



## **"THE OLD LADY BOOTLEGGER WHO LIVED ON THE HILL"**

I thought that I would share with you some learning experiences I have had in my early ministry as a Correctional Chaplain. I feel that these experiences are certainly **"Lessons To Live By"**.

In the early years of my Ministry, I served as Crises Intervention Chaplain at the Kentucky State Reformatory in LaGrange Kentucky. One day as I was talking to some young prison inmates in the Chapel, one of them who knew that I was from Hardin County, asked if I knew a certain lady. When he said her name, I immediately knew who he was talking about. I said, **"Why yes I do know her well"**. Now, I didn't mention to him that I knew her as **"The Old Lady Bootlegger"** who lived on **"The Hill"**. *(For those of you who may not be familiar with the term "Bootlegger" it is used to describe a person who distributes or sells goods illegally.)* With excitement in his voice he exclaimed. **"That's My Grandmother"**. The young man went on to tell me his story about his Grandmother. **"Chaplain Vance did you know that when me and my brothers and sister were growing up, that my Grandma sold whiskey so we could have food to eat and clothes for school? She was too proud to take food stamps or go on welfare"**.

I'll admit that I was taken back by his declaration. I knew her well from the Hardin County Jail. But, I had never looked at her as a Grandmother, or as anyone who cared enough to even feed her grandchildren. I only saw **"The Old Lady Bootlegger"** who lived on the hill.

I wonder how many of us, far too often, look at certain people through our "Human Eyes of Personal Prejudices" - How they are dressed; Where they live; What we've heard about them. Or, in my case, How many times I had talked with The Old Lady Bootlegger in the Hardin County Jail. Like far too many of us, I had failed to look at her through my Spiritual Eyes of Love. My preconceived undisciplined judgment of her personal contributions to her family was dead wrong. This young man **Adored, Loved and Respected** his Grandmother. From his eyes, she had seen to it that he and the rest of his family were able to survive, living in their unforgiving world of poverty. I had overlooked our Lord's Great Commandment.

**My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.**

John 15:12 NIV

There are many of us who grew up hard and poor. But, we chose to work our way out of our poverty and to deal with the heart breaking pain of knowing we were unwanted. I pray that each of us can encourage others to do the same. It's an individual choice. Choose Wisely!

Your Pastor Loves You

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