

How to Maintain the Flow of the Anointing

THE OIL WILL NOT RUN DRY IF YOU'RE OPEN TO RECEIVE A NEW ANOINTING. ASK GOD FOR IT, THEN ASK HIM FOR JARS INTO WHICH THE OIL CAN BE POURED.

If I had to choose one distinctive element of our ministry, it would be that we have been channels of restoration and spiritual renewal for both individuals and ministries. Hundreds of thousands of people who have attended our meetings around the world have testified to a fresh anointing that brought lasting changes to their lives, their communion with God and their Christian service.

But wherever I go I hear the same question: "Pastor Claudio, what do I do to keep the anointing flowing?"

All over the world, believers express similar concerns about keeping their anointing fresh. Some who are filled with oil and burning with the fire of the Holy Spirit are afraid of losing that wonderful communion with God. Others, whose jars have broken, have lost oil along the way. For them the question becomes a particularly urgent one.

LESSONS FROM A PROPHET I believe Elijah has something to teach us about keeping the anointing flowing. Consider his encounter with the widow at Zarephath. He comes upon her as she prepares a fire for the last meal she and her son expect to have.

When Elijah asks for bread and water, she tells him they have run out of food; all they have left is a handful of flour and a little oil. When that is gone, she and her son will die.

This situation illustrates the condition of many believers. They are God's children, and the oil of the Holy Spirit is in their lives. But their spiritual lives are as good as

dead—they barely have any oil in their jugs.

There is very little anointing. They have a devotional life, but it is carried out with great effort, almost as a burden. They serve the Lord, but without any fruit.

Many Christians, aware that their situation is like that of the widow of Zarephath, prepare themselves for their spiritual death. They resign themselves to living Christian lives without joy, power or sparkle. They live their faith without expectation, just waiting to die.

But Elijah gave the widow a list of instructions to prevent the oil from running out. Let's examine these instructions together.

Examine your attitude. The first order Elijah gave the widow had to do with maintaining a correct attitude. "Don't be afraid," he told her (1 Kings 17:13). The widow at Zarephath had to stop believing that she and her son were going to die. She had to free her mind of negative thoughts and unbelief.

Unfortunately, a spirit of fear holds many Christians in bondage and hinders them from living an abundant life. The moment some Christians have a new experience with the Lord, they start thinking, I wonder how long this will last.

Maybe they have allowed the flame of God's fire to go out and now feel unqualified to start all over again. Or perhaps they are afraid of losing the fresh anointing they have received. We cannot permit ourselves to become immersed in unbelief, doubts and fear.

When God anointed you with His Holy Spirit, He didn't give you a spirit of timidity or fear. The oil that descended upon you is the spirit of love, power and self-control (see 2 Tim. 1:7).

Don't believe the lie that your Christian life will die a slow

death, that your fellowship with God is fading. Don't accept as normal a substandard life when it comes to witnessing and service. Don't be paralyzed by fear so you end up losing all God has given you. If you follow the instructions in the Word, the oil of the anointing of the Holy Spirit will not run dry.

Establish your priorities. Elijah's second recommendation addresses priorities. When the woman told him her problem, Elijah had an interesting response: "Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son" (1 Kings 17:13).

The word first is significant. Elijah appears to be insensitive. Although he knew that this poor widow had little food, he asked her to provide food for him first. But in doing so Elijah was applying a basic principle for receiving God's blessing.

This principle applies to our finances, but it also applies to everything else. Do you want blessings in your family life, your studies, your vocation, your profession, your relationships and your ministry? Then apply the priorities principle.

Give first to God; God, who doesn't owe anybody anything, will give you what you need and even more. Consecrate your life to God. Let Him be the most important thing in your life.

I have ministered to thousands and thousands of people, and I have never known anyone who, having put Jesus first in his or her life, has ever lost the intensity of the anointing.

Be obedient. The third precept is that of obedience.

Try to place yourself in the widow's situation. You are in the midst of a catastrophic national crisis. Because of a drought, there is no food.

All you have left is a handful of flour and a little oil in a jug. All you can do is eat and then die.

But suddenly, someone appears and tells you, "Before you and your son eat, give me something." What would you have done? What would you have said?

When the Potter places His hands on you and molds you as His jar, He fills you with oil so you can be a blessing to others. Disobedience ruins the jar and causes the oil to spill.

Many believers are anointed by God to minister with signs and wonders. God commands them to pray for the sick in His name so He may heal them.

But instead of following God's instructions, they become afraid, lose their faith and end up disobeying. They do this over and over again until God cannot trust them any longer. And so, very slowly, the anointing decreases.

God touches other believers, fills them with joy, gives them external evidences so they learn to trust and fills them to overflowing with His love. They receive the anointing but continue with sin in their lives.

They want the anointing of power, but they are not willing to abandon those things that grieve Him who gives the anointing. Anointing and sin can't walk together too far. Either the anointing gets rid of the sin or the sin gets rid of the anointing because darkness has no fellowship with light.

TIME WITH GOD Elijah told the widow to go home. God was going to do an amazing thing in her life, and she needed to be at home.

The believer has to understand the importance of time alone with God. In recent years we have seen church services filled with people who praise God together and want to be ministered to. This is wonderful, but we cannot neglect our private time

with God. Our anointing for public ministry corresponds directly to the time we spend alone with God.

There is no secret formula in this. Anointed men and women who have been raised up by God in each generation have been those whose prayer lives were rich and consistent.

Prayer must be a daily practice for every believer. We must be alone with Him as much as possible—not only to seek more of Him but also to see our anointing increase. Jesus practiced this in His own life, pulling away to be alone with His Father. There, He received more holy anointing.

SHARING THE ANOINTING Elijah and Elisha not only had similar names, they also had similar ministries. In 2 Kings we read that Elisha also performed a miracle of provision for a widow. In this case, it was a prophet's widow. Her husband had revered God, but he had died, and there were debts to pay.

Since she didn't have the means to pay, the creditor wanted to take her two sons as his slaves. When Elisha asked what she had in her house, she answered, "Your servant has nothing there at all... except a little oil" (2 Kings 4:2).

Elisha told the widow what to do with the jar of oil—but his instructions sounded strange and a bit ridiculous: "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side" (vv. 34).

Asking the neighbors for oil instead of jars would have made a bit more sense to me. The oil was valuable and negotiable and therefore could have provided money to pay the creditor, whereas the jars had very little value.

But Elisha ordered her to ask for jars!

For the anointing not to run dry, we have to share it. So many

believers spend their time praying for more anointing, more oil. But God is telling them, "Don't ask for oil; ask for more jars. If there are more jars, I will pour more oil, and the oil of My anointing will never cease."

The Word says that the widow's jars became filled with oil. The sons kept bringing more jars, and instead of running dry, the oil kept on flowing, filling more and more jars. It ceased to flow when there were no more jars to fill.

The oil of the anointing will cease when you stop finding jars with which to share your blessings. As long as there are new jars to hold the Holy Spirit's oil, the anointing will go on.

VESSELS TO FILL The people around you—at home, at work, in the neighborhood, in your school—are empty jars. They are needy, lacking all those things that only Jesus Christ can produce in people's lives. When you bless them, two things happen. They are filled, and your oil continues to flow even more.

Remember too that blessing those around you is only the beginning. God expects that, but He also wants your influence to reach to the ends of the world.

The jars the widow needed had three characteristics: They had to be borrowed from the neighbors, they had to be empty and they had to be not "just a few" (v. 3). If you ask for jars and not just oil, God will send you people to minister to and bless.

All of a sudden you will start seeing people in a new way; the Holy Spirit will show you needs that lie deep in their hearts. You will be able to minister to them in a specific way, and the anointing will go with you and increase in you. The only time the oil runs dry is when there are no more vessels to fill.

The Potter formed you and made you into a jar. When you are filled with the oil of the Spirit, you bless those around you.

If you are feeling as hopeless as the widow of Zarephath, do not allow your spiritual life to die but be open to receive a new anointing.

If you have asked for oil, you have received God's anointing already. Now ask for jars, and share the oil with them.

Read a companion devotional.

Claudio Freidzon is the founder of King of Kings Church in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He has been a leader in the revival in that country and now ministers to churches, pastors and leaders around the world. His book Holy Spirit I Hunger for You has been translated into nine languages.