

Like a Sweet Fragrance

DOING WHAT GOD MADE US TO DO

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(Questions to Ponder, Discuss, or Journal)

Introduction:
The Fragrance of Victory

(Refer to “Introduction: The Fragrance of Victory” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #1

Do you know what it’s like to have your head stuck in a desk for the world to see? God is sovereign, but he is also compassionate. How have you experienced the compassion of God?

Question #2

Because we’re following Christ, God sends us to the hurting, the humiliated, and the embarrassed, so they can experience Christ-like compassion. How have you shown God’s compassion to someone else?

Chapter 1:
Rejects in Christ's Parade

(Refer to "Chapter 1: Rejects in Christ's Parade" in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #3

"Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness" (Psalm 30:11 KJV). How does this visual imagery show the truth of what God can do to help us when we're enveloped in sadness?

Question #4

"Give us a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair" (Isaiah 61:3). Paraphrased, the prayer pleads for God to exchange our hopeless feelings for a thankful heart. How does praising God uplift our spirits?

Chapter 2:

One Whiff of Jesus

(Refer to “Chapter 2: One Whiff of Jesus” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #5

The Samaritan woman tells Jesus how she sees him. He doesn't have a jar, therefore he can't give her any water. Jesus may have looked like the human he was, but what was in him was so much more. When times are bleak, how do you see Jesus? How do you think Jesus wants to be seen?

Question #6

The Samaritan woman's shame didn't stop her from telling people about Jesus. How can our past be a hurdle when we're wanting to share what God has done for us?

Chapter 3:

The Poignant Perfume of a Prostitute

(Refer to “Chapter 3: The Poignant Perfume of a Prostitute” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #7

Simon saw a prostitute, but Jesus saw a forgiven woman. God gives us sight to see as Jesus sees. How can this knowledge help us respond to people we see each day?

Question #8

Kneeling at the feet of Jesus, the crying woman did not notice Simon’s scorn. What happens when our whole being is focused on Jesus Christ?

Chapter 4:
Forget-Me-Not

(Refer to “Chapter 4: Forget-Me-Not” *in Like a Sweet Fragrance.*)

Question #9

The bleeding woman squeezes through the crowd to touch Jesus, regardless of the outcome. What if she had stayed home that day? Have you ever refused to ask God for something because you didn't want to risk being disappointed?

Question #10

Jesus looked for the person who touched him in the crowd that surrounded him. How is that one moment an encouraging image when we're feeling worthless and insignificant?

Chapter 5:

Forward in Triumph, Not Stuck in Regrets

(Refer to “Chapter 5: Forward in Triumph, Not Stuck in Regrets” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #11

To esteem God’s Word more than the world’s view of beauty is a worthy pursuit. How is God’s Word more than the power of positive thinking?

Question #12

Inner Beauty Day reminded me that I can’t focus on God if I’m focused on my own face. “Your face, LORD, I will seek” (Psalm 27:8). How can anxiety over the way we look distract us from God?

Chapter 6:
Eau de Tamar

(Refer to “Chapter 6: Eau de Tamar” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #13

An innocent victim, Tamar took a bad situation and made it even worse. Are God’s plans thwarted by our worst mistakes?

Question #14

How does the genealogy of Jesus Christ remind us that God is able to do immeasurably more than we can possibly imagine? Note, in particular, Matthew 1:1-3.

Chapter 7:

His Merciful Fragrance in Miriam's Mess

(Refer to "Chapter 7: His Merciful Fragrance in Miriam's Mess" in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #15

Miriam stood by the water's edge, but she was ready to step forward. Important opportunities can be disguised as times when all we seem to be doing is watching and waiting and wondering. Have you ever felt like your life was filled with only small, meaningless tasks?

Question #16

God looks at sin like we look at cancer in a beloved family member. He knows the damage it causes and the pain it inflicts, and God wants it gone. Miriam sinned, but God was merciful to her. If you were to explain God's mercy based on your life's experiences, what would you say?

Chapter 8:

A Potent Presence in a Fragrant City

(Refer to “Chapter 8: A Potent Presence in a Fragrant City” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #17

God’s Word isn’t a substitute for fear, but a demolisher of it. “They will have no fear of bad news,” the psalmist proclaims. “Their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD” (Psalm 112:7). Has worry ever kept you awake at night? How might this psalm help you focus on God instead of fear?

Question #18

The spies rescued the prostitute who believed in their God, and they also saved the people who chose to stay inside the house with her. Rahab chose to follow God, but her family had a choice to make too. Our choices matter. Have you ever made a choice, good or bad, that profoundly affected someone you loved?

Chapter 9:

The Fragrance of a Well-Lived Life

(Refer to “Chapter 9: The Fragrance of a Well-Lived Life” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #19

Naomi blamed God for the loss of those she treasured most. “The LORD’S hand has gone out against me!” (Ruth 1:13). Have you ever felt like Naomi? How was your experience similar or different from hers?

Question #20

“Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Ruth vows to follow God even though her life has fallen apart. How does following God give purpose in the most devastating of situations?

Chapter 10:
The Sweet Scent of Grace

(Refer to “Chapter 10: The Sweet Scent of Grace” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #21

For years, Hannah focused on what she did not have until she prayed in an explosion of such grief that the priest thought she was drunk! God gave Hannah peace, baby or not. How can her story be our prayer?

Question #22

Trust means to “rely or depend on” and “to believe” (“trust”). When we trust someone, we feel safe and secure. But how do we trust God when we’ve learned, from our own experiences, that people aren’t always trustworthy?

Chapter 11:

Worthy of Reflection

(Refer to “Chapter 11: Worthy of Reflection” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #23

In heaven, life’s going to be perfect; but in the meantime, here we are, and sometimes we seem stuck in some unpleasant situations. Do you know what that feels like?

Question #24

Psalm 34:8 encourages us to “taste and see that the LORD is good.” We all need our own pie, not another person’s leftovers. Have you ever depended on a friend’s faith, instead of your own faith, to help you through tough times? Why do you think we do that at times?

Chapter 12:
It Reeks! Bitterness is Not Sweet!

(Refer to “Chapter 12: It Reeks! Bitterness is Not Sweet!” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #25

God put Michal in the life of a man who was devoted to him. God is visible to others through our relationship with him. Are you living with someone who doesn't have a relationship with God? Are you a David to a Michal? How is your life important in that person's life?

Question #26

Against her will, Michal was returned to David, and she became a bitter woman. Is bitterness a choice? What happens when it consumes our life?

Chapter 13:

Living with a Stinker

(Refer to “Chapter 13: Living with a Stinker” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #27

Armed with courage, good sense, intelligence, and wisdom, Abigail confronted an angry warrior determined to annihilate her household. God provides us with what we need to fight. What attributes has God given you? Which ones do you use daily?

Question #28

Abigail kept David from making a foolish mistake, steering him in the right direction once more. Has there been someone in your life who has helped direct you back toward God? Does that person know how important he or she is to you?

Chapter 14:
The Fragrant Allure of a Woman

(Refer to “Chapter 14: The Fragrant Allure of a Woman” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #29

We don't know whether Bathsheba was enjoying the admiration of the king or whether she was even aware that he might be watching, yet she is remembered by that one moment in her life. God, however, continued to work in the lives of Bathsheba and David. Do you know how it feels to be known for one mistake?

Question #30

God is serious about forgiveness, calling us to forgive as he has forgiven us. Is there someone you need to forgive?

The Master Perfumer

(Refer to “The Master Perfumer” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #31

The professional perfumer decided which scents would complement the others and the quantity of each one needed to bring out the most pleasing aroma. She also signed off on the work we did and sealed our fragrance in a bag engraved with her personal design. How is God like a master perfumer?

Question #32

God gives us work to do in his name. What everyday tasks has he given you to do today? What other tasks has he given you to do that you have been putting off, waiting for the right time or place or perfect conditions?

Conclusion:

Go in Victory

(Refer to “Conclusion: Go in Victory” in *Like a Sweet Fragrance*.)

Question #33

The bits and pieces of the sand dollars bore the unique five-petaled design that distinguished them from other sea urchins. Ironically, the imperfect sand dollars were found on a beach so perfect only God could have created it. How does this metaphor fit our life?

Question #34

Second Corinthians 2:14 says, “But thanks be to God! For in union with Christ we are always led by God as prisoners in Christ’s victory procession. God uses us to make the knowledge about Christ spread everywhere like a sweet fragrance” (GNT). What does this verse mean to you today?