

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN? PEOPLE WHO SEEK GOD'S ANOINTING!

Imagine going on a hike through the forest (whether on a hunting trip or a nature hike). There you find a lamp in the middle of the woods! As you pick it up, you notice that it is one of those old time lamps that requires some type of oil to keep the flame burning. You then begin to rub off the dirt and grime and then a Genie pops out!

This genie grants you one big wish. You say, "hey, I thought I got three!" The Genie tells you to stop being greedy and be grateful for the one you got. What would you wish for? TELL YOUR NEIGHBOR

Did anyone wish for our church to grow?

How will we grow our church?

- **Prayer** – people tell us if we just prayed more, things would change. I know praying leaders whose churches are not healthy!
- **Business Plan** – these are people in leadership who tell the church how to operate under good business practices. If it worked in my company, then it can work here!
- **Money** – how much in our bank accounts should not dictate our growth!
- **Yesterday** – the Church of the Brethren is quick to tell the history behind a church or camp without seeking what is going on today! While some traditions are good (our trust in the Bible, the Love Feast, communion, worship, etc.) others can stop us from going where God wants us to go.
- **Music** – some people say that if we just had better music, or more traditional hymns, or more contemporary praise songs, then our church will grow. Music is important, and how a congregation sings can tell us where their hearts are. It is not the all encompassing answer for church growth however.
- **People's Opinions** – when everyone is afraid to offend someone because their voice gets loud when change occurs, the church is run by the critic! Who is the least likely to be spiritually prepared to make decisions for the church? The critic!

**What should the answer to our growth be?** Every person, every day, every moment, in every situation, seeks God!

Hebrews 11:6 (NLT) – *So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that there is a God and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.*

What does it mean to seek God?

The Church of the Brethren has always tried to seek God. In doing so, they have have been known for doing weird things:

- In the past, they wore weird clothing, because they believed that God wanted them to wear all black and not get fancy as the world does.
- In the past, they actually practiced the holy kiss! They wanted to greet their brothers and sisters as God wanted them to.
- Brethren actually wash people's feet because they believe Jesus asked them to.
- Brethren call people to peacemaking because they believe that in doing so we are seeking God.
- Brethren baptize three times forward by immersion because they believe that is how the early church baptized people.
- Brethren actually anoint people with real oil because they believe that anointing is one of the biggest ways of seeking God.

One way to seek what God wants is to seek His anointing upon you.

Anoint is a weird word and for some a weird action. With all the modern medicine, why would you allow someone to pour oil on your forehead? Why would you be anointed?

Anointing has little to do with the person who does the anointing and more to do with what God is doing in the anointed person's life. Anointing has little to do with oil. You can use Crisco Vegetable oil or expensive frankincense and myrrh. Anointing has everything to do with what God is doing. When a person is anointed, it is a physical act of a spiritual reality: God is working in that person's life.

In fact, I believe that more people should seek God's anointing. What does it mean to ask God to anoint you?

Anointing means to have God to pour His Spirit out on you for healing in your sickness, power in your weakness, guidance in your confusion, and approval for what you are giving your life to.

In fact, seeking God's anointing is not too weird. It should be the hallmark of every Christian. Did you know that being called Christian actually means that you are anointed?

Jesus was called the Messiah and some think that Jesus' last name is Christ. The terms Messiah and Christ have nothing to do with Jesus' birth name. Jesus would have been called Jesus Ben Joseph. The terms Messiah and Christ mean "anointed one". The term Messiah is Hebrew for "God's anointed one." The term Christ is Greek for "God's anointed one." In English, Jesus should be called Jesus the Anointed One.

Think about what this means for being called a Christian. This means that if you call yourself a Christian, then you are saying that you are also an “anointed one.”

Followers of Jesus were made fun of because they followed Jesus. They were therefore called “Little Christs” by the people to ridicule them. Acts 11:26b – *The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.* This means that they people were calling followers of Jesus, “little anointed ones.” If you are a follower of Christ today, then you are a “little anointed one.” It is in our name!

I think this puts anointing in the “not too weird” section of the Christian faith. It should make it more common and more accessible to everyone.

## WHY DO WE SEEK ANOINTING?

1. **Sickness** – we seek anointing so that God will heal us from our sickness!

One of the major ministries of the disciples was anointing people for healing. Mark 6:13 – *They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

We know that anointing can bring healing on many different levels:

- Healing can happen on the physical level (if God desires).
- Healing can happen on the emotional level (God can heal people from brokenness).
- Healing can happen on the spiritual level where God gives the person being anointed a readiness of what God is going to do. He gives the person peace in whatever situation he or she is in.
- Anointing also is one of the weapons of faith where we are healed from demonic attack. When the devil attacks, God fights back.

When we seek God’s anointing, we are asking for God to heal us no matter what level we need it on!

Today, the book of James tells us Christians to anoint for healing of sickness:

James 5:14 – *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

We take this quite literally in our anointing services:

- We read the James passage each time to remind us why we are doing this special act.

- Then we give the person being anointed the opportunity to say anything that God has laid upon their hearts. This might include confession of sin, or a real heart to heart of the person's needs from God.
- We then anoint the person. We say, "we anoint you for: the healing of body, the forgiveness of sin, and the strengthening of faith." While we anoint we usually make the symbol of the cross on the person's forehead with the oil. Some Brethren actually pour the oil on the person.
- We then lay our hands on the person and pray.

You have probably seen this before. We pray for God to work. Healing is not automatic. There is no "Genie in the bottle". The oil we use is not magical. We anoint because God asked us to, plain and simple. We are saying to God, "we know you can heal. We know you have asked us to anoint for healing. Will you heal this person now?"

Sometimes God heals the person here on earth. We can have seen God literally heal the person because of the prayers said during anointing. Sometimes, however, God says that He has a better way. He heals the person by taking them to heaven, rather than healing them here on earth. Anointing prepares us for God's healing, however He chooses to do it.

### **We seek anointing because of our sickness, and because of our...**

2. **Sin** – we seek anointing so that God will forgive us from our sins!

We all face pain – Each of us have had pain in our lives:

- Some of us in this room come from lousy family or marriage situations. There is hate in the home. That's pain.
- Some of the pain in this room has to do with our own bodily pain. We have some affliction that we live with. And it looks like tomorrow morning when we wake up we're going to have the same affliction. That's pain.
- Some of us in here are in less than ideal work situations. We don't like our job and we don't know if we have a future in the career we are in. That's pain.
- Some of us in here are going through the trauma of a separation or divorce. That's pain.
- Some of us have lost loved ones. That's pain.
- Some of us are just starting to face the reality of an emotional condition that we're discovering about ourselves. That's pain.
- Some of us have constant financial pressures. We don't know how we will make it. That's pain.
- Some are parents who are broken apart. They're watching their kids make decisions that are self destructive. That's pain.

All of this pain is from sin. It is sin done by us, or done to us. Sin has caused pain in our lives.

God's Answer's to sin is anointing.

- **Anointing by the Blood of Christ** – Revelation 7:14 – *[Followers of Christ] have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*
- **Anointing by the Holy Spirit** – Isaiah 61:1-3 - *The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.*

When we seek God's anointing, God Himself comes into our lives and deals with the pain! He deals with the sin by washing it away with the blood of Christ and anointing you with the Holy Spirit.

We have to realize that anointing points us back to Christ's death:

- Jesus was even anointed for His death – John 12:3 – *Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*
- Jesus' told us that "*When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.*" (Matthew 26:12)
- Anointing does not take our sin away, the death of Christ does. Anointing is the tool that God uses to point us back to this event!

Anointing is the tool that God uses to point us back to the salvation that Christ brings. In the Bible, the word "salvation" or "saved" means "wholeness". Anointing points us back to the wholeness that Christ brings.

We seek anointing for sickness, and sin, and the...

3. **Spirit** – we seek anointing so God will pour His Holy Spirit out onto us in a new and powerful way.

The Bible shows us that when a person is anointed, the Holy Spirit comes into that person's life: 1 Samuel 16:13 – *So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the olive oil he had brought and poured it on David's head. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah.*

In fact, if you are a Christian, a "little anointed one", then you have the Spirit of God in your life: 1 John 2:27 – *The world is no match for what is embedded deeply within you—Christ's anointing, no less! You don't need any of their so-called teaching. Christ's anointing teaches you the truth on everything you need to know about yourself and him, uncontaminated by a single lie. Live deeply in what you were taught.*

We anoint to remember and claim in the name of Jesus that the Holy Spirit is in our lives!

### **What the Holy Spirit does for you:**

- **He prays for you** – Romans 8:26-27 – *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.*
- **He counsels you** – John 14:16 – *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.*
- **He searches out life’s answers for you** – 1 Corinthians 2:10b – *The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*
- **He guides you:**
  - John 16:13-14 – *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.*
  - Isaiah 30:21 – *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”*
- **He produces godliness in your life** – Galatians 5:22-23 – *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*
- **He marks or seals you as God’s child** – Ephesians 1:13 (NLT) – *And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.*
- **He teaches you** – John 14:26 – *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*
- **He satisfies your soul:**
  - John 7:37-39 – *If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.*
  - Isaiah 44:3 – *For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit.*
- **He gives you new life** – Titus 3:5 (NLT) – *He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.*

We anoint to claim this reality. We anoint to say, "God, we need your Holy Spirit. Work in us!" God's answer is a resounding, "I AM HERE. HERE IS MY SPIRIT."

We anoint physically to say that this is happening spiritually. God is here. We might not be able to see the Holy Spirit, but in anointing we ask Him to work again.

Why do we seek anointing?

- For God to heal our sickness
- For God to forgive our sin
- For God to pour His Holy Spirit out on us.

Our Church will grow as we seek God's anointing. The Church of the Brethren is people who seek God's anointing. If this is true, why has our denomination been in steady decline?

Have we tried to get more spiritual without trusting God's Spirit of truth?

Have we looked to business models for our answer?

Have we lost faith because we forgot that God is the one with all the money in the world?

Have we looked to tradition to keep us going?

Have we said that it is music that is the answer, rather than God's anointing on His word and Church?

Have we let the critic rule us, rather than God's opinion?

We need to get back to seeking God's anointing.

There is no genie in a bottle, even an anointing oil bottle. When we anoint, it is not a magical formula where God will work. It is a declaration of a reality: God has already healed us if we are in Christ. God has already forgiven our sins, if we are in Christ. God has already given His Spirit if we are in Christ. Anointing reminds us of these realities.

It points us back to what is real: John 3:16 – *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

This is the ultimate reality: God loves you! He loves you so much that He wants to give you His Holy Spirit!

Will you put your trust in this reality?

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