

Episode 057

The Leader's Anointing

When a church does not move with the Spirit, things start to feel dry. Everything becomes predictable—same songs, same routines, no fresh ideas, no spark. It's like the life gets sucked out, and we're just going through the motions. How then can it be different? Alive? Anointed?

God gives us the Holy Spirit to open up many new dimensions for us. The Holy Spirit touches, convicts and transforms people's lives. Thus, it is very important for us leaders to move in the Holy Spirit. Leaders must learn to come into God's anointing, carry it and be empowered by it.

What does the anointing mean? While the word carries a range of nuances, at its core, it refers to the Presence of God resting upon a person, along with the empowering work of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's purposes. The anointing enables us to operate beyond our natural abilities, accomplishing what human effort alone could never achieve.

In this lesson, we will discover some keys to being anointed by God as leaders.

UNDERSTANDING THE FORMS OF GOD'S ANOINTING

God's anointing manifests in various forms, each serving a distinct purpose. Let us briefly consider three expressions relevant to our current focus:

1. The Believer's Anointing

This foundational anointing is given to all who belong to Christ. It abides as long as we walk in fellowship with Him, for the Holy Spirit dwells within us (1 John 2:27; Romans 8:9). Through this anointing, we receive assurance of salvation, discernment between truth and error, and the ability to serve God through spiritual gifts, etc.



2. The Anointing for Ministry and Leadership

This anointing equips individuals for greater effectiveness in specific areas of ministry or leadership. It may involve a broader scope or deeper authority, enabling the servant of God to fulfill their calling with divine empowerment—much like how the Spirit came upon David to shepherd Israel (Psalm 78:70–72).

3. The Temporary Anointing for Specific Tasks

At times, God grants a momentary anointing for a particular assignment or occasion. This empowering comes upon a person to accomplish a specific task and then lifts once the task is complete or the kairos moment has passed. This was shown in how the Spirit came upon Samson for feats of strength (Judges 14:6).

God's anointing often accompanies His call upon a leader. It can ignite a fresh passion and imbue a divine vision for ministry. It can impart a greater level of insight, skills and/or competence. The anointing can open doors and draw favour before others. There can be supernatural giftedness or manifestations accompanying the anointing. The anointing can elevate the leader's impact and influence far beyond natural ability, enabling them to accomplish what human effort alone could never achieve. That is why a wise leader leans into the anointing - depending not on self, but on the Spirit of the Lord who empowers the call.

I have experienced much of the above in my own life and ministry. I am unable to carry out all my current roles except for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is the anointing that has further my influence and impact. All glory to God!

The anointing is not granted automatically; its nature and measure remain entirely at God's discretion. Yet Scripture reveals that God is drawn to those whose hearts are tender and responsive to Him (Isaiah 66:2). The degree to which we walk in His anointing often correlates with our willingness to receive and our sensitivity to the Spirit's leading. As we posture ourselves in humility and obedience, we become vessels more readily entrusted with His empowering Presence.



If the leaders hear from the Spirit carefully, God will help them build the church. We need to be open to hear from the Spirit because sometimes God may lead us to do something that is entirely different from what we have planned or prepared. We have established ministries by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Our missions in Africa was initiated by the Holy Spirit, it was never in our plans.

When leaders listen attentively to the Spirit, God will guide them in building His church. But this requires openness. Because at times, the Spirit may lead in ways that are very different from our plans or preparations. Divine direction often interrupts human strategy, and those who are willing to yield will find themselves aligned with God's greater purpose.

PREPARATIONS TO CARRY THE ANOINTING

What are some ingredients that helps us be the holy vessels suitable to carry God's anointing to a greater measure? To receive more of the enduring anointing that God desires to place upon His leaders?

1. Desire and expect the Holy Spirit to anoint us

When we turn to God with eager expectation, we open ourselves to His anointing and the move of His Spirit in our lives and ministries. For God delights in faith—faith that believes He will empower us to fulfill the calling He has placed upon us. God often works in deeper and more powerful ways through those who trust Him wholeheartedly. Therefore, it is vital that leaders cultivate unwavering convictions about God's call on their lives and trust that He will supply the anointing they need.

When Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait, they received the Holy Spirit—not just because they obeyed, but because they waited with expectation. Their posture of faith made room for the outpouring. Acts 1:4–5 (NIV) 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

When I was a younger leader – I had little expectation and experience little of God's anointing. But I gradually recognized my error and began to push in deeper in my convictions and faith. Believing God for more! And I saw God move much more!



Before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street, California in 1906, there was a deep hunger and unwavering faith among the people. They had been fasting and praying for months, preparing their hearts for a move of God. Their meetings began at 10 a.m. and often stretched past midnight—sometimes until two or three in the morning. By September, around 13,000 people had received the Gospel. And for three years, the fire didn't stop—daily gatherings continued, fuelled by expectation and the power of the Spirit.

Those who truly long for Him will recognize the stirring of His Spirit. Expectation leads to preparation—we ready our hearts for Him to move at any moment. Unfortunately, many times, though the Holy Spirit wants to move in us, we miss it—not because He's absent, but because we weren't expecting Him.

2. Be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV) Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit...

In order to truly move with the Spirit, we must first be filled with His power. The baptism of the Holy Spirit isn't just a moment—it's an entry point into deeper dimensions of His presence and work, especially the supernatural. In the early church, believers cried out for boldness, and the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them in response. Acts 4:31 (NIV) After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Yet the filling of the Spirit extends beyond the initial baptism of the Holy Spirit. It requires keeping in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:25 (NIV) Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

The more closely we walk in step with the Spirit, the more freely He fills us with His presence and power. We become like a finely tuned instrument in the hands of a master craftsman—ready, responsive, and useful. The better the instrument, the more the craftsman delights to use it. But if it proves unreliable or unfit for purpose, it will be set aside more often than employed.



3. Close relationship with God.

A close relationship with the Holy Spirit opens the door to knowing His guidance, His leading. The more familiar we are with His Presence and voice, the more clearly we will discern His direction, His message, and His leading for our lives. This helps us keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

John 10:14 (NIV) “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

John 15:14–15 (NIV) 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is hindered from moving in our lives or ministries simply because we have failed to recognize His voice. Without intimacy with God, we miss His promptings. That’s why fasting, worship, and prayer aren’t just spiritual disciplines - they’re vital practices that help us stay in step with Him.

If we want to hear God’s voice, our motives and attitudes must be right. Sin creates distance—it blocks us from entering His presence. That’s why walking in righteousness and purity isn’t optional; it’s essential for intimacy with Him.

So how much are we praying? How much are we praying in the Spirit?

4. Obedience and faithfulness to the Spirit’s leading.

Keeping in step with the Spirit means aligning our actions with His leading—not resisting or going the opposite way. It requires responsiveness and obedience. When we continually ignore what the Spirit is prompting, our sensitivity fades, and His voice becomes harder to recognize. He may speak less to us.

We’re called to live faithfully. God may have entrusted us with a measure of gifting for this season, but if we neglect it, He won’t increase it—and may even take it away. What seems small or insignificant right now still matters. When we’re faithful with little, God sees it, and He entrusts us with more.



RECOGNISE THE MOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the preceding section, we explored the enduring anointing that God places upon a leader—a long-term grace that sustains their calling. In this section, we turn our attention to the posture that welcomes a momentary surge of anointing or enables us to move in step with it when it comes. These divine boosts often arrive for specific assignments, seasons, or moments of ministry, and our responsiveness to the Spirit determines how fully we walk in them.

1. Recognise His Presence

One of the keys to moving with the Holy Spirit is cultivating an acute awareness of His Presence. We can develop a fine-tuned sensitivity that recognizes when He begins to manifest—like sensing a familiar person entering the room behind you. You may not see them yet, but their distinct voice or the sound of their unique footsteps quietly signals their arrival. Often, God's Presence is marked by markers such as a heightened sense of holiness, peace, love.

Our physical bodies can also perceive the manifestation of His Presence—if we are attuned to the subtle stirrings of the Spirit. Just as horror literature often describes hair standing on end in the presence of evil, the converse is true with God's Presence: our bodies may respond with warmth, peace, tingling, electric or a gentle soothing sensation. These physical cues, though quiet, can signal that the Holy Spirit is near.

We can often discern subtle cues of God's Presence through a shift in the atmosphere around us. It's like when a prominent VIP enters a room—those who notice instinctively look up, fall silent, or stand in reverence. In a similar way, when God manifests His Presence, it affects people—even those unaware of what's happening. The spiritually attuned may be the first to respond. Worship begins to soar. Preaching flows with ease, as words and ideas seem to come from a higher Source. People become unusually attentive. Something shifts—quietly, powerfully—in a moment.

On the other hand, activities driven by darkness begin to unravel. Vocal opposition to God's agenda may falter. Those operating in witchcraft or rebellion may suddenly feel powerless, confused or fearful - just as the legion of demons cried out in terror when confronted by Jesus (Mark 5:6-8).



When we sense His manifest Presence, these are sacred moments. Times to listen closely, watch carefully, and move in step with His leading. For when God turns up, it often means He wants to act upon something.

2. Recognise His leading

God moves His people in many ways. As He moves, He reveals His intentions—prompting believers to walk in His will. His voice may come through visions, a spoken word, a burden upon the heart, Scripture, dreams, or prophetic utterances. Those who desire to move with Him must learn to recognize His voice.

In His grace, God often allows a season of learning, as seen in the story of Samuel. Though God spoke to him, Samuel did not initially recognize the voice of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:1–10). But through guidance and repetition, he grew in discernment.

Often, God speaks in a gentle whisper. When Elijah discerned that whisper (1 Kings 19:12–13), he understood God's will and responded in obedience. Likewise, we must cultivate sensitivity to His voice—so that when He speaks, we move.

As leaders, it is vital to cultivate a deeper sensitivity to God's Presence and His leading. For we can only guide others into His purposes when we ourselves are attuned and ready to respond in the moment. Divine opportunities often come suddenly and it is the spiritually alert who recognize them and move with God.

3. Recognise His purpose

Whenever God moves, He moves with a purpose. He does not do anything wasteful. He does not waste His anointing or His gifting. In order to move with God, we must identify specifically what God wants to communicate to us about His purpose. Often the better we understand His Word, the more experiences we have with God helps us more quickly and accurately grasp God's intentions.

For instance, if someone wounds us with harsh criticism. Later the Spirit of God gently whispers, “forgive wholeheartedly”. We instinctively connect that prompting to the offense and the lingering grudge. Through Scripture, we understand both the reason God calls us to forgive and the way in which we are to do it. In responding, we align ourselves with His heart—and move in a way that pleases Him.



Another vital aspect to discern is recognizing whether God is calling us to move personally or to lead our group or congregation into movement. Both require spiritual sensitivity, yet each carries a distinct weight of responsibility. Accurately perceiving the scope of His purpose is essential for responding in alignment with His will—especially when He entrusts us with prophetic words or actions. These moments demand not only obedience, but wisdom in knowing whom the message is for and how it is to be carried.

Tips to response sensitively to Spirit's leading

When the Spirit leads, our response should be marked by faith and obedience. As we yield to Him, His move often deepens and expands. But if we resist or respond wrongly, we risk quenching the flow of His Presence. The Holy Spirit is a gentleman—He rarely forces Himself upon us. His touch is gentle, and if we are unresponsive, He may quietly withdraw. To help us respond rightly and fruitfully, here are some practical tips:

1. Communicate God's heart.

As leaders, we must learn to convey the heart of God in our speech and demeanour. If He is expressing love, let love saturate our words. If He is offering comfort, speak with tenderness. If He is issuing a challenge, let your tone carry holy urgency. Yet in all things, let love remain the foundation. This is crucial—because if we speak through the filter of personal bias or emotion, we risk distorting the tone of God's heart.

2. Discern the spiritual atmosphere God desires.

What heart condition is He seeking in the moment—mercy, forgiveness, repentance, reverence? Lead the group toward that posture. Our role is not merely to speak, but to shepherd hearts into alignment with His Spirit.

3. Act upon God's leading.

When the Spirit prompts, respond swiftly and in faith. Leaders must model obedience and guide their people to respond to the Holy Spirit—calling them to repentance and leading them into alignment with God's will. Timely action often opens the way for a deeper move of the Spirit.



4. Keep your focus on God.

Distractions - whether external or internal—can pull us away from His Presence and dull our ability to hear His voice. A crying child, an off-key instrument, or wandering thoughts may seem small, yet they can shift our attention. We must learn to quiet the noise within and fix our gaze on Him. Cultivate a disciplined attentiveness to His Spirit.

5. Beware of going beyond what God has led.

At times, we may be tempted to add to His prompting. We presume we understand His full intent or seize the moment to insert our own ideas, thinking He will approve. But such presumption is dangerous and can lead to serious consequences. King Saul adjusted the instruction given by the prophet Samuel regarding the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:20–21), and as a result, he forfeited his kingdom to David. When God speaks, obedience must be precise—not embellished or edited.

CONCLUSION

To be a leader in God's kingdom, we must not rely solely on human strength. God desires to empower us for His purposes—that's why He offers His anointing. We are called to lean into that divine enablement, not merely acknowledge it. To do so, we must learn how to receive His anointing more deeply and carry it with reverence. This also requires growing in sensitivity to the move of the Holy Spirit and responding with faith, humility, and obedience.



Discussion Questions

These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. What is your conviction about leaders needing God's anointing? Why? How much are you pursuing it?
2. In your view, how can God's anointing increase a leader's effectiveness? Discuss possibilities.
3. What do you think is limiting your ability to access more of God's anointing?

Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. What are some specific steps you can take to increase God's anointing upon your life?
2. What are some hindrances in your life to greater anointing? What specific steps can you take to deal with it?
3. What are some key steps you can take to learn to move with the Holy Spirit more?





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