

Please Don't Fake the Anointing!

Gideon is one of my favorite Bible characters because I relate to his struggle with inferiority. God pulled this runt of a guy out of a hole in the ground and called him to deliver Israel. Gideon's classic "Who, me?" response reminds me of conversations I've had with the Lord. None of us feels qualified to do God's work, but we know from Gideon's example that reluctant wimps can be transformed into valiant warriors.

I've heard people criticize Gideon because he laid out a fleece of wool on the ground and asked the Lord—not once but twice—to confirm His promise (see Judges 6:36-40). But the Bible doesn't say God was mad at Gideon for wanting assurance. In fact, God answered Gideon both times with moisture from heaven. The dew was a sign of God's favor and blessing.

You know how the story ends. Gideon's impressive army of 22,000 is downsized to a ragtag band of 300, and they carry only trumpets, clay pots and torches into battle. Through their supernatural victory over Midian, God made it clear that His anointing has nothing to do with human ability.

How many of us have learned Gideon's lesson? Do you trust the Holy Spirit to work in you, or do you lean on the flesh? Do you have the precious dew of His miraculous anointing on your life, or have you manufactured a cheap form of human moisture to do the job?

Many Christians today can't distinguish between the sweat of the flesh and the dew of heaven, but there is a big difference. As I have prayed for more anointing in my life, I've realized that we often mistake fake anointing for the real thing. Here's what I've learned so far:

The anointing isn't in numbers. We place so much importance on

church size today, yet God doesn't seem impressed by crowds. I have nothing against megachurches as long as they preach the gospel—and many of them do a better job of it than small churches. But we're headed for disaster if we think seating capacity alone reflects God's approval.

The anointing isn't in eloquence. Some people have an uncanny way with words (including non-Christian motivational speakers), but persuasive skill isn't the same as spiritual anointing. The dew of heaven is holy. It brings conviction and repentance—not self-awareness and an ego boost. And true preaching does not exalt the preacher—it crucifies him and focuses all attention on the Son of God.

The anointing isn't in looks. In today's cool evangelical scene, rock star pastors are expected to be sexy, and everyone in the praise team needs trendy clothes. There's nothing wrong with dressing to reach your audience, but I hope we don't think the Holy Spirit is impressed with hipness. The dowdy grandmother wearing orthopedic shoes might have a word from the Lord for the congregation—but will we allow her on the stage?

The anointing isn't in technology. I love to use digital graphics when preaching. But some of the most anointed meetings I've been in were in Third World countries where we didn't even have reliable electricity, much less computers and projectors. When genuine anointing falls on a preacher, he or she can talk for two hours without having to entertain.

The anointing isn't in emotionalism. In many churches today, lack of anointing creates a vacuum that is filled by screaming, swooning and other forms of religious theater. It doesn't matter what is preached—it is “anointed” as long as the preacher punctuates it with enough volume and the people shout back. (One preacher I know had everyone hollering while she quoted lines from a Beyoncé song!) Remember: Backslidden Israel shouted so loud that the earth quaked, but by the end

of the day the Philistines had plundered them (see 1 Sam. 4:5-11).

The anointing isn't in contrived manifestations. I love it when the Holy Spirit does miracles. But when people fake the supernatural in order to get an audience response (or a big offering), I run for the door. If we had the fear of God we would never pretend to have the anointing by jerking, slurring words, stretching the facts in a testimony or sprinkling glitter on ourselves.

Charles Spurgeon referred to the Holy Spirit's anointing as "unction," and he said of it: "Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless." Let's turn away from every false anointing and ask the God who answered Gideon to soak us with His heavenly power.

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CORRECTION: Last week some subscribers to this newsletter received a promotional e-mail advertising a curriculum by Bill Johnson. Because of an error in design, the article seemed to imply that Lee Grady wrote the promotional article. Actually it was written by Larry Sparks. Charisma regrets the error.