

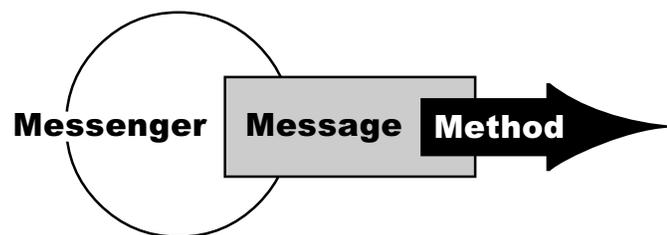
How to Teach God's Word

5

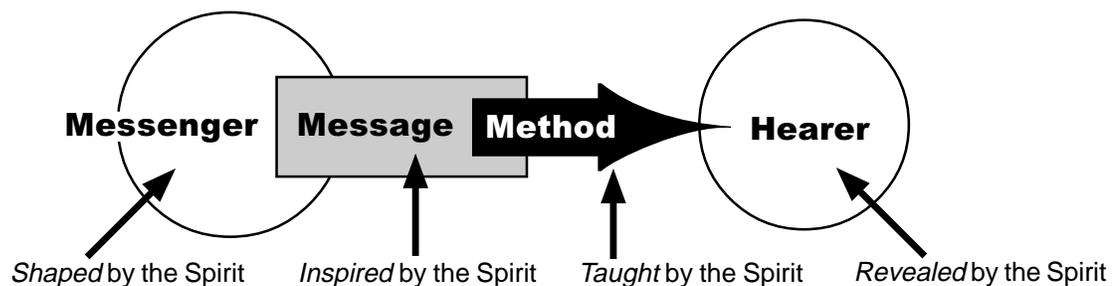
The Anointing of the Spirit

In **Module 103**, we've been looking at the three parts to the effective communication of truth from God's Word:

- The Messenger
- The Message
- The Method



We've seen how the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in each part of the communication process:

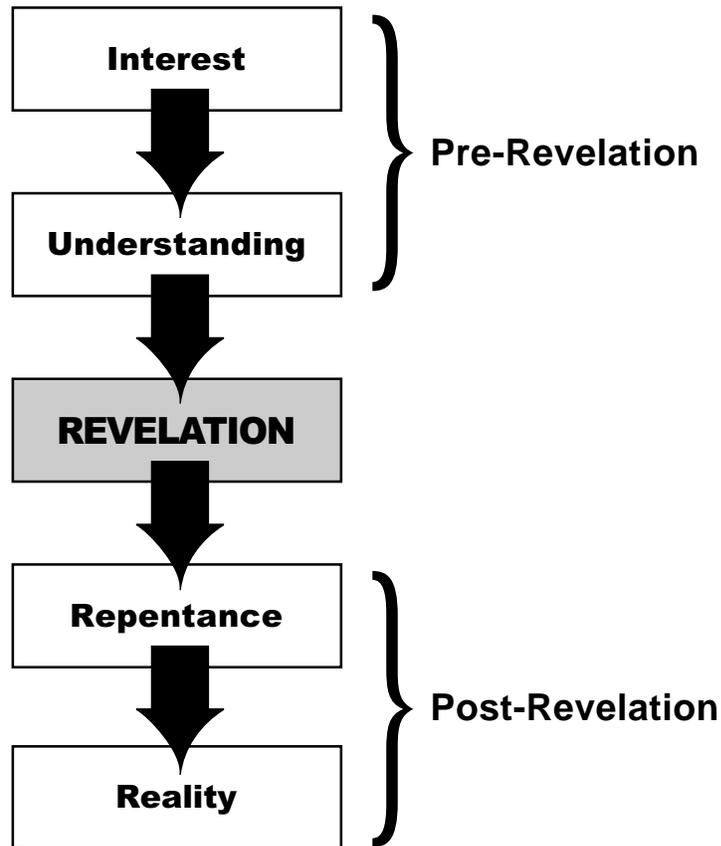


In our two lessons on the Method (**ES103-03** and **ES103-04**), we focused on the two vital parts of ministering a message from God's Word:

- Preparation of the message
- Delivery of the message

We also saw in the last lesson that the art of biblical teaching is to lead the hearer on a journey of personal discovery in God's Word. This journey of discovery is

along a path of revelation, as follows:



In this lesson, we will be looking at the most important part of the communication process – the work of the Holy Spirit himself. Without the anointing of God’s Spirit upon the Messenger, upon the Message, upon the Method, and upon the Hearer, it does not matter how well a message is prepared or delivered, it will not hit the target that God desires. It would be like an engine, all primed and ready to run, yet without gasoline to fire its cylinders. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is the oil which drives the communication process.

What is the Anointing?

Read Psalm 23:5

In the Old Testament, anointing involved literal oil being poured over the head. This oil was symbolic of two things:

- The setting apart of a person for special service to God (**Exodus 28:41**)
- The empowering of God’s Spirit upon a person’s service (**1 Samuel 16:13**)

There have been many “anointed ones” down through history (note **Psalm 105:15**). Saul was called God’s “anointed...leader” (**1 Samuel 10:1**) and so was David (**Psalm 89:20**). A Gentile king, Cyrus, was described as God’s “anointed”

(**Isaiah 45:1**), and even Satan himself was originally “anointed as a guardian cherub” (**Ezekiel 28:14**). In all these cases, the “anointing” depicts authority delegated from God to do God’s work. But while there have been many “anointed ones,” the Old Testament always pointed ahead to *the* Anointed One.

Read Acts 10:38

Jesus was called “the Anointed One” (**Psalm 2:2**). This, in fact, is the meaning of the Hebrew word “Messiah” and the Greek word “Christ.”

Read Luke 4:16-21

Here Jesus describes the nature of the anointing he had received. Have a look at what the Scriptures describe as the purpose of this anointing:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to *preach* good news to the poor. He has sent me to *proclaim* freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to *release* the oppressed, to *proclaim* the year of the Lord’s favor.”

This prophetic description, fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus, teaches us a number of things about the nature of the anointing. Firstly, we see that the anointing involves the Spirit of the Lord being “upon” a person. This is why we refer to it as “the anointing of the Holy Spirit.” But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jesus to fulfil a very specific purpose:

- ➔ To preach the good news
- ➔ To proclaim freedom, recovery and favor
- ➔ To release the oppressed

The anointing of the Holy Spirit has to do with the forward movement of the Gospel message. It is given by God for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, which *is* the proclamation of freedom and recovery, which *is* the proclamation of God’s favor, and which *is* the power of God for the release of the oppressed.

Read Isaiah 11:2-4

This passage describes in more detail the components of the anointing that was upon Jesus – wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge and the fear of the Lord. But the anointing upon Jesus did not end when Jesus returned to heaven. This anointing is now upon the Church, in the form of what we know as “the gifts of the Spirit.”

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

These “spiritual gifts” (**1 Corinthians 12:1**) are *focused expressions* of the anointing of the Holy Spirit “apportioned” by Christ to his Church (**Ephesians 4:7**). The ministry of Christ has been carved up and distributed to the many members of his Body. The anointing of Christ is, in the same way, distributed throughout the Church, so that as we work together, the combined effect is that of the anointing of Christ, as described in **Luke 4:18-19**, is expressed to the world.

You and the Anointing

Read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

The anointing is equated with the presence of the Holy Spirit “in our hearts.” The presence of the Holy Spirit, Paul says, involves two things – a seal of ownership (**Romans 7:4; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Revelation 5:9**) and a deposit guaranteeing what belongs to us in Christ (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).

Just as the anointing meant two things for the people of the Old Testament – *separation* for service and *empowering* for service – so the anointing means two things for you:

- The anointing is the *seal* of the Holy Spirit, marking your separation as one purchased by God
- The anointing is the *deposit* of the Holy Spirit, enabling the reality of the Gospel to outwork in and through your life

There is always a “being” aspect to the anointing and a “doing” aspect to the anointing. You are anointed to *belong* to Christ before you are anointed to *work* with him.

Read 1 John 2:20,26-27

The Amplified Bible translates this passage with its usual comprehensive style:

“But – you hold a sacred appointment, you have been given an unction – you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know [the Truth]...But as for you, (the sacred appointment, the unction) the anointing which you received from Him, abides (permanently) in you; [so] then you have no need that any one should instruct you. But just as His anointing is true, and there is no falsehood, so you must abide – live, never to depart [rooted in Him, knit to Him] just as [His anointing] has taught you [to do].”

Do you notice what this passage is telling us? The anointing has been *given by God*, it *abides* (or remains) in you, and it *teaches* you. But note what it is that this anointing teaches you:

“...abide in Him....” (NKJV).

Everything about the anointing of the Holy Spirit is pinned to one simple fact: you are abiding in the vine. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is dependent upon you abiding in the vine and it teaches you to abide in the vine.



Read John 15:4-8

When Jesus said, “Remain in the vine,” he promised that the result of this would be that you would “bear much fruit” (**verses 5,8**) This is because the anointing that was upon Jesus flows to us in our connection with him.

The Essence of the Anointing

Let’s summarize what we’ve discovered so far about the anointing that was upon the Lord Jesus Christ:

- He was anointed with power (**Acts 10:38**)
- He was anointed to preach the good news (**Luke 4:18-19**)
- He was anointed with joy (**Hebrews 1:8-9**)

Many people saw the outward *results* of the anointing upon Christ, but few understand at the time the *source* of that anointing.

Read John 5:19,30

The anointing of the Holy Spirit, by its very definition, means that you are drawing upon the reserves of God’s power and wisdom, not your own. It is defined by two things:

- Seeing what God is doing (**John 5:19**)
- Hearing what God is saying (**John 5:30**)

Read again Isaiah 11:3-4

As you teach God’s Word, the temptation is to think that once you have received a message from God, that God’s involvement in the teaching process has essentially ended. It is now “up to you” to deliver the message (even though you may ask for God’s help). You have your notes, you have your illustrations, you have in mind the revelation you want to impart. You have even asked God to open the hearts of the people who will be hearing the Word. But is this enough?

When Jesus ministered to people, it didn’t even occur to him that he was exercising an independent ministry “on behalf of” his Father. As far as Jesus was concerned, his work was his Father’s work and vice versa. What he saw his Father doing, he followed up on. What he heard his Father say, I spoke out.

So what does this mean for you? The same anointing that was upon Jesus is now available to you as you teach his Word. *Seeing* what the Father is doing and *hearing* his ongoing instruction is an intrinsic part of what it means to teach the Word of God. Here’s how it works. As you are teaching God’s Word, there should be a question constantly at the forefront of your mind:

Lord, what are you doing in the hearts of these people?

By keeping this focus in prayer, even as you are teaching the Word, you are declaring an ongoing dependence upon the anointing of God’s Spirit to speak the

words and enact the message in the way that will have maximum impact on the lives of your hearers.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is not a feeling. It is not just a “tingling” at the edges of your fingertips. It is a ministry style. That ministry style is based on a cooperation with God’s Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who originally breathed life into the Word (**2 Timothy 3:16**), now wants to breathe that life into the hearts of the people you teach.

Your dependence upon God is marked by the understanding that the Holy Spirit has been working in the hearts of your audience long before you get up to speak. He has been working in their lives during the past week and even in the hours prior to the meeting. He has been working in their lives during the time of worship, before you speak. You are not *initiating* the work of God; you are simply *joining* the ongoing work of God. This puts your message into the perspective of God’s wider purpose.

Seeing what God is doing comes from the experience of working with God. There are no shortcuts. There are no “cheat sheets.” It comes about only through a continual discipline of daily reliance upon God. But here are a few hints:

- When you pray in private, ask the Lord to give you a sensitivity to where the people are and to where the Lord is up to in his work in their lives. Ask him to open your eyes to see the people in the way that he sees them.
- During the time of worship before you speak, take time to look around. Are the people genuinely worshipping God? Are they simply going through the motions? Are they distracted? As they worship, ask the Lord what it is he is doing in their lives, what encouragement he wants to bring, what challenge he wants to make.
- When you become more experienced in teaching God’s Word, be open to change your message to bring it line with what you see God doing. This can be daunting at first (after all, I’ve spent *hours* preparing this message), but with experience, your most powerful messages will come when you are willing to discard what you have prepared and “flow with the anointing.” This does not preclude preparation. The time you spend in preparation is never wasted. Remember, God is not just wanting you to prepare a message; he is wanting to prepare *you* as a messenger who will hear his voice and follow his directions.
- While you are speaking, keep watch for the tell-tale signs of God’s work in people’s lives. When you see signs of revelation beginning to strike at hearts, get ready to follow God’s leading and reinforce what God is saying to them.
- Toward the end of the message, when you are bringing the challenge of repentance, keep asking the Lord what he is seeking to do in the hearts of your hearers. It can be helpful to ask the congregation to close their eyes in prayer – but you keep your eyes open. Look at them. Spend a few mo-

ments of silence to talk to the Lord, waiting on his directions. Your final prayer can then drive home the revelation that God is bringing.

In some church traditions, an “altar call” is made at the end of every message. Altar calls have some value in encouraging people to make a commitment on the basis of the Word you have brought, and if you do make an altar call, the same principles of “doing what you see the Father doing” and “speaking what you hear the Father saying” applies as you pray for people who have responded.

But apart from the altar call, there are many other ways you can encourage the people to respond to God’s Word. Be open to new ways of ministry at the end of a time of teaching. Innovate, with the Holy Spirit’s help. And always remember, God’s work doesn’t end when the meeting ends. Be sensitive to the Lord and ready to speak or pray with members of the congregation after the meeting.

You’ll note that these hints are designed simply to place you in a “God-conscious” and “hearer-focused” way of thinking. It really is that simple. Just as Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing in the lives of those he ministered to, so you too can learn to do what you see the Father doing in the lives of those you minister to. Just as Jesus only spoke the words of life that he heard from his Father, so you too can learn to speak “the very words of God” ([1 Peter 4:11](#)).

The Experience of Paul

Let’s have a look at how Paul describes his own preaching to see what he considered to be the most important element in communicating God’s Word.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

This is such an unusual statement that we need to look at it for a moment to gauge what it is that Paul is communicating. When you look over Paul’s ministry as it is recorded in Acts, you don’t see any of the “weakness and fear, and with much trembling” that he speaks of in his letter to the Corinthians.

Read Acts 9:27-29

Read Acts 13:46

Read Acts 14:3,8-12

Read Acts 19:8

Read Acts 28:30-31

This does not look like “weakness and fear,” does it? Can you see any “trembling” in these accounts. But once again, we are just seeing the *results* of the anointing upon Paul’s life, not the source of that anointing. Paul was acutely aware that he was totally dependent upon the anointing of God’s Spirit to preach the Word.

Read Ephesians 6:19-20

Why do you think that Paul experienced “weakness and fear...with much trembling”? Could it be that Paul knew that unless the Holy Spirit moved in and through his life, he would not see the fruit he desired?

Read 2 Corinthians 11:6

He claimed he was not a trained speaker, but this was not entirely true, as we understand it today. When Paul said, “I may not be a trained speaker,” he was referred to the Corinthians’ own criticism of him. Some in the Corinthian church had belittled Paul’s oratory skills. The city of Corinth was renowned for its philosophers and “sophists,” who would debate the fine points of ethics and philosophy. Paul was being compared, not favorably, with the skills of the worldly debaters.

Yet Paul had sat under the instruction of Gamaliel (**Acts 22:2-3**), who was a well-trained and respected speaker (note his speech in **Acts 5:34-40**). As a disciple of Gamaliel, Paul would have also been trained as a speaker. Yet Paul refused to rely on “eloquence or superior wisdom” in his preaching of the Gospel. He was able to declare:

“My message (the core revelation) and my preaching (the delivery of that revelation) were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”

In **1 Corinthians 1:17**, Paul rephrases his meaning by saying that he refused to “preach the gospel...with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

The “trembling” that Paul experienced was not simply a case of bad nerves, but a realization that without a demonstration of the power of God, his preaching would be without effect. His “weakness and fear” was borne of a very real understanding of his own incapacity to “bear much fruit” outside of the vine. Paul understood his critical reliance upon the anointing of God’s Spirit, and this flavored his whole approach to ministry.

The Example of Elisha

Elisha is a wonderful example of a man of God who ministered under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Before Elijah was taken up to heaven, Elisha requested a double portion of Elijah’s “spirit” (**2 Kings 2:9-14**). What Elisha was asking for was a double portion of Elijah’s anointing, and it is hardly a coincidence that the Bible records sixteen miracles under the hand of Elisha compared to Elijah’s eight.

Let’s take a look at just one of those miracles in order to see how the anointing of Elisha worked.

Read 2 Kings 4:8-17

So far the story seems quite ordinary. Elisha is staying with a Shunammite woman and wants to bless her for her hospitality. When she finds out that the woman is barren, he prophesies an event that you think would be the answer to her prayers. But this is where the story becomes unusual. The woman’s reply is:

“No, my lord...Don’t mislead your servant, O man of God!”

Why would she say that? Why wouldn't she be rejoicing at the thought of holding a child in her arms? There is obviously more here than meets the eye.

In course of time, the Bible records, she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha predicted. But this is not where the story ends.

Read 2 Kings 4:18-25

What an inexplicable event! This son, for which she had longed for so long, ends up dying in her arms. This gift from God has suddenly been snatched away. With many questions burning in her mind, and her grief barely beginning, the Shunamite woman immediately decides to seek out Elisha.

Read 2 Kings 4:26-28

Elisha sees her approaching from a distance and, realizing that there may be a problem, sends his servant to ask if all is OK. The woman tells the servant, "Everything is all right," but once she is at the feet of Elisha, the cry of her heart begins to pour out. Note her words to Elisha:

"Did I ask you for a son, my lord?...Didn't I tell you, 'Don't raise my hopes'?"

Now at last we see the reason why the woman originally objected, "No, my lord...Don't mislead your servant..." The woman didn't want her hopes raised, then dashed. She had obviously experienced this many times in her life, and had got to the point where "hope deferred makes the heart sick" (**Proverbs 13:12**).

Here is a woman who had come to the point of hopelessness, only to have her hope miraculously fulfilled with the birth of a son. Yet that hope is once again dashed, with her son dying in her arms. The emotion of this situation must be understood in order to comprehend the sequence of events that follow.

As she had approached Elisha, without explaining what was wrong, the woman had immediately fallen to her knees and grasped the prophet's feet. When his servant tries to push the woman away, Elisha's words are very revealing:

"Leave her alone! She is in bitter distress, *but the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me why.*"

Keep these words in mind, for they have a bearing on what is about to happen.

Read 2 Kings 4:29-31

Elisha send his servant on ahead and instructs him: "Lay my staff on the boy's face." The servant does this, but "there was no sound or response," and so the servant runs back to Elisha with the bad news.

Why has this happened? Didn't Elisha instruct the servant to place his staff – the symbol of his prophetic authority – upon the boy's face? Why didn't it work? Why wasn't the boy brought back to life? Why did the mother have to face yet one more bitter loss of hope?

Read 2 Kings 4:32-37

The story has a happy ending, but this is far more than a story. It is a window on how the anointing operates. Let's backtrack for a moment to find out what went wrong the first time.

- Elisha knows the woman is distressed, but not why, for “the Lord had not revealed it” to him (**verse 27**). This is our first clue as to why the events unfolded as they did. *Elisha had not heard a direct word from God.*
- Elisha sends the servant ahead with a very simple instruction: “Place my staff upon the boy’s head.” This was a reasonable strategy. There are many examples in Scripture where the prophet’s staff has been used by God to perform a miracle (see **Exodus 4:1-5,17; 7:20; 14:16; 17:5-6**). The point is, however, *Elisha had not heard a direct word from God.*
- The second time around, however, Elisha does it all differently. He shuts the door on both the mother and his servant, and begins to pray. This is the first time recorded that he actually sought God’s wisdom. And notice what Elisha does. He doesn’t place his staff upon the boy’s face; this time he places *himself* upon the boy’s body. After a while, he gets up, pacing back and forth again in prayer, then does the same thing. It is at this point that the boy is revived. *This time, Elisha has heard a direct word from God!*

Much can be learned from this story about how the anointing of the Holy Spirit works. There are three important lessons we can glean from Elisha’s experience.

- The first and foremost lesson is: *Get the Lord’s direction.*
- The second lesson is related to the first. We have a tendency, like Elisha, to use well-tried methods – methods that have worked in the past – when we are not sure what to do. After all, if it’s worked in the past, surely it will work again! But remember, *there are no formulas with the Lord, only closeness with him.* God is not wanting to teach you a set of pre-determined formulas for ministry. He is wanting to teach you to hear his voice.
- The third lesson is that God’s method invariably involves close identification with the person in need. A staff upon the face is a remote method. It does not need any personal contact. But Elisha lay upon the boy’s body, “mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands.” This was identification of the most intense kind. As Elisha lay upon him, “the boy’s body grew warm.” This was nothing more than Elisha’s own body heat being transferred to the lifeless body, but God used this total identification between Elisha and the boy to initiate the miracle.

If you are seeking to move in the anointing of God’s Spirit – if your desire is to be a means by which God brings revelation and transformation to people – then you cannot simply put the staff upon the body. You cannot just rely on perfecting your oratory skills. You must lie upon the body, “mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands.” You do this by:

- Doing what you see God doing in people's lives
- Speaking what you hear God directing you to say
- Identifying totally with the people you are teaching, in the same way that Jesus has identified totally with them

In Season, Out of Season

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-2

Paul's charge to Timothy was: "Preach the Word; be prepared *in season* and *out of season*..." We encourage you, in your walk with the Lord, to be prepared to teach God's Word both in season and out of season. "In season" means those times where you have been given lead-time to prepare a message from God's Word. "Out of season" means you have no lead-time – you are asked to teach God's Word without notice.

If we were to condense this whole module into one paragraph, it would be this:

The secret to teaching God's Word is to spend time with the author of God's Word. He wants to prepare you as a messenger even as you prepare the message you are to bring. With the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon you and upon your message, you will hit the target God is aiming for – the heart of the hearer. Prepare your message well, but even more importantly, prepare your heart to follow his leading and teach as he would teach.