

HIS

Nature

Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:14

THE AROMA OF CHRIST

Our lives are lavished with good gifts from a kind and gentle God. One such delight is our sense of smell. We probably don't often consider what our world would be like without odors, but I think it might be boring.

Certain smells—especially floral fragrances—sweetly “communicate” the tenderheartedness (Matthew 11:28-30) of our Creator, Jesus Christ. The scent of jasmine, familiar to most people, sings loudly of Christ's meekness in a special way.

Recent research on the jasmine flower has shown that its fragrance soothes nerves, relieves anxiety, and promotes sleep. If true, then the Persian word *yasmin*, which means “a gift from God,” is an apt



Jasmine

name for this aromatic plant—a gift to an anxious world.

The odor of jasmine has been cherished since ancient times as a relief from the symptoms of stress. According to Professor Hanns Hatt, jasmine boosts the neurotransmitter GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid), located in the brain. Thus, increasing GABA elevates one's mood. This shouldn't be too surprising since the olfactory nerves in our noses

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are connected to those parts of the mind that direct our emotions.

Egypt is the largest supplier on Earth of jasmine oil (derived from the flower *Jasminum* sp.). So prized is its aroma that jasmine is the national flower of Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

There's an interesting, yet fetid, side note to the story of this most-fragrant plant. One of the chemical components of jasmine oil is indole. At low levels, indole has a wonderful floral scent. But in high concentrations, it possesses an intense fecal odor! It's all a matter of perspective.

Had God wanted, he could have laced large quantities of indole into most flowers, making them quite repulsive to people . . . though not to flies. He didn't. And in this mercy he demonstrates to us his love and his meekness.

As reflected in his creation, Jesus is the Rose of Sharon (Song of Solomon 2:1). As Savior, he proclaims to the world the infinite potency and glory of God in a way that will not overwhelm us. To some, the cross of Christ "gives off" a very sweet aroma. Sadly,

most people find it offensive. Jesus is the "Jasmine" of God, and he calls us to be like him. I wonder . . . what do we smell like to others?

DIGGING DEEPER

Scientific studies have shown that certain scents, including jasmine, augment memory. And it's been discovered that the smell of lavender improves computational skills, helping kids and teenagers do better on math tests.

The scent of lemons apparently heightens the performance of employees on the job, with some workers making fewer mistakes. In addition, advertisers have found that the fragrance of flowers increases the sales of athletic shoes at department stores. (One wonders if floral aromas cause shoppers to picture themselves running blissfully through a verdant spring meadow, thus motivating the purchase?!) Like music, our sense of smell seems to have a powerful effect on our minds.

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*We are to God the aroma of Christ
among those who are being saved
and those who are perishing.*

2 CORINTHIANS 2:15