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A BEAUTIFUL AROMA

*In fact, God thinks of us as a perfume
that brings Christ to everyone.
For people who are being saved,
this perfume has a sweet smell
and leads them to a better life.*

2 CORINTHIANS 2:15–16 CEV

She breezed in and sat down in front of me at an Indiana University basketball game on that cold February night. She was an older woman, dressed in a navy business suit, with a red and white scarf tied stylishly around her neck. Her silver hair was neatly tucked behind her ears in a classic bob, and her lipstick was a perfect IU crimson color.

I would have guessed her to be in her early fifties—probably an IU professor. As she settled into her seat, a wonderful aroma filled the air. It broke through the smells of stale popcorn and overcooked hot dogs and filled my nostrils. I inhaled deeply and said, “Mmmm.”

“Do you smell that?” I whispered to my mother.

“Yes, it’s marvelous,” she answered.

There was no doubt. The wonderful aroma had wafted in with the classy lady in front of us. As the halftime buzzer sounded, I leaned forward and tapped the woman on her shoulder.

“Excuse me, ma’am. You smell so wonderful. Could you tell me what you’re wearing?”

“Thank you,” she said, then told me the name of her perfume.

I shared the information with my mother,

and we each made a mental note about our next perfume purchase. I wanted to smell just like the classy lady with the silver hair.

You know, the Bible says we are the aroma of Christ. When we enter a room, we should carry His fragrance with us. His aroma should be so pleasing on us that people will tap us on the shoulder and ask, “Excuse me, ma’am. You smell wonderful. What are you wearing?” With that opening, we can share Jesus Christ with every person who notices our Christlike aroma.

Maybe your fragrance smells more like those overcooked weenies or stale popcorn. If so, you just need a “smell makeover.” Ask God to replace your human smell with His divine fragrance so that you will be a witness of His sweetness everywhere you go. Ask the Lord to fill you with His fragrant love so that it enters the room even before you do. He will. He doesn’t want His children to go around smelling stinky. After all, we are the aroma of Christ, and that’s better than the finest perfume.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD. . .

*They saw that his face was radiant.
Then Moses would put the veil back over
his face until he went in to speak with the
LORD.*

EXODUS 34:35 NIV

Film legend Audrey Hepburn was named the most naturally beautiful woman of all time by a panel of experts in June 2004. Hepburn, the star of *Roman Holiday* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, topped the poll of beauty editors, makeup artists, fashion editors, model agencies, and fashion photographers who were asked to choose their top ten beauties from the list of one hundred compiled on www.smh.com. The women were chosen for their “embodiment of natural beauty, healthy living, *beautiful on the inside and out*, with great skin and a natural glow to their personality, as well as their complexion.”

The article went on to say that Audrey Hepburn is the personification of natural beauty because “she has a rare charm and *inner beauty* that radiates when she smiles. Her skin looks fresh in all her films and her personality really shines through as someone warm and lively.”

Wow, that's quite a tribute, huh? Wouldn't it be great to make the Top 100 Beautiful Women of All Time list—let alone be voted number one? But did you notice that Audrey Hepburn's inner beauty was mentioned twice in the judges' reasoning for choosing her? Sure, there were many other beauties that made the list—Marilyn

Monroe, Cleopatra, et cetera. Some may have been even more beautiful than Hepburn, but apparently their inner beauty was found lacking, even though their exterior beauty was striking.

That's good news, isn't it? That means even if our skin isn't flawless, even if our teeth aren't perfectly straight, and even if our hair has more bad days than good ones, we can still "radiate beauty" because of our gorgeous inner looks. In other words, if your heart is filled with the love of Jesus, that is going to cause you to glow. Did you know that Moses had to cover his face after he had spent time in God's presence because his face actually glowed? It's true!

Spend some time with God today, and get a makeover by the Master. Soon, you'll radiate His love, and people will find you attractive. You might even say, "You'll glow, girl!"

A WEIGHTY ISSUE

*“If any of you lacks wisdom,
he should ask God, who gives
generously to all without finding
fault, and it will be given to him.”*

JAMES 1:5 NIV

Standing in line at the supermarket, you can't help noticing the various women's magazines with headlines such as: LOSE 10 POUNDS IN 10 DAYS! WALK YOUR WAY TO A HEALTHY WEIGHT! LOSE THOSE LAST FIVE POUNDS EATING TOFU! And if you're like me, you probably buy several of those magazines each month and try eating tofu for a few days until you give in and have a package of M&Ms.

With each decade, managing your weight becomes more difficult. Our metabolisms slow down if we're not working out regularly, and the weight slowly acquires on our midsections, hips, and thighs. Ugh!

If your "fat jeans" fit perfectly today, then you're not alone. According to the American Obesity Organization, more than half of adult U.S. women are overweight, and more than one-third are obese. Obviously, we have some work to do in this area. But here's the good news: We don't have to do that work alone.

God cares about every little thing that affects our lives—including those extra five, ten, or twenty pounds that are hanging on for dear life! Let Him help you to achieve your ideal weight.

Ask Him to get involved in your quest for fitness and a healthy lifestyle.

My pastor's wife had struggled with her weight off and on for years, and then she finally got a plan. No, it wasn't Weight Watchers, LA Weight Loss, or Jenny Craig. It was God's plan! She said that she prayed about her weight issue, and God impressed upon her to do three things: Drink more water than soft drinks; quit eating after 6:00 p.m.; and walk two miles three days a week. Those instructions didn't seem that hard, so she started following them. Twenty pounds lighter now, she is a happier, healthier woman.

The plan God gave my pastor's wife may not be a perfect plan for you, but rest assured, God has a weight-loss plan with your name on it. Just ask for His wisdom today, and leave those supermarket magazines on the racks. Who likes tofu, anyway?

WALKING WITH THE LORD

Let us not become vainglorious.

GALATIANS 5:26 ASV

In my teens and twenties, looking good was always an issue. I exercised not because I wanted to be healthier. No, I exercised so that my Levi's would fit better. I exercised so that I could strut my stuff in a two-piece bathing suit. I exercised so that I could wear the latest, hip fashions and look good.

Now that I'm in my midthirties, I still want to look good, but I am more conscious about being fit. When I hit the treadmill, it's not just so I can burn those Snickers' calories from earlier. No, now I am exercising so that I can still be around when my daughters have children. Now I exercise so that I can enjoy those golden years with my husband. Now I exercise so I can be a healthy vessel the Lord can use.

And guess what? Exercising is no longer such a burden. Okay, I'll be honest. I don't love to jog. I love to *have* jogged—period. But I am enjoying the different mind-set I have as I approach exercise. Now that it's no longer all about me and it's all about my family and serving the Lord, I seem to be able to jog more minutes, log more miles, and have more joy as I do.

If you're struggling with this whole fitness thing, like I was, maybe you need to change your

motives, like I did. Ask God to help you take your eyes off yourself and put them back on Him. He wants you to be healthy and fit so that He can use you and so that you can enjoy life to its fullest. When you understand that truth, it gives “Just do it” a whole new meaning, doesn’t it?

Exercise is actually a gift from God. It is a God-designed activity that has many health benefits—lowering blood pressure, increasing your metabolism, counteracting depression, preventing the atrophy of your muscles, increasing flexibility, preventing osteoporosis, and many, many more. So go ahead. Get fit for all the right reasons and enjoy all the benefits. God wants to help you discover a better, healthier version of you!

HERE COMES THE JUDGE

*I can do everything through him
who gives me strength.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NIV

Do you ever worry about what others think of you? I've found that most women struggle with this issue of being judged—even gorgeous, “got it all together” women. One of my dearest friends is absolutely beautiful. Would you believe that even she worries what others think of her? I once heard her say, “I'd love to do more teaching, but I'm just not ready.”

I started thinking, *Wow, if she's not ready, nobody is ready. I've never met anyone who studies the Word of God more than she does.* So I said, “You are *so* ready. You probably have more of God's Word on the inside of you than anyone else I know.” With that, she lowered her head and sighed. I had touched on something that upset her.

“What's the problem?” I pushed.

“Well, I have to lose at least fifteen more pounds before I'll be ready. I worry that everyone will be looking at how big my behind is rather than focusing on the message God's given me to speak.”

I couldn't believe my ears. The devil had so deceived her. She had become so worried about what others would think of her that she wasn't

walking in the fullness of God. She wasn't allowing herself to be used by Him.

As I drove home that day, I began to think back on all of the times I'd allowed my worries to keep me from serving God. I thought about specific instances when I'd been so afraid of being judged by others that I had completely missed an opportunity to serve Him. It made me sad—not just for me, but for all of my sisters in Christ who had done the same thing.

Are you one of those sisters? Have you been allowing your insecurities and fear of being judged to keep you from doing great things for God? If so, don't be sad. Just give those concerns to God and ask Him to fill you up with His love and confidence. Remind yourself throughout the day that you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength, and then go forward and change the world. You have much to offer!