time.

But there is a simple, yet painful, truth in life: *you will always make time for what is truly important to you*. Sadly, we do not always realize what is truly important until it is too late.

Pastor To Pastor: It is important to take time occasionally to evaluate our priorities, look at our lives closely, and consider all of our activities. Then we should lay all of that before the Lord, consider His Word, and decide whether our priorities are in alignment with His.

If the scriptural exhortation to take time to “wait upon the Lord” is not high on our list, it should be. For this is often the only way we will hear Him speak to us.

DRAWING NEARER TO GOD

In order to receive more of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we must ask. And then we must wait upon the Lord.

As we wait, we are far more likely to hear His “*still small voice*” (1Ki 19:12). Waiting allows time for the Holy Spirit to deal with our hearts and lives, preparing us to receive more of His presence and power. He may reveal a blockage or hindrance to our receiving; He may convict us; He may instruct or direct us; and more.

It is often during times of patiently waiting that the work of transformation is taking place in our lives. As we are transformed, we will receive; as we receive more of His Spirit, we will, of course, be more effective and fruitful in service.

Another great benefit of waiting on the Lord is that those times in His presence draw us nearer and nearer to Him. We come to know Him in a far deeper and more personal way.

As you wait upon the Lord, you may want to be silent (Ps 46:10). Or you can quietly pray with your spiritual language, or softly worship (1Cor 14:2,15). But remember, the primary purpose of waiting is to *listen and receive*. That is often best done in a still and quiet manner.

In your hunger for more of God, your prayers may rise in volume. That is not necessarily wrong. But just remember that you do not have to prove your

desire or worthiness with the volume of your prayers; neither do you need to loudly beseech the Lord in order for Him to hear and answer.

Instead, trust in His promise: “...*how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who **ask Him***” (Luke 11:13).

DO NOT FEAR

Some might fear that waiting upon the Lord for more of the Holy Spirit might instead bring a demon spirit. This is **not possible!** First, demons can enter in only where they are specifically invited, or by a person’s participation in satanic activities such as witchcraft. If you are praying to the Lord and your desire is for Him alone, no demon can suddenly “slip in” upon you. You need not fear this!

The demonic realm is aware that as you receive more of the Holy Spirit, you will walk in God’s power in a greater way. This means that your boldness and authority in spiritual matters will naturally increase. So the devil may try to *tempt* or *distract* you away from time spent seeking the Lord.

But remember: You are a saint who has been bought and washed with the blood of Jesus Christ. Satan and his demons have no power over you that you do not directly give them. The devil was defeated at the cross (Col 2:14,15). So take up your armor and sword (Eph 6:10-18) and stand firm in the Spirit as you draw near to God (Jas 4:7,8).

e. Receive the Holy Spirit’s anointing by faith.

We are God’s children and the heirs of His promises (Rom 8:17; 2Cor 1:20; Gal 3:26). This includes the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38,39). We have learned that this is not just a one-time filling, but is a continual and fresh filling of His presence and power in our lives (Eph 5:18). What God has promised, He will fulfill – so just ask Him!

So let us ask – and keep on asking, seeking and knocking until we have received (Luke 11:9,10). God wants you to have the Holy Spirit in fullness (Luke 11:13). Just open your heart and believe in Him and His desire to fill you – as you wait patiently upon Him (Heb 11:6).

Praying for fresh filling can be a daily occurrence, because we are to be *continually* filled! We need His power and presence, moment by moment, in all that we do.

JUST RECEIVE

We receive by faith, not by our feelings. We are seeking an impartation of the presence of the Holy Spirit, not an emotional experience. As you ask, you may take any physical position you feel comfortable with – sitting, kneeling, standing, or lying prostrate. You can be in your prayer closet, kitchen, bedroom, church or outdoors. The position and location are not as important as your open heart and your desire to receive.

When you ask for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, use whatever words are in your heart. There is not a right or wrong way to pray to God. He wants to hear from you, just as you are.

Your asking might take a form like this: “Come Holy Spirit, I open my heart to receive more of You. I yield my heart and my life to You. I ask You to freshly fill me. Fill my life with Your presence. Fill my mouth with praises to God. Fill my ministry with Your power, that I might be a useful vessel for God...” Use your own words and open your heart to God. Pray and receive! Be filled, in Jesus’ Name! Hallelujah!

CONCLUSION

My brothers and sisters, fellow workers in God’s fields, and partners in ministry service for the Gospel – you and I have a high calling indeed! We have the honor of serving Christ’s beloved Body, those *“not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1Pet 1:18,19).

This is a calling that we cannot – and must not – attempt to fulfill in our own strength. Thanks be to God, He has given us *all that we need* to be truly **fruitful**, truly **effective**, and truly **glorifying** to Him!

We began this study with God’s Word:

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD of hosts” (Zech 4:6)

God, through the ages, has already done such great and marvelous things. But there is so much more that He has promised to do, which is yet to be fulfilled!

There are “*greater works*” to be done – miracles, signs and wonders to the glory of Jesus (John 14:12). And God wants to do them through you! The Lord desires the bold proclamation of the Gospel, the conversion of the lost to Christ and establishment of His Church. He desires this for YOUR church, YOUR city, YOUR nation! Glory to God!

God is continually looking for those who will fully yield their own lives to His will. He is searching for those whose hearts are loyal to Him, through whom He might show Himself strong. He answers those who desire Him above all else, and who will let their spiritual hunger for Him grow – those who will boldly say, “*Here am I! Send me*” (Is 6:8).

There is only one way to completely fulfill God’s call and will for your life and ministry – that is through the anointing of the Holy Spirit! It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that you will receive the transformation, gifts and abilities necessary to *be* and *do* all that God would desire of you. And it is yours for the asking!

God will give you abundantly of His Spirit; believe this, receive His anointing, walk in it and minister with it. As you give away the life and power of the Holy Spirit in service to others, He will have **more** to pour both *into* an *through* you.

May the Lord bless you and open your spiritual eyes to understand His truth. May you receive His grace and help to obey Him in all things. May He abundantly anoint you and your ministry, that the lives of others might be transformed and become a glory to Him who died to save them. And May God receive all the praise, all the glory, all the honor that is due Him from your life and ministry as you walk and grow in the anointing of His Holy Spirit. I ask this before the Father, in the strong and mighty name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen!

