

*“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”*

**Romans 12:9-13**



My grandmother always had a way of teaching me through story. Whenever she perceived that an important life lesson was needed she would tell me this unbelievable tale that I would never forget and thus never forget the meaning of it. This past week one of those stories began to roll around in my head.

“There was an old man who always carried a little can of oil with him everywhere he went. When he would go through a door that squeaked, he would squirt a little oil on the hinges. If he encountered a gate that was hard to open he would oil the latch. And so, he went throughout his life applying oil to all the difficult places; making it easier for all those who came after him.

But people didn’t necessarily understand the man or what he was doing. Often others would be rude and simply refer to him as eccentric, strange, and sometimes even crazy. But the man was not shaken by the reactions. Day by day he would still go about his normal routine; refilling his can of oil when it needed it, continuing to oil all the difficult places he found.”

The lesson that went with this story was simple: In this world, there are many situations, and sometimes even people, that painfully creak, annoy, and irritate. These situations and times, these people, need a little oil – the oil of joy, gentleness, kindness, thoughtfulness, understanding, consideration, acceptance, and so on. So, remember to be patient, to be helpful, and to do what you can to help; remember to love, and to share the best of what you have to give.

Obviously, I’m not a little child anymore but even at this stage in my life my grandmother’s words continually ring true. I have never forgotten the story of the elderly man and his oil. It was a story given to me as a child and has grown with me into adulthood and into who and what I am as a person – a Child of God in this world today. Time and again I will think about that “oil” especially when I come up against difficult situations; or even people who I know won’t be the easiest or kindest.

But what about you? Do you carry your own “can of oil” with you? Are you ready with “your oil” of acceptance, kindness, and understanding each morning? What would a little “oil” here and there do in the midst of your life and those that you come in contact with; the situations that occur? Your “oil” may mean more than you know to someone who is discouraged. Your “oil” may be that word of encouragement needed in the heart of a situation that seems to be filled with nothing but despair.

In life, my grandmother taught me not just through story but through her example that you should never fail to share the love from within your heart with the world; nor with those around you. That message is still key as it continues to remind me even today in the face of all that surrounds me that change starts from within – one person at a time – one situation at a time.

I encourage you to think about this simple childhood story in the framework of your grown-up adult life. Think about all the God given gifts and abilities that you have been blessed with. Think about how it is that you are utilizing them. Just how much of that kindness and love are you sharing with the world today? Are you spreading it everywhere you can - the tender word, the smile, the hope, the glimpse of God, the love of your Savior? Is that the “oil” that you are using?

*“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” **Colossians 3:12-17***

## **Prayer**

Gracious God,

Let me be the one who welcomes, shares, accepts, and sees the good in someone.

Let it be my choice to be your child in this world. Let me choose to love today.

Amen