

LifeGroup Questions

Based On: 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

April 17, 2016

Overview:

I read an article this week about a British couple who while taking a walk on the beach found a lump of whale vomit. Why would anybody even write an article about such a disgusting thing? Apparently whale vomit, also known as ambergris, sells for \$10,000 per pound. This couple could make anywhere from \$50,000-70,000 for their disturbing find. The article states: "It wasn't too hard to find the ambergris, which is both rare and valuable; they just followed their noses. It's a very distinctive smell, like a cross between squid and farmyard manure."

What purpose does ambergris have? As unusual as it might be it is used to make expensive perfumes. It extends the lifespan of the perfumes scent. I find it intriguing that this smelly lump would just rot away on the beach unless found by someone who knew what it was. Its usefulness and value wouldn't be utilized unless it is put in the right hands. Next time you put on some cologne or perfume make sure you read the ingredients.

In 2 Corinthians 2:12-17 the Apostle Paul talks about being the aroma of God. He begins this passage with some travel dialog and then gives the illustration of being lead as a captive in a triumphal entry. In this culture the captives were used to show the glory of the conquerors. Paul, who at one time opposed God, has now been captive for God's glory. Paul uses this illustration as a way of describing the Christian life. Once believers surrender to God then He will use them for His purpose. It is through weakness that God will be glorified. This is often a very difficult concept to grasp in the Christian faith.

What does it mean to be the aroma of God? As a believer there should be something very distinctive about your life that separates you from unbelievers. An aroma is noticeable before any words need to be said. Paul gives two reactions to this aroma: one is death and the other is life. For those who oppose God your faith probably is as attractive as ambergris. For those who have a faith in God, the aroma of Christ is like a sweet perfume.

Bible Study: 2 Corinthians 2:12-17

1. Read 2 Corinthians 2:14. Discuss as a group what it means to be lead as captives in a triumphal entry. How does God use weaknesses for His glory?
2. If someone said: "If you had enough faith you would avoid suffering." How would you respond to them?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-18 and 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. What are the similarities between these two passages?
4. "As Richard Baxter (1615–1691) put it in his classic work from 1656, *The Reformed Pastor*, and modeled in his life: "Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling-blocks before the blind, as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you unsay with your lives, what you say with your tongues."¹ Is belief in God enough to be considered the aroma of Christ? Why or why not?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 2:17. How can a church guard itself from peddling God's word for profit? Peddling the gospel includes making sure people's experience is more important than the truth proclaimed.

¹ Hafemann, S. J. (2000). *2 Corinthians* (p. 123). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

6. In what ways do your neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family know you carry the aroma of Christ in you?
7. What steps can you take to make sure you carry the aroma of Christ every day and not just on Sunday?