A Little Pot of Oil: A Life Overflowing (LifeChange Books) by Jill Briscoe

Inspirational

A time comes when we just don't have anything left over to give. We run out of faith, energy, strength, patience, options, peace, joy, ideas, and even love. So when God's call comes knocking and our resources seem thin, we tend to hole up and hide from the needs of others. But that's exactly when God's greatest blessing is within a single step, according to Jill Briscoe. He's asking us to obey, senseless as it may seem. The Holy Spirit's empowerment comes when we step into the forward motion of God's love flowing through us - not backwards into our comfortable shell!

My Personal Review:
'Running on empty' is a much used cliché that reflects a loss of energy or strength. In her book A Little Pot Of Oil Jill Briscoe uses the very same phrase to show how we can regain strength if we allow the Holy Spirit to enter into our lives. God gives us what we need when we are running low-the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God himself - the Comforter - who we can call on in times of darkness to fill our empty spaces. The Holy Spirit takes residence within our souls and helps us in times of hardship - a teacher who came after Jesus. Perhaps most important of all, the Holy Spirit teaches us to affect the lives of others with the love of Christ.

The disciples were running on empty when Jesus died. They had lost faith and hope. But when Jesus talked to them before his death, he told them that another Counselor - who would teach them and remind them of everything that Jesus had taught them - would come after him. This is what happened at Pentecost seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection when the arrival of the Holy Spirit brought people running into the streets of Jerusalem and caused more than three thousand of them to turn to Christ (Acts 2). In today's world - a world that is running out of time, that is running out of hope and is consumed by fear; a world where poverty and inequality are everywhere to be seen - people need the fresh breath of the Holy Spirit,
a personal `Pentecost' of sorts, to bring them back to life. This is Briscoe's central message throughout her book.

But how are we to find the Holy Spirit? How are we to understand what it feels like to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Briscoe returns to one particular story of the Old Testament to answer these questions. The story tells of a widow who, following the death of her husband- the very source of income for her family, had nothing and now faced the loss of her own children to the creditors who were seeking payment for her husband's debts. Her life was, in a word, empty. But she was touched by the prophet Elisha who offered to help. With Elisha's advice, the widow was able to take her sole possession- a little pot of olive oil- and use it to fill several jars all of which she eventually sold to pay the creditors. This woman was able to put her faith in God and take what little she had to pay off her husband's debts. This story provides the foundation stone for Briscoe's message- that if, as Christians, we take what little we have inside of us and give to those in need, the Holy Spirit will come and fill our lives with more. The Holy Spirit is in a sense our own little pot of oil- the answer to our plight.

Cliché or not, the phrase `running on empty' can bring us to the realization that, with a faith in God and a trust in the provision of the Holy Spirit, we can use what little we have to bless those who we meet in our every day lives. Briscoe does a tremendous job of proclaiming this message to those of us who, often times, run low and feel we have nothing more to give. So it is perhaps ironic that Briscoe should end with a personal story in which her grandson refers to the little pot of oil in the Old Testament story as `the pot of all'. Perhaps a genuine mistake or a moment of divine inspiration it is a fitting ending to a tremendous message that tells of how the Holy Spirit will provide `all' we need if we just begin to act in faith.

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