

Every holiday season companies create an ad, commercial or marketing campaign with great music and a short story line that tears at your heartstrings and you have to grab for a Kleenex or change the channel once the commercial comes on! You know what I am talking about? Well this year during Mother's Day, Apple got me again with the flood gates and heart strings! There is a commercial that stars Moms of all sorts; pregnant moms, moms seeing their babies for the first time, a mother skipping with her child, kisses. And these pictures and videos are taken by the moms or someone else watching these women with their children. At the end of the commercial the title comes across the white screen, "Moms" shot with an iPhone. Well, I am sitting on the couch crying silently and Caleb my son gets up from building his latest Lego creation, kisses me on the forehead and walks back to his Legos! I died!!! This is a small sweet moment in my everyday life as his mom I will remember forever!!

I know that is sweet, sappy and a little bit cheesy but this commercial reminded me of the movie I chose Up and because you may not cry at Mother's Day commercials, if you are human everybody cried at the first ten minutes of Up!

[Collage of stills from Up's opening scenes] The movie starts when Ellie and Carl are kids and meet in an old abandoned home where Ellie is pretending to go on an adventure. Ellie invites Carl into her Explorer Club and pins on her Grape Soda bottle cap making him a honorary member. Ellie shares with Carl her "My Adventure Book" and they plan to go on a grand adventure to Paradise Falls in South America, but she doesn't know how she is going to get there! With a little bit of persisting and a raised voice she makes him promise he will take her! Carl and Ellie get married, they buy that abandoned house where they met and fix it up. They both get jobs at the Zoo, Carl sells balloons and Ellie works with birds. They dream of having children, but struggle with fertility. At that moment, Carl brings Ellie's "My Adventure Book" to her and they start saving for the trip to Paradise Falls, but life happens. They need new tires and a few accidents happen so they have to break into their Paradise Falls piggy bank. Life just "gets in the way of their grand adventure".

And once Carl surprises Ellie with tickets to Paradise Falls she is too sick to go. Ellie gives Carl the "My Adventure Book" for him to go make new adventures, but he doesn't want to go without her.

After she dies, his love and ambition for grand adventure dies as well. As time goes on and urbanization happens, there is a demand to knock down his house to build skyscrapers. This causes him to become more and more bitter because their house, as well as all the belongings in it, is the last reminder Carl has of Ellie's love and sense of adventure. Eventually he is forced out of his home and has to go to a retirement facility, another reminder of having to stay HERE. This is not what he wants! Carl wants to leave HERE as much as he wants to go UP. All his life has been about escaping the HERE of flat tires and infertility and hospitals. He wants his big adventure for Ellie that never happens! So in Pixar reality he ties 20, 000 balloons to his house because he is going to Paradise Falls and fulfilling his promise to Ellie!!

We can relate. We all have dreams, we all have big ideas, we all want to go places, and we want to go UP!! It is no coincidence that Paradise Falls is at the top of this big tall mountain and this movie is called Up. Because the whole movie Carl is always trying to leave where he is and go up and fulfill his grand adventure for Ellie. Like Carl, we want to go up! For some this may be by having the latest model truck,

or wearing the latest trends. I may not be Carl and Ellie, but I have my struggles. So do you. You might want to get away from bills, never ending medical payments, relationships you want to get away from, societal pressures, maybe a job that you might want to leave, but can't because of obligations or fear of finding a new one. You want to go up and get away from it all. Up, up, up! We want to keep going up in our lives, in our faith, hope, love, spirituality. It's up over there and I want to get there for my life to have meaning; I have to go up.

So what does UP teach all of us who are looking for life somewhere else? Well, as Carl is going Up with his house he finds out there is a stowaway, Russell the Wilderness Explorer that has been knocking on his door trying to earn his Assisting the Elderly badge. Through several storms and detours they land next to Paradise Falls. As the two work hard at getting the house to the edge of the falls just like Ellie wanted Carl learns he was wrong in trying to get Up or to Paradise Falls to be happy again. What he realizes is meaning and hope is found in small acts of friendship and love. This is a powerful message for people of faith. We don't find meaning, purpose, faith, hope, love or peace somewhere else. God is right in front of us, in the midst of our flat tires and infertility, demanding bosses or losing jobs, blended families or school events calling us to find life through daily acts of love.

We need to quit looking for meaning elsewhere or in things and realize God is calling us to daily acts of Love. We live in a world of BIG love gestures! Grand Prom invitations, Reality TV, The Bachelor, over the top marriage proposals and sappy movie montages. In faith, it is going to church every week, reading the Bible, Prayer, dates of importance Christmas, Pentecost, wearing your Sunday best, memorizing scripture or when were you sanctified. We put these up on a mountain top - just like Paradise Falls. We're convinced if we can just live THERE our lives will be so much better than the ordinary lives we have.

But God calls us to daily consistent faith. Not dates or times or grand gestures; simple acts of love every day.

The message of Up is that the everyday trumps the extraordinary. Want proof? It's in the clothes. I know... the clothes? No one pays attention to the clothes the characters are wearing! The meaning is in the mundane! But Carl's journey to healing is revealed in the clothing. We miss it because no one pays attention to the clothes, you want to know if they make it to the edge of Paradise Falls or not. You don't really care about the clothes in the movie.

At the very beginning Ellie puts on a Grape Soda bottle cap pin on Carl making him a member of her club, Ellie ties Carl's colorful ties every single day for work as an act of love, Russell proudly wears his Wilderness Explorer uniform and needs the "Helping the Elderly" badge on his sash to complete his adventure to go up to the next level and at the end of the movie the acts of love come full circle when Carl get the honor and pins the Bottle Cap Badge to Russell's sash as an act of love. The little details in the clothing reveal love.

Can we pause and think about OUR clothing for a moment? What do clothes mean to us? Clothes are a daily routine for us; it is one of the first things we do when we get up in the morning to take on our day. Our fashion choices tell people about us; what we might do for a living, if we work out or not, what type of movies, music or books we like, our social status and even our feelings.

What we wear can have real consequences on our social circle as a child, teenager and even adult. I remember in junior high I had Lee jeans and all the cool kids had Girbaud. I made all As one semester and I talked my mom into buying those expensive jeans so I could try to part of the “in” crowd. I had Payless plastic Dr. Marten’s instead of the real gold high quality stitched leather!! Think about it; people were judged based on stitching of their boots or tags hanging from the back of their jeans instead of their heart or brain!!! High school was cruel! Caleb my son will be going to a school next year where he will wear a uniform. My husband and I are ecstatic about this! I can breathe a sigh of relief that he will not be put in a social circle based on the logo on his pants or the brand of his shoes. He will start off his public education just as himself; brain, personality and heart.

Paul asks us to think of how we live our faith in the world as a “dress code”. What counts as a good Christian “uniform”? You can't take off your race, gender, social status, etc. The things we use to judge and divide from each other. Paul says, Put on the uniform of LOVE". Love covers over all that stuff so we can be unified. That brings us back to the division in Colossians where there is no Jew or Gentile, barbaric, uncivilized, plastic Doc Marten versus leather Doc Marten, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and He lives in all of us. But do we let it show on the inside of us? Do your outsides match your insides? Just because I wear a Texas Tech shirt doesn't mean I don't like someone that wears a Texas A&M shirt. We can say all day it doesn't matter what you wear, but you have to wear something. Clothes have to be worn every day, they don't define what is on the inside of us. God tells us daily we have to put on Love! Differences are covered over by Love! When you put on Love you put on Christian Love and this is who you are.

**[Scripture Slide]** If you have a Bible, turn with me to Colossians 3. If you grabbed a Bible from the back, you can find this on page XXXX. And if you don't have a Bible, you can keep that one as a gift from us. Colossians is a letter written to a church full of new Christians. In this part of the letter, Paul (the author), is explaining to them the beauty and power of the life they experience because of Jesus' resurrection. Follow along as I read 9-17. Particularly pay attention to how the writer treats the life of God like we treat our clothing.

Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. -- Colossians 3:9-17

The writer talks about the stripping of clothes and putting on new! Take off old ways, put on Love! The uniform of a Christian is LOVE. We're to put it on every day before we leave the house - before we leave the BEDROOM! That should be what every Christian does everywhere...So what does it mean to "put on love"?

If you are having a hard time with this think for a moment, 'When do you feel most loved?' It is different for everyone!

My husband feels the most love when both of his kiddos are in our house or Caleb and him have a competition of saying who loves each other the most, "I love you to the next galaxy and back!" "No, I love you to the next galaxy and back!" I teach a teaching internship program with high schoolers! I love my job! I feel love when I can teach my students and they come back to school gushing with a 'light bulb moment' their students had. Or when they think of me on Mother's Day and thank me for being an adopted mom to them, or a simple thank you. I feel most loved when I come home from work and my husband has prepared my favorite meal! Or when he uses his mechanical brain-the opposite of me-and fixes our pool or washing machine. When he brings me flowers or whistles at me in a cute outfit!!

LOVE is not really found in the big, romantic gestures. It's found in the ordinary, everyday, mundane acts of love that make up our lives...

And it is not always about the romantic, kissy/huggy way of loving someone. It is not the run into my man's arms in the pouring rain love, like on *The Notebook*!! It is in our actions, thoughts, dreams, words or even with no words at all! Our everyday, ordinary lives are where you find love!! We try to make this so hard, up on a mountain top, like *Paradise Falls*. We need it to be big, bold and on a glittery sign or a Pinterest idea. Being spiritual is the same. We think it's the grand, amazing moments. We believe that we have to have "Big/High" faith! We have to memorize scripture or have an annotated coloring Bible. Being spiritual is about being faithful, about going to Church listening to the messages on Sunday and practicing those principles out to people we encounter in our lives every other day than Sunday. Being spiritual is about caring for others when they are not being very caring to us.

But .... as a mom/parent, I don't have the time to do a Bible study or being in the word everyday like I used to. That doesn't make me any less spiritual because I am not checking off a box on my to do list or meeting with a group of ladies once a month to discuss a book! I am in the trenches with my kiddo reading books, working on homework, driving back and forth to school events, playing games, having a loving and respectful relationship with his dad and getting the house cleaned and laundry done. I am now teaching my son patience when we play a game, talking through what he should do when a friend doesn't want to play what he does on the playground, showing him a Godly, loving marriage and reading Bible stories and saying prayers at bedtime. This is what spirituality" looks" like to me now. It is my calling and purpose every day to be spiritual to my family, students, colleagues, the checker at the grocery store or the person that cut me off in traffic; not just to love them. Jesus says, "Do unto others, as you would want done unto you! Do what you wish people would do for you!" It's simple!

At the end of the movie *Up* Russell has earned his last badge, the Assisting the Elderly badge. But Carl doesn't give him the Wilderness Explorer trademarked badge instead he gives Russell the grape soda

bottle cap badge that Ellie gave him at the beginning of the movie. It is the Love Badge. He has found new meaning with the relationship he has built with this bothersome little boy and it wasn't found on the top of Paradise Falls it was found through his adventures with Russell and right where he is today with Russell. Today we are giving you a love badge, a designer label of LOVE. It's your plain white tee, your favorite jeans, your go to 'I look skinny in this outfit' badge! Put it where you get ready in the morning, where you get dressed. Put it there so you remember to always put on love. Ask yourself, "what would I like people to do for me today to make me feel loved and how can I love others?"

Have you ever had the nightmare of standing up in front of a group of people or your church and not wearing any pants? Or going to work or school and not wearing pants? It sounds terrifying, right? Putting on love is just like putting on pants. What if we were as afraid to leave the house without love like as we are afraid to leave for work or school without pants? It is simple, put on love! You would never consider leaving the house without pants would you? In verse fourteen and fifteen we clothe ourselves in love so you must forgive others. What if as Catalyst we were a people that didn't put on love every day? What would our homes look like? I can tell you mine would have less hugs and kisses, less stories read, smaller Lego towers, less meals made, little cuddling on the couch watching our favorite shows, less clothes washed, the tears not wiped away, fewer high fives or birthday candles blown out!! What would our neighborhoods look like, our grocery stores, our workplaces, our schools, our future!!!! What if we were so committed to putting on love we wouldn't leave the house without it. We talked and talked about how putting on love is so easy, but what happens when it's not? What happens when you get a little off course and those pants are a little too tight? Or they don't match what you are wearing? What if it has gone out of style and the person/world/friendship has moved on? What happens when the pants have gotten too worn, have a hole and need to be patched? What do we do to repair that love? Or what do you do when you just need new pants? I challenge you every day to put on love! Every day put on LOVE! Forget those Sperry's, Nike shorts, Guess jeans or Z Cavaricci's. Wear the designer label of LOVE!! Be the people of LOVE!!

As you walked in today you found a sticker on your seat and thought oh how cute or your kiddo put it on their shirt and ran off to The Lab with it on! No worries we have lots. We have created a Catalyst designer label of love for you to "wear". I want you to go home today and put this sticker wherever you get dressed in the morning. On a mirror, your underwear drawer, your closet door, anywhere you get ready for your day. And tomorrow and every day as you get dressed to conquer your day think, "I am putting on love for my day, just like I am putting on these clothes. You don't leave your house without clothes, why would you leave it without love!!

### **Communion**

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