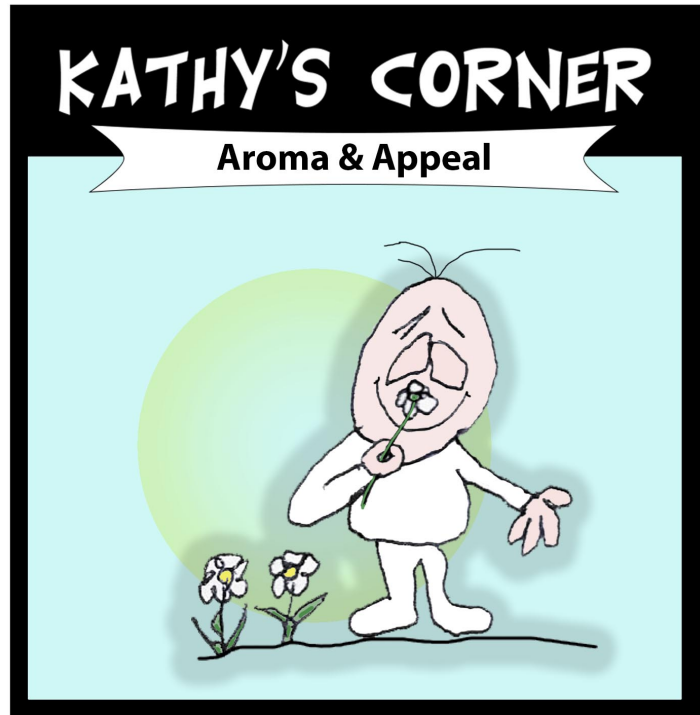


Aroma & Appeal

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in Christ's triumphal procession and through us spreads the aroma of the knowledge of him in every place. **For to God we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To some we are an aroma of death leading to death, but to others, an aroma of life leading to life. Who is adequate for these things? For we do not market the word of God for profit like so many. On the contrary, we speak with sincerity in Christ, as from God and before God.** (2 Corinthians 14-17 CSB)

Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will find favor and high regard with God and people. (Proverbs 3:33-4 CSB)



Historically, in the Roman procession, captives were led by the victorious general. Prisoners often were made to carry incense. In contrast, we willingly follow our victorious Savior spreading an aroma of the knowledge of Christ wherever we are through our lives. To God we are the fragrance of Christ. It is unfortunate that the fragrance that is so pleasing to God is the fragrance that may or may not be pleasing to men. “To some we are an aroma of death leading to death.” —So we are “terrorists” to the culture of death that openly celebrates everything contrary to the life of wholesomeness which God intends for mankind. God has not just intended, but has also provided for this abundant life and eternal life through Christ. “To some we are an aroma of life leading to life.” Some will see a sincere life—the sincere words we speak, the sincere way we walk, as appealing. It is different but better, refreshing even! They will be drawn to its Source through the aroma of life.

Heroes have an appeal. Who would look at someone weak and overcome by sin and say, “I want to be just like him or her one day.”? Yet there are those who think they can handle it—sin. To some sin has an appeal. Their hero may be a *cute* sinner. They may want to be like this hero. These people will likely become ensnared. In their own minds they believe they are strong enough to enjoy the sin without it having a negative effect on them. Many of us were these people in one way or another. How we needed that aroma of life!

There is a scarcity of the aroma of life. How many of us saw Christianity that wasn't compromised lived out in real time as we were growing up? How many of us didn't? There may have been a moral standard in those we admired, but was there the aroma of life? For me there was not. In His Mercy God plainly “spoke” to me one day when I was angry at Him for my circumstances—I asked Him, “Why are you doing this to me?” He said, “Because you're not living right!” I determined to change that that day, but felt like I was alone in my sincerity even in a church that I decided to attend, and in many other churches where I tried to find life. In God's mercy, He led me on a path which eventually led to NUMA. Here I found that sweet aroma of life leading to life, and more life, as I continue in fellowship with those that appreciate the same.

This week I was led to a Hymn of aspiration. I want to share a couple verses of *Higher Ground* with you:

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm upward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground!"

My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where those abound,
My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.

(Johnson Oatman Jr., 1898)

This hymn is a prayer as are many of the Psalms in the Bible. I think it reflects the hearts of many of us today. When we can live above the world through faith—without doubts and fears because we know our God, we will spread that aroma of life to life. When we trust and obey the God that is on our side—with us and for us, knowing nothing can separate us from His love, knowing that He will never leave or forsake us, we will live spreading that aroma of life. We may at times neglect our relationship with Him, but He is always there. The moment our heart turns back to Him, we find the truth of His faithfulness. **He never leaves, never forsakes! That is the God who has appeal!**