



"Give people plenty and security, and they will fall into spiritual torpor."

—Charles Murray

02-Jan-15

Do You Have Enough Oil? (Part Three)

In Part Two, we saw that physical oil symbolizes wealth, abundance, health, energy, and a vital ingredient for a good life. It can likewise represent spiritual abundance, only possible through what [God](#) gives. As Isaiah 55 shows, this oil is "bought" through listening to God, delighting in what He gives, and seeking to be like Him.

However, acquiring this oil is not like a store transaction that takes just a few minutes. Just as our seeking of God occurs throughout our converted lives, so also the abundance that comes from knowing God and His way accrues gradually. One cannot speed up the process, only be faithful to it. One cannot wait until one hears that the Bridegroom is approaching to drop by the corner market and pick up a can of Spiritual Abundance™ on the way to the Wedding. There are no shortcuts here; the oil that matters accumulates over a lifetime.

It is no wonder, then, that [Jesus](#) told the foolish virgins, "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you" ([Matthew 25:12](#)). What terrifying words! He did not know them because they had not invested the time to know *Him*. A one-sided relationship is no relationship at all. He did not know them because

they were not inviting Him into their lives—except maybe when they got into a jam and wanted Him to rescue them. They were not in alignment with the spiritually abundant life that He wanted to provide. That life may have mattered a *little* to them, but it did not matter *enough* to make it a priority.

The foolish virgins did not have enough oil because they did not pursue God and His spiritual abundance throughout their lives. Maybe they thought it would all just work out as long as they stayed in the church. Maybe they thought that God would just give the oil to them at the end, without demonstrating that they truly wanted it—that they wanted God to be their God and desired to be part of His people. Maybe they thought that they could depend on their family, friends, or minister to get them through and give them what they needed, rather than *personally* preparing ahead of time. Whatever the reason, the foolish virgins were not prepared because they did not earnestly and consistently seek the Source of the oil as their conscious mode of life.

In contrast, *wise* people are described elsewhere as building on solid rock—hearing Christ's words and doing them—because that is the only way they will withstand the ravages of life and time ([Matthew 7:24-26](#)). Wise servants are faithful to their masters over an extended period ([Matthew 24:45-51](#)). True wisdom only comes from God above ([James 3:17](#)). From these examples, we can infer that the wise virgins were people who deliberately ordered and conducted their lives in a manner that resulted in their knowing God, spiritually enriching over time.

In the conclusion of the parable, Jesus ends with the admonition, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" ([Matthew 25:13](#)). The Greek word translated "watch," *gregoreuo* (Strong's #1127), has nothing to do with looking at external events or keeping on top of world news. He is talking about being vigilant with regard to our own spiritual state, as well as being circumspect and spiritually awake as we go through life. The danger is that if we do not watch *ourselves*, we will be distracted by self-indulgence and material concerns, and find ourselves spiritually unprepared when the end comes. We will discover that we are without oil, and at that point, it will be too late to "buy" it from God.

We do not know when [Christ will return](#), nor do we know the timing of our own deaths. None of us knows how long we have to become prepared. The lesson, then, is that we should *always* be concerned about how much oil we have and how prepared we are *right now* because *the end*—or *our end*—could be just around the corner.

Remember, though, that the oil does not *just* symbolize spiritual abundance and fruitfulness that has its source in God. While it does symbolize that, more importantly, this spiritual richness accrues *because* we are seeking Him, and because we are faithful to the covenant. This abundance comes to us because we are fellowshipping with Him and taking on His image—the only image that will last for eternity. Buying this oil costs us time and attention, two things that are certainly in short supply today. Ultimately, the price of the oil is our lives, perhaps not in the sense of martyrdom, but at least in the sense of our lives being wholeheartedly devoted to God and to our fellow man, rather than being devoted to the self or the things of [this world \(Romans 12:1-2\)](#).

God's oil comes neither cheaply nor quickly. But having it symbolizes being spiritually ready to inherit His Kingdom, and we become ready for the Kingdom by being in His image. When we are in His image, we, too, will have lives of abundance, of energy, of richness and fruitfulness, perhaps not on the physical plane but certainly on the spiritual one. Only God truly knows how to *live*, and as we grow to be like Him, we will experience that abundant life as well, symbolized by oil.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Patience With Growth](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Fruit maturation takes time, from 90 to 150 days. Waiting for the fruit is just part of the story; while we wait, we must also work, including thinning and pruning. In our fellowship, we see people maturing at various stages. We

must be tolerant with one another, realizing God works with us all individually and particularly. As Leviticus 23 indicates, agricultural symbolism is replete in the sacrifices and ceremonies involving the Wave Sheaf offering and the Feast of Weeks. Christ represented the wave sheaf while we represent the loaves, ground down, baked—picturing our corruption with the leaven symbolizing sin. The two loaves picture God's called-out ones. Pentecost culminates a period of spiritual harvest, depicting the maturation of the Church, from the time of Christ's death, resurrection, and second coming. God is focusing during this time on the maturation of His called-out people. God stresses during this period what His people are commanded to do for the fruit we produce. No one can do it for us. Pentecost emphasizes the Christian's work under God's supervision. Traditionally, God gave us the Law on Pentecost (or Shavuot). Later in history God gave His Holy Spirit on the same date, enabling us to keep the Law. We have Jesus Christ in us at all times. God works in us to will and to do. Ruth, symbolizing the Church, worked diligently in the fields of Boaz (who symbolizes Jesus Christ), producing fruit, leading to the eventual birth of Christ. The growth took many years and much work. Thankfully, Jesus Christ gives us ample time to bear fruit; however, infertility—not bearing fruit—is never an option. As Jesus is patient with us, we should be forbearing with others in the Family of God, helping them to overcome.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[God's Quality Way of Life](#)

by Staff

Our God is a God of excellence and quality. As Christians, we should be striving to develop our lives to the sterling quality of God's character.

CGG Weekly: Do You Have Enough Oil? (Part Three) (02-Jan-15)

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