

MYTH *11*

Anointed
by the Spírit



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All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

But you have an anointing from the Holy One... the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things.

1 John 2:20, 27

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is.

Romans 12:2

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TRUTH

THE ANOINTING TEACHES

The book, *The Night the Boys Came Home*, captures the evening forty men (including myself) returned to a small town in South Georgia after being away twenty-five years.¹ Coming from as far away as California and Connecticut, we came as a “band of brothers” to honor a man who had greatly impacted each of our lives. For twenty years he had been the city’s recreation director, the high school basketball coach, track coach, and assistant football coach. Those who came were his former athletes whom he had coached and also whom had worked in the recreation department. More than a coach and an employer; he was our mentor, teacher, and to many, a second father.

Many of us had gone on to be athletes in college; some had had successful professional careers. One even became an industry titan featured on the cover of *Life* magazine. Not surprisingly, several followed our mentor’s footsteps, becoming coaches themselves. The evening included testimonials, and giving tribute to the inspiration, motivation, and influence he had had on our lives. For each one

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of us, success in sports and then in business was a direct result of what he had instilled in us so long ago as young men: a solid work ethic, teamwork, self-discipline, dedication, responsibility, values, etc. Yes “coach” taught us how to live successively.

Success Is Not Instant!

Instant! We have come to expect it with everything. Many expect success to happen instantaneously without developing essential skills or expending effort. Those embracing that view are destined for failure. Hard work and proficiency developed over time lay the groundwork for success. The forty men above are evidence of that process. However, in the church today many Christians look for shortcuts to successful Christian living. Using Scripture incorrectly, many say that God “anoints” to give new and fresh revelation to the church through teaching and preaching.² As our “coach” would say, “We need to go back to the fundamentals.”

Theology 101

God communicates with believers primarily through His Word. Six theological concepts shed light on God’s revealed truth:

- Revelation—Content of the Word (2 Tim. 3:16)³
- Inspiration—Recording the Word (2 Pet. 1:20-21)⁴
- Illumination—Meaning of the Word (1 John 2:27)⁵
- Interpretation—Understanding the Word (2 Tim. 2:15)⁶
- Explanation—Explaining the Word (Eph. 4:11)
- Application—Living the Word (James 1:22-25)

The *content* of revealed truth in the Scriptures is God-breathed.

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The source is God, while its *recording* is through the Spirit's moving of human authors. The Spirit utilized recorded truth to teach its *meaning* to believers. This is where assumptions produce confusion. While illumination or enlightenment is the unending ministry of the Spirit in which He assists believers in understanding the truth, that understanding is not guaranteed.⁷ Though *understanding* of the Scriptures can be spiritually appraised only by a believer (1 Cor. 2:9-3:2), it is directly related to diligent study of the truth.⁸ Illumination by the Spirit and interpretation by the student of the Word are inextricably linked. However, illumination should not be confused with an act of anointing. John wrote that believers "have an anointing from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20) and that "His anointing teaches you about all things" (v. 27). In both instances the anointing refers to the indwelling Spirit. The Spirit is "the anointing" Who teaches.⁹ One should not confuse "the anointing" with an endowment of fresh revelation to an individual, teacher, or preacher. That concept is foreign to the New Testament. Even though God has given teachers to the church, they must be "workmen...accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Their responsibility is to *explain* the recorded Word; not to give new revelation. As we increasingly understand God's truth, we are to integrate the truth into our behavior. We are to *live* the truth.

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Teaching or Something

Some troublesome practices exist in the evangelical church.

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Reference Book

If you have attended church, or Christian conferences, or watched religious television for any length of time, you have become acquainted with preachers using a verse or passage as the “launching

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pad” from which to teach whatever they want, disregarding the content, context, and obvious intention of that particular verse or passage. Rather than explaining God’s Word, they espouse their own words, even suggesting that their message is a “word from God.” Any deviation from the intended meaning of a text is not God’s Word [or word] at all, but is mere conjecture, lacking the authority of Scripture. If the original meaning of Scripture is not

explained as intended, it becomes only a handy reference book used to find particular words or a viewpoint to expound at will.

The Anointed Word

As a visitor, I was sitting in a large evangelical church when the newly installed senior pastor explained the responsibility of each person in the service. He said, “The preacher is anointed of God to speak for God and the congregation’s responsibility is to listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit.” Two things immediately jumped out at me from that statement. *First*, nowhere does the New Testament tell us that anyone is “anointed” to speak for God; rather every single Christian has the indwelling of the Spirit, the Anointing (1 John 2:20, 27). While some understand that the New Testament gift of knowledge and the gift of prophecy refer to speaking for God, Bible students differ on their meaning. However, these gifts should never be confused with anointing.

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Second, “to listen to the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit” is an idea that was discussed previously in *Myth 10: Spirit Dictated*. Even if this statement referred to the Spirit’s illuminating work, it implies that the Christian merely waits for the Spirit’s verbal input on how to apply what was said to be “from God.” Illumination and interpretation go hand in hand. Paul taught the Scriptures, but the Bereans examined the Scriptures “to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Do believers today diligently study the Word for themselves or ever question what a Christian leader or teacher says? Illumination without careful study and interpretation is never guaranteed and should not be automatically expected.

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Feeling Anointing Power

Relying on experience rather than Scripture can lead to erroneous assumptions. If you have spoken in front of an audience and it went reasonably well, you experienced a degree of elation and satisfaction.

Successfully allowing interaction between yourself and the audience can produce a sense of euphoria and power over the audience. Listen to how two entertainers explain this dynamic:

I started giving three-minute speeches in my freshman English class. I loved doing it because I was very shy, and yet, when I got up before an audience, I felt comfortable. Then one day I addressed the whole student body and talked for about 10 minutes. All of a sudden, I was making them laugh,

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I was making them listen, and I felt very powerful. It was an exhilarating feeling.¹⁰

Richard Widmark, Actor

You get on the stage....Talk about a charge. It's like there's electricity running all through your body. Then you get that energy rolling back and forth between you and the audience. They give me some. I give them some more back. Yeah, I've felt that power.¹¹

Lindy Gravelle, Country Singer

I am afraid that experiencing an energy exchange between the audience and the speaker has been misunderstood in the church as an “anointing power.” I have observed the “working-up-of-the-crowd” to create a mood or environment that is conducive to producing the alleged “anointing power.” Frankly manipulating people without a movement of the Spirit is self-serving, rather than God-honoring.

Conclusion

Obviously some understand teaching in the church in an inappropriate manner. We must diligently strive to align our approach with God's Word, recognizing that the only manner that is pleasing to God and effective for the body of Christ is God's way of doing things.

Teaching, New Testament Style

How to teach is found in the Scriptures.

Purpose

Biblical teaching is not just the transmission of facts; it involves the transformation of lives. In one of the final instructions to His disciples, Jesus explained their responsibility to make disciples in

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“teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). The making of a disciple is the product of choices based on a renewed mind (Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23). Christ’s purposeful approach in teaching His disciples is shown from Mark 3:14. “He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out.” First, is the selection: He “appointed twelve.” Second, is reproduction: to be “with Him” so they would know Him. Third, is multiplication: He “sent them out” to make Him known to others. Intimate association with a teacher is the key. No wonder Jesus said, “A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). “The purpose of biblical teaching is life transformation.”¹²

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Responsibility

As previously addressed, every Christian is responsible to understand the Word of God. Teachers are not substitutes for each believer’s study of the Word. Instead they are to supplement and enhance understanding. While 1 John 2:27, “you have no need for anyone to teach you,” seems to indicate that Christians do not need to be taught by others,¹³ parents are to teach their children (Deut. 6:4-9), mature Christians are to teach others in their spiritual journey (Heb. 5:12), and God has given shepherd-teachers to His church (Eph. 4:11). While an individual believer may struggle to grasp difficult texts, teaching resources can help in comprehending biblical truth and applying it. Unfortunately most Christians count on the one hour each Sunday as their study time. If receiving the Spirit’s enlightenment comes only through study, then it is greatly hindered when private study is lacking. Growth in Christ or Christian matu-

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riety is in direct proportion to the amount of time personally spent in God's Word.

Process

Hebrews 5:11-14 clearly addresses the process of teaching.

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

The writer of Hebrews contrasts “what is” with “what should be” in the lives of believers. Anyone who does not progress in his

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spiritual growth becomes “dull of hearing” and is “not accustomed to the word of righteousness.” On the other hand those who pursue the solid food of the Word become increasingly mature, and their ability to discern and apply the will of God is increased. Again we hear an echo of Romans 12:2. “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God

is.” This text is a command to move forward. We either progress or regress. There is no middle ground. Growth is dependent on sensitivity and openness to the Word through diligent study.

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The Anointing Teaches

The Spirit is the anointing that every Christian permanently possesses. The anointing teaches or illuminates the written Word as the believer strives to understand and apply it. Success, however, is not automatic; it depends on the amount of time spent and the effort expended in study.

Do you see the reoccurring pattern? Whether considering the filling, leading, or teaching by the Spirit, how receptive the believer is to His influencing ministry depends on the believer. The Spirit is always available, but He is accessible only as the Christian submits to His influence. That is a matter of choice.

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Myth 11, NOTES

1. David Michael Coley, *The Night the Boys Came Home* (Cairo, GA: South Valhalla, 1993).

Coley's book is a tribute to Tommy Taylor, our beloved "coach," who greatly impacted the lives of the men who gathered to honor him in 1993. In his twenty-year coaching career in Cairo, Georgia, he won twelve state track championships and two state basketball championships.

2. While not denying that God can do anything He wants, even giving new revelation, the issue addressed in this myth concerns the normal or usual way God deals with His church.
3. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 38; and Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986), 67-69.
4. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, 38; and Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 69-72.
5. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, 47-48; and Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 116.

While the promise of "guiding you into all the truth" (John 16:12-15) is associated by many with illumination, this author believes that particular passage concerns an exclusive promise to the apostles in reference to inspiration.

6. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, 48-50.
7. Ibid., 48.
8. Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching* (Nashville; Thomas Nelson, 1998), 103, 107.

Zuck writes, "The role of the Holy Spirit in the Bible means that the unregenerate do not welcome and apply God's truth, though they are able to intellectually comprehend many of it statements" (p. 103). "Of course...unsaved people may not welcome the plan of salvation, though they have understood it mentally" (p. 107).

9. Ibid., 36.
10. Richard Widmark, *Parade Magazine*, February 22, 1987, 5.

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11. Lindy Gravelle, *West Magazine*, November 4, 1984, 10.
12. John Moore and Ken Neff, *A New Testament Blueprint for the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 132.
13. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching*, 38-39; and Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 116-19.

Zuck discusses five views on the meaning of 1 John 2:27. Hodges adds an additional view.

