

Fragrances, Study 1

SMELLS, FRAGRANCES, AND ODOURS IN THE CHURCH

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But thanks be to God, who always leads us in victory through Christ. God uses us to spread his knowledge everywhere like a sweet-smelling perfume.

Second Corinthians 2:14 (NCV)

In the Song of Songs, there is a beautiful picture of Christ and the Church. Despite how many have initially been told to understand the Song of Solomon, the "lover" in this story is not Solomon! Rather, Solomon is the one trying to entice the Shulammitte from her betrothed, a young shepherd. While working her family's vineyard, it appears that she had grown to love the shepherd boy whose family would graze their sheep among the vines. Eventually, at the appropriate age, the two young lovers are betrothed to each other. But shortly after this, King Solomon spies this girl working in her family's vineyard and takes her to be one of his wives back in Jerusalem. She is quizzed by the existing members of King Solomon's harem about her lover and where to find him and tells them-

¶ *If you do not know,
O most beautiful among women,
follow in the tracks of the flock,
and pasture your young goats
beside the shepherds' tents.*

Song of Solomon 1:8

This book is full of descriptions of rural fragrances which remind the Shulammitte of her childhood sweetheart. While Solomon offers her various riches, wines, spices and perfumes, she remains faithful to her betrothed. It is a beautiful picture remaining faithful to Christ despite the alluring temptations of the world.

As the Lover (Christ, the Shepherd) tends his garden (the Church), it too begins to exude a sweet smelling fragrance (Song 1:12 NIV). The bride talks of herself as being her lover's "garden" and says- "*There are young figs on the fig trees, and the blossoms on the vines smell sweet. . .*" (Song 2:13 NCV).

1. One of the main themes of the Song of Solomon is _ _ _ _ .
2. The fragrance of God is also associated with _ _ _ _ .
3. We see from the message of the Song of Songs that God wants His Church to be a _ _ _ _ _ church.
4. Paul says that the Church is a _ _ _ _ smelling fragrance.

Therefore, it is our aim as a church to become more *smelly*! (In a sweet way of course.) Perhaps one of the insights from the Song of Songs is that our *fragrance* is proportional to our love. The faithful Shulammitte bride in the Song of Songs describes her Lover (a type of Jesus) as being "...like a bunch of flowers from the vineyards at En Gedi." (1:14). Therefore, since the lover seems to represent the Son of God, it similarly seems that God has a 'smell'.

5. This is not surprising, considering the very essence of God is _ _ _ _ (1Jn 4:16).

All followers of Christ are spiritually fragrant! What is this fragrance that the Bible is talking about? It is love...

Love produces a feeling but love is first involves a way of acting. It is also a way of thinking about others - not as problems, not as nuisances, but as people created to be loved. God's kind of love (which the Greeks at the time of Christ called "agapé") cares most for someone else rather than ourself. Agapé love is sincere and genuine.

THE FRAGRANCE OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

6. The love of the Father is un _ _ _ _ _ .

In the Old Testament, the words most used to describe God's love are-

'ahab This word for God's love occurs 250 times in the Old Testament. It describes spontaneous and outflowing love.

hesed A word denoting deliberate choice of affection and kindness. This word is often translated as "mercy", "kindness", or "steadfast love".

(The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Vol. 3, pg. 173-174)

Jesus described the love of the Father by saying-

"...He causes the sun to rise on good people and on evil people, and he sends rain to those who do right and to those who do wrong"

Matthew 5:45

Jesus made it clear that His followers must have the same fragrance of their heavenly Father-

"If you love only the people who love you, you will get no reward. Even tax collectors do that. And if you are nice only to your friends, you are no better than other people. Even those who don't know God are nice to their friends. So you must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Matthew 5:46-47

Obligations

1. We spread the fragrance of God's love like a sweet-smelling perfume when we spend time in God's presence- privately and corporately.
2. We can intensify the fragrance of God on our lives when we flow in the Father's love.
3. The greatest display of love in the world today should be in the church and amongst believers, their families and their friends.

Amen.

Next study: *The Different Types of Loving Perfume In The Church*

ANSWER KEYS

1. love 2. love 3. faithful 4. sweet 5. love 6. (un) conditional