



Anointing Oil: Uses and Scripture

A short guide for churches, ministries, and homes on
when and why believers anoint with oil.

*“To give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for
mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”*

ISAIAH 61:3 (KJV)

Seven ways anointing oil is used in Scripture and today

Throughout the Bible, oil marks a moment when God's people pray, bless, or set something apart for Him. The oil has no power of its own. It is an outward sign that goes with prayer, and the Lord is the one who answers.

01 Praying for the sick

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

JAMES 5:14-15 (KJV)

The clearest instruction for anointing in the New Testament. Pastors and elders use oil when they visit someone who is ill, at home or in the hospital, and pray for them by name.

Mark 6:13 shows the disciples doing the same.

02 Dedicating a home or place to God

"And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy."

EXODUS 40:9 (KJV)

Oil was used to set apart the tabernacle and everything in it for God. Families and churches follow this when they pray over a new home, a new church building, or a room set aside for prayer.

Jacob poured oil on a stone to mark where God met him (Genesis 28:18).

03 Commissioning for ministry

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward."

1 SAMUEL 16:13 (KJV)

Samuel anointed David when God chose him to lead. Churches use oil to pray over new pastors, elders, missionaries, and volunteers as they are sent out to serve.

04 Comfort in grief

“To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

ISAIAH 61:3 (KJV)

This is the verse our Oil of Joy name comes from. Oil was a sign that mourning was ending. Many people use anointing oil when they pray with someone who has lost a loved one.

05 Blessing and gladness

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

PSALM 23:5 (KJV)

In Scripture, oil on the head was a sign of welcome, honor, and plenty. It is used to bless people at milestones like a baptism, a wedding, a graduation, or a new season of life.

Psalms 45:7 calls it “the oil of gladness.”

06 Worship and devotion

“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.”

JOHN 12:3 (KJV)

Mary of Bethany poured costly spikenard on Jesus' feet as an act of love, and the whole house was filled with the scent. Many people anoint during personal prayer and worship as a way to give their time and attention to God.

07 Unity in the church

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;”

PSALM 133:1-2 (KJV)

David compares believers living in unity to oil running down from Aaron's head. Some churches use oil when they pray together for a congregation, a leadership team, or a family.

How to anoint with oil

There is no single required method. These simple steps are common across many churches.

- 1 Begin with prayer. Ask the Lord for what you are seeking, whether it is healing, comfort, guidance, or blessing.
- 2 Place a drop of oil on your fingertip. A roll-on bottle makes this easy on hospital and home visits.
- 3 Touch the oil to the person's forehead or hands. For a home or church, touch it to a doorframe. Some people trace a small cross.
- 4 Pray in the name of the Lord, as James 5:14 describes. Reading one of the verses in this guide aloud is a good place to start.
- 5 Close by giving thanks, trusting God with the outcome.

The anointing that matters most

"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

2 CORINTHIANS 1:21-22 (KJV)

Anointing oil points to the work God does in His people through the Holy Spirit. Use it as a reminder of that promise.

Choosing a fragrance

Many Oil of Joy scents are tied to a theme in Scripture, like Spikenard for worship and Frankincense and Myrrh for intercession. Download our free fragrance guide at swansoninc.com/oil-of-joy to see what each one means.



Shop Oil of Joy anointing oil

14 scents in sizes from a 1/3 oz roll-on to 32 oz refills, plus balms, assortments, and store displays. Churches and ministries can log in for ministry pricing.

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