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# US TRIBUNE



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Edifying, Defining, Inspiring ordinary Individuals to Become Extraordinary Ones

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FRAGRANCE



## Ebola-free nurse Nina Pham visits President Obama after being cleared of deadly virus

Special correspondent

The 26-year-old was released from the hospital Friday, eight days after she arrived at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., and paid a visit to President Barack Obama in the Oval Office before her trip back to Texas.



A glowing, healthy and happy Nina Pham received a big hug from the commander-in-chief Friday, hours after she was declared free of the virus.

Pham, a nurse who contracted Ebola after treating America's

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## 700 Syrians 'Beheaded, Crucified' By Islamic State

Special correspondent

A recent report indicates 700 people of a native Syrian tribe were reportedly shot, beheaded, and crucified by the Islamic State back in August, marking the biggest Islamic State massacre on Syrian land in over a year.

According to The Washington Post, the villagers were members of the Shaitat tribe located in Abu Hamam in



Smoke rises from the Syrian town of Kobani, seen from near the Mursitpinar border crossing on the Turkish-Syrian border in the southeastern town of Suruc, Sanliurfa province

the Deir al-Zour province. The media outlet reports that although the massacre was rarely reported on by international

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## North Korea Releases American Arrested For Bible In Hotel Room

Special correspondent

North Korea has reportedly released one American detainee, although two other Americans remain imprisoned in the Asian country.

Jeffrey Fowle, a Christian American, was arrested in North Korea back in May after leaving a Bible in his hotel room. He is now reportedly on his way home after being released from detention in the country. Fowle will reportedly take

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The family of Jeffrey Fowle, his wife Tatyana (2nd R) and children Alex (L), Chris (2nd L) and Stephanie, surrounds family attorney Tim Tepe after Tepe read a family statement in Lebanon, Ohio, August 12, 2014.

## Christians baptized in Iraq in spite of threat from Islamic State

Special correspondent

Andrew White, known as the vicar of Baghdad, said yesterday that he had baptized a family of five, as Islamic State (IS) militants circle ever closer to Iraq's capital.

In an update on Facebook, Canon White said, "despite the tragedy all around us we are so aware of the presence a glory of G-d [sic]."

"We had a great joyful event today as I baptized a mother and her four young children. What a joy it was when the 10-year-old came up to me after the Baptism and said 'I feel all new now I am all different' and he was."

Canon White told Anglican News Service that "people really wanted to demonstrate their faith," despite the danger of doing so.

"It was lovely baptizing them and the children were so excited...In the midst of such a desperate situation it was wonderful to have something which was so nice."

Reports stating the current location of IS militants as they close in on Baghdad have varied over the past few days.

The BBC's Lyse Doucet reported on Monday that members of the terrorist group were less than 10km away



from the city in the early hours of the morning.

The Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East then reported at around am GMT that IS militants were "less than 2km away from entering Baghdad."

"The crisis here with ISIS/L continues but

their movement toward Baghdad has been pushed back," Canon White said yesterday.

"At one point yesterday they were said to be within a mile of Baghdad. Now the Intel tells us they are 20 miles away from the Capital."

## As winter approaches, Christian and Yazidi refugees who fled IS could freeze to death

Christian, Yazidi and other refugees in the Kurdistan region of northern Iraq who fled Islamic State terrorists now face a freezing winter with temperatures of 35 to 55 degrees and few resources to sustain them.

"Winter is upon them, and it is already cold at nights, but they don't have anywhere to go," Juliana Taimoorazy, president of the Iraqi Christian Relief Council told the National Catholic Register. "This is a human tragedy unfolding in front of our eyes, and not enough is happening."



The refugee camps are already affected by fever and disease, she said. Thousands of refugees have left Iraq altogether and crossed the border into Turkey.

According to the

UN, there are about 850,000 Iraqi refugees in Kurdistan, including 150,000 Christians.

Caroline Brennan, of Catholic Relief Services, told NCR: "Just weeks or months ago, they

were middle-class; they had homes; they had careers: They were corporate professionals or barbers or teachers or college students. Now, they are just living under extremely perilous conditions."

www.gatewaypeople.com



Expecting soon from the next edition onwards a write up on the fastest growing community in Dallas Metroplex "Gateway Church", that is touched by the hand of God and are moving lives.

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## Ebola-free nurse Nina Pham visits President Obama

Ebola ‘Patient Zero’, Thomas Eric Duncan, met briefly with President Obama in the Oval Office October 24 Friday afternoon. White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said that Obama decided to meet Pham because it was “an opportunity, first of all, to thank her for her service.”

Hours earlier, a beaming Pham, 26, wearing a smart black pantsuit over a turquoise blouse and necklace, smiled as she thanked her supporters for nursing her back to health after she was hospitalized and diagnosed with Ebola on Oct. 12.

“I feel fortunate and blessed to be standing here today,” she said outside the National Institutes of Health medical center in Bethesda, Md., where she was flown and hospitalized on Oct. 16.

The resilient nurse, the first person to contract the disease on U.S. soil, also thanked Dr. Kent Brantly, another Ebola survivor, who donated plasma to help her combat the disease.

“Although I no longer have Ebola, I know it will be a while before I have my strength back,” she said.

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## Pakistan Upholds Death Sentence for Asia Bibi

Bibi’s case drew global attention in 2011 when two politicians were killed for supporting her.

Over the years, various international human rights organizations have called for her release. On Thursday, Amnesty International said Bibi’s sentence is a “grave injustice.”

“Her mental and physical health has reportedly deteriorated badly during the years she has spent in almost total isolation on death row. She should be released immediately and the conviction should be quashed,” Amnesty’s Deputy Asia Pacific Director David Griffiths said.

Under Pakistani blasphemy laws, insulting the Quran or the Prophet Muhammad can be punished with life imprisonment or death. But experts say the laws often are exploited for personal gain.

Mushtaq said Bibi was arrested after Muslim women told a cleric in a village in the eastern Punjab province that she had made “derogatory remarks” about the prophet. He said the trouble actually began when the women objected to Bibi using their drinking glass because she was not a Muslim.

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## North Korea Releases ..

a connection flight from North Korea to Guam before heading to the United States.

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest addressed Fowle’s release on Tuesday, saying the U.S. welcomed North Korea’s decision to release the American. The U.S. reportedly arranged Fowle’s transportation back to the states once he was released.

According to the New York Times, Fowle’s release has eased, but not ended, the tense relationship between the U.S. and North Korea. Two other detainees, Matthew Miller and Christian missionary Kenneth Bae, remain in captivity in North Korea. Earnest said Tuesday that the U.S. implores North Korea to “immediately release” the other two Americans.

“We certainly welcome the decision from the DPRK to release [Fowle],” Earnest told reporters. “While this was a positive decision by the DPRK, we remain focused on the continued detention of Kenneth Bae and Matthew Miller and again call on the DPRK to immediately release them.”

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## 700 Syrians ‘Beheaded..

tional news outlets, it is a clear example of how difficult it is for local people in Syria and Iraq to fight against Islamic State militants without aid.

As The Washington Post reports, many anti-Islamic State fighters in Syria and Iraq are calling out for more aid from the U.S. to fight the terrorist organization. “We saw what the Americans did to help the Yazidis and the Kurds. But they have done nothing to help the Sunnis against the Islamic State,” Abu Salem, a member of the Shaitat tribe who survived the 700-person massacre, told the media outlet.

News of this massacre comes as international media outlets continue to report on fighting in the Syrian border town of Kobani. Locals have been battling with the Islamic State militants for power of the crucially-positioned town for over a month.

Turkey announced recently that it will be allowing Iraqi Kurdish forces to cross over its border to fight the Islamic State in Kobani. “Turkey has no wish to see Kobane fall,” Turkey’s Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told BBC News.

However, Kurdish officials are arguing that what fighters in Kobani really need are stronger weapons, not more manpower. Ismet Hesen, a senior Kurdish official working in Kobani, told BBC: “If any force would like to come to fight with us here, forces on the ground doing the fighting here should be consulted first.

Stephanie Reck



Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “surrender” as to give oneself up into the power of another: to “yield”. “Yield” can be defined as to give up possession of on claim or demand.

So many people truly never fully surrender their lives to Christ. They hold on to their desires, their expectations, and

their control. Control is a lot harder to give up if you live in fear and circumstances are too controlled and heavily monitored. We may even try to control the outcomes of certain events because allowing God to have His way maybe too vulnerable or even scary for us. We want certainty at all costs, since we live in this unpredictable world and our lives have been a series of things we could not mange or control. Fully surrender to Christ also means that Christ is trusted even if we cannot figure out the outcomes or even see the solution to our problems. You may have control issues if you have been hurt or have endured series of trials that have damaged your soul. Life may seem so unpredictable to you and downright scary at times. You fear the worst-case scenarios because in your eyes you have seen and experienced devastating circumstances in your life and the life’s of those you loved.

Are you going God’s way and letting go of control and surrendering or you going your own way?

Control freaks have a hard time fully surrendering and letting go. Fear is usually the culprit and the unknowns and uncertainties of life are too unbearable. We believe, as control freaks, that we can at least somewhat, manage and control our lives and everyone else’s. We believe that total surrender may involve vulnerability and trust at all costs and those are too risky for us.

There are many reasons people have trouble with fully surrendering their lives to Christ. Sometimes it is difficult to trust what you can’t see, or you feel like if you don’t take over every aspect of your life and everyone else’s that the consequences of not controlling and intervening

Control freaks have a hard time fully surrendering and letting go. Fear is usually the culprit and the unknowns and uncertainties of life are too unbearable. We believe, as control freaks, that we can at least somewhat, manage and control our lives and everyone else’s.

will be severe. Control freaks play the “what if” game all too often. An example would be, “What if I don’t step in to help my sister again, what will happen, will God step in?” Most of the time, control freaks would say to that question, “I am not sure what God will do if He steps in or chooses not to step in, and I might not can handle His

ways so I will step in and take control.” In a way, we play God. We believe our outcomes and ways are better and are sufficient to meeting our own needs and the needs of others.

We may not like the way our life is turning out or has turned out, so we try to get certain things to line-up the way we would want them too. We are not truly satisfied with what God is doing, so we take over. We take over our families, and sometimes friendships and complete strangers at times. We do this all because we want our certain outcome to happen.

What would happen if we truly let go and surrendered? What if we could completely trust God that if He chooses not to give us what we believe we want or if He chooses to handle our families the way He sees fit. Is it possible we are getting in the way of our own freedom and getting in the way of our families deliverance? We do not want our family and friends to go through consequences and pain so we step in and rescue them. However, what if God wants them surrendered to Him so that He can work in their lives? Perhaps you should get to the roots of why you keep stepping in to help others, or even the reasons you cannot fully surrender your life. Maybe you had a blueprint for your life and it is not turning out like your blueprint that you had in your mind. Perhaps you are even fighting against God’s plans for you because you will not let go.

Are you ready to surrender your life, your family? Are you ready to trust God’s ways are better than your ways? Are you ready to stop living in fear of the “what if’s?”

Surrender starts when you can truly say,” Not my will be done but your will Lord.”

What kind of things can you do for the Lord as young teenage Christians?

Do you often wonder?

Sometimes adult Christians do not make many provisions to include young people in the Lord’s work. Perhaps you feel left out.

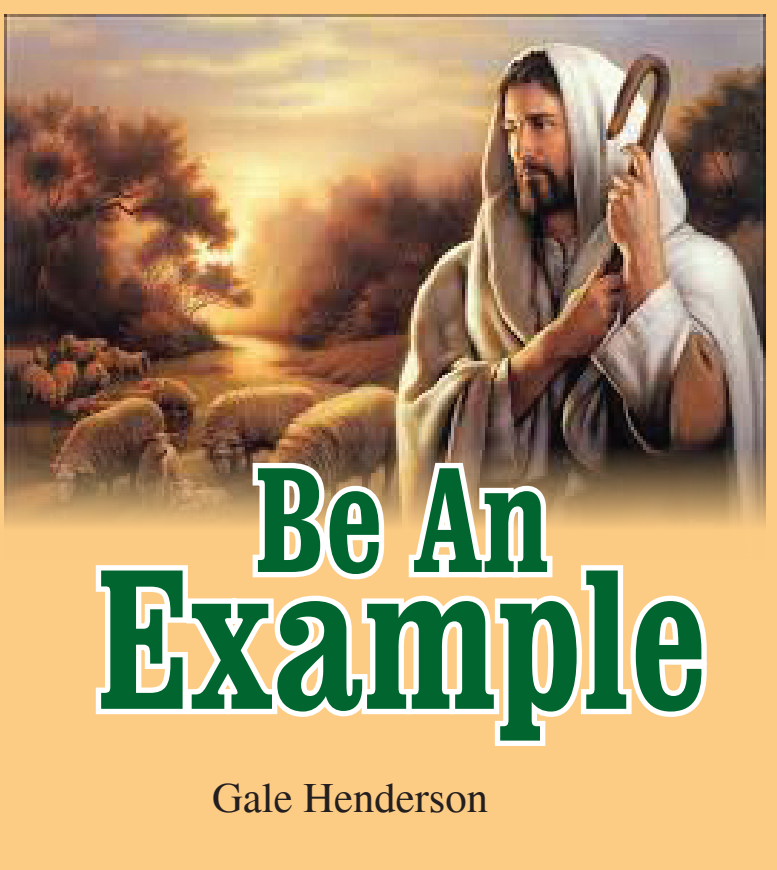
Youth has certain advantages, but it also places certain limitations. Young people find it a struggle just to gain acceptance and respect from adults.

How can you be a productive servant of the Lord under that kind of pressure?

What can young people do to bring glory to God now, while they are still young?

One of the most important things you can do is be an example. All kinds of people are watching you—especially young children who want to be just like you. “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

- (1 Timothy 4:12)



Gale Henderson

There are many ways that you can be an example.

**In Word:** What kind of things do you talk about? The latest fashion trends? Music? School ball teams? Television shows? Sports?

None of these interests are wrong, but couldn’t you talk with others about the Bible too?

**In Conduct:** You can make sure you stay out of trouble. You can quit ‘copping attitude’ with your parents. You can show more reverence to God when you assemble to worship Him. You can participate more in the worship by singing louder, praying more fervently, and giving more cheerfully. Young men can learn to participate more in the public portions of worship.

**In Love:** Do you hold grudges? Are you forgiving? Do you still have enemies at school now that you are a Christian? Jesus said, “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44).

Do more of that.

**In Spirit:** Have you put on the “fruit of the Spirit”—the positive characteristics which come by walking according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh? “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23).

**In Faith:** What kind of choices are you making when your faith is tested? Are you choosing school activities over church? Have you done all you can to make clear your desires about not having to engage in other activities when the church is meeting for worship?

**In Purity:** Stay away from sex before marriage. Avoid compromising positions and situations. Stay away from alcohol and do not even take the first drag off a cigarette or joint.

**Why should you do all this?**

Not to please your parents or people at church.

Do it to please your heavenly Father!

Then you will be a faithful example both to those who are and those who are not Christians.



# ABC'S TO PERSONAL HARMONY



Dr. Shiny

Like pieces of a puzzle, the many different aspects of your being come together to form the person that you are. You work/play, rest/ expend energy, commune with your body and soul, exalt in joy, and feel sorrow. Balance is the state that you achieve when all of these aspects of your life and self are in harmony. Achieving harmony requires that you assess some important truths in everyday life. Here are some points to the ABC's of a more harmonious life.

**Accept:** Recognize in life what you can change. Accept everything you are and things you are not.

**Believe:** Remember in life, it is not in just the doing but in the being and believing. Believe in the goodness/ blessings God has in store for you for your life.

**Choose:** Every moment of everyday, choose. Choose to do the right thing, not the familiar easy thing. Choose to be a Christian. Choose to smile instead of frown. Choose to walk up the stairs instead of the elevator. You life is in your hands so choose the best for yourself.

**Dream:** Dream it. Wish it. Do it. "If you can dream it, you can do it."

**Eat:** Do not live to eat but eat to live.

**Forgive:** Ask for forgiveness, offer forgiveness. For life, for love, for peace; for you, for them, forgive.

**Grow:** Always continue to grow more than you are at the present. Grow spiritually, intellectually, emotionally.....etc.

**Honor:** Honor yourself, others, and the Earth you live on.

**Inherit:** Embrace your heritage. Learn where you came from and how you got here. Inherit God's undying faith and love.

**Journey:** Journey your way through life's misfortunes as life lessons. Learn and grow from them.

**Keep:** Keep yourself grounded and centered in Christ in the midst of chaos- and always keep an eye out for those things or people that would lead you astray.

**Laugh:** Laugh as much as you breathe and love as much as you live.

**Mend:** Mend yourself and others when life seems to fall apart at the seams. Have the faith, patience, and courage to piece together all the beautiful pieces

that make you a whole stronger, integrated self.

**Nest:** Create a home or environment that is a safe and comforting. Create a place that you can shut the doors and windows to the world to refresh and recharge yourself.

**Offer:** Let yourself give the gift of offering to others but come to realize that the people that truly love you are the ones who need you in their lives when you have nothing to offer but yourself.

**Pray:** Remember to be thankful to God in your blessings and pray. Remember when life gets too hard to stand, kneel. "If God answers your prayer, he is increasing your faith. If he delays, he is increasing your patience. If he does not answer, he has something better for you!" -Anonymous

**Quit:** Quit when it is quitting time. Do not go back to a well that you know is empty. If you are in a situation where you are getting absolutely nowhere, quit traveling the same rocky road to the same dead end.

**Receive:** For once stop giving and be open to receiving. Accept a compliment, a gift, a favor. Accept them with grace.

**Say:** Say what you mean and mean what you say. Say exactly what needs to be said and then say no more.

**Touch:** Touch another...not just physically but spiritually. Spiritually, discover how remarkable life can be when you open yourself to touch and be touched.

**Use:** Use the blessings and talents God has blessed you with. Use it or you may loose it.

**Visit:** Visit your family, your old neighborhood, a friend in a hospital, a museum, a church.

**Walk:** Exercise! Walk a minimum of thirty minutes a day. Walk in the morning to start your day on the right foot.

**Xenodochial:** Be hospitable. Live a life that is welcoming to all.

**Yes:** Say yes to life. Say yes to Christ and his everlasting life.

**Zealous:** "The more passionate you are about what you do, the more you get aligned to your purpose."-Puja Gupta. Be zealous in your pursuit of all things that matter in life. ■

# NOTHING WITHOUT GOD

Dionne Stratton



"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." - John 15:5

Why did God make us so that we can do thing – that is, nothing good – without Him? I believe that the simple reason was to get us to rely on Him. We cannot live a true, righteous, and full life without vital connection to God because that is the way He wanted it. God made it so that we must rely on Him otherwise probably every one of us would rather do everything on our own. Wasn't that at least part of the first sin? That our first parents wanted the ability to know good from evil without relying on God to tell them. And in that moment of self-determination, they turned their backs on God. Now, because of our fallen nature, we must rely on God for everything – for salvation, direction, wisdom, mercy, grace, and the power to live a holy life. Nevertheless, it is precisely our need of Him that draws us to Him and keeps us near Him. And that is exactly where He wants us.



## Kuttanadan Tharavu Mappas / Duck Curry with Coconut Milk



Marie Thomas

1. Duck - 3/4 – 1 kg (Cut into medium pieces)
2. Turmeric powder – 1/2 tsp  
Pepper powder – 1/2 tsp  
Salt – To taste
3. Whole spices – Fennels – 1/2 tsp, Cardamom – 3 – 4, Cloves – 8, Cinnamon stick – 1/2 inch, Whole pepper corns – 1/4 tsp (Crush all the whole spices in a mortar and pestle)
4. Ginger – 1 inch, thinly sliced  
Garlic – 8 large cloves, chopped  
Onion – 2 medium-small, thinly sliced  
Green chilies – 4 – 5, slit  
Curry leaves – 1 sprig
5. Turmeric powder – 1/4 tsp  
Coriander powder – 1 – 1.5 tsp  
Garam masala powder – 1 tsp  
Freshly ground pepper powder – 1/4 – 1/2 tsp
6. Vinegar – 2 – 3 tsp
7. Hot water – 1/4 – 1/2 cup
8. Coconut milk, thick – 3/4 cup
9. Salt – To taste
10. Freshly ground pepper – 1/4 tsp or to taste  
Curry leaves – A few  
Coconut oil – 1.5 tbsp + 1 tsp  
Gram masala powder – 1/4 tsp or to taste



### Method

1. Heat 1.5 tbsp coconut oil in a pressure cooker at medium heat. Add in the crushed whole spices and stir until fragrant, about 5 – 10 seconds. Next add ingredients numbered 4 and saute until onion turns transparent. Add in ingredients numbered 5. Saute until their raw smell is gone or for about 1 minute. Next add marinated duck pieces, vinegar and 1/4 cup hot water. Mix everything well. Close with the lid and pressure-cook for 1 or 2 whistles or until duck is fully cooked.
2. Open the lid and add 3/4 cup thick coconut milk. Mix well. Taste-check for salt. Add 1/4 – 1/2 tsp of freshly ground black pepper, few curry leaves, 1 tsp coconut oil and 1/4 tsp garam masala powder. Mix well and switch off when it starts to boil. Serve with porotta, chapathis, bread, idiyappam, appam, rice etc.

## The Prayer Formula

Robert Hooker

1. Unload on God. Psalms 142. The Bible says pour out your complaint to God. Tell Him all of your hurts, your pains, your anger, your hatred, your sorrow, whatever it is that torments your thoughts and emotions. Buried feelings never die; they always come back to haunt you. So get them out of your system and vent on God. This is the easy part. The key is, do not hold anything back. You do this, not for God's sake, but for yours. He knows what is there, but you have to unload it if you want victory. He cannot do that for you.
2. Confess known sin. I John 1:9. When we have been unjustly treated, we do not feel there is anything for us to confess. We excuse ourselves from responsibility. But we are responsible for the emotions the pain has caused us and for the lack of trust that it has brought us to as a result. Whatever you unloaded on God in point #1, recognize the negative emotions the pain caused and confess them. Hatred, bitterness, jealousy, anger, cynicism, distrust, skepticism, worry, anxiety, depression, disbelief- none of those emotions are from God. They are negative emotions that torment our hearts. Do not justify them! Let them go!
3. Forgive. The offender, God, yourself, others. Matt. 18:21, 22. Forgiveness is an act of the will. It is a decision not a feeling. Forgiveness does not exempt the other person from receiving justice; it simply relieves you of the burden of exacting the justice yourself and allows God to deal with them in His way, in His time. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay." Believe Him and let it go!
4. Erase the Pain. Ps. 51:10. This is the most difficult step because there is a feeling that if we ask God to erase the pain then we will never be vindicated for the way we have been treated. If you outwardly forgive but inwardly continue to harbor negative emotions, you may have forgiven the offender but you are not trusting that God will vindicate you. You are choosing to become your own defense attorney and keep the evidence so you can remind God that He has not come through yet. This is wrong and is

evidence of lack of trust. It is essential that you let go of the evidence and ask God to erase the pain of the memory. Ask Him to not let your mind instantly replay it or associate it with other similar wrongs again.

5. Access the Fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22, 23. There are 9 fruits of God's Holy Spirit that you have access to any time you need them. The Bible says against such there is no law. In other words, ask and He will give, no strings attached. Any one of those nine fruits will combat any negative emotion that you are dealing with. You do not have to fight this battle alone! I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me. If you are combating hatred, ask for love- the love Jesus would have if He were in your shoes. If you are combating anxiety, ask for peace- the peace Jesus would have if He were in your shoes. If you are combating anger, ask for meekness- the meekness Jesus would have if He were in your shoes. This is the most important step. Do not do the other four and not do this one!
6. Ask for grace to obey God's revealed will. Rom. 16:20. Ask God for grace because the battle is going to come again and you must be ready. Satan never goes down without a fight. When the testing comes, two choices- one good and one evil- will be available. Make the right choice! God will give you a command either from His Word, from a Godly teacher, or from a man of God. Do not second-guess the command. Obey it! Just do it even if it does not make sense. Trust the orders. The second you choose to obey, you will feel God fill your soul with Holy Spirit power enabling you to follow through with the command. The filling will not come until you have made the choice to obey.
- It is vital that you repeat this prayer formula as often as you struggle with hurt, pain and negative thoughts or emotions. Some of us have a lot of junk buried and relief is not going to happen in one single session of prayer. We have to push delete on those images in our minds every time they pop up. Therefore, every time they appear, deal with them thru prayer/meditation and eventually they will not be there anymore. ■



# GOD'S FAVORITE FRAGRANCE



Gwen Plauche

Have you ever really thought about the miracle of smell? How can there possibly be enough variations in perfume smells to produce the hundreds of different brands available?

I have a favorite perfume. What I just do not understand is why dear hubby believes that slick salesclerk who swears that some less expensive brand smells just like my brand, but I can tell it is not the same! No imitations accepted!

The power is released when someone smells the fragrance of Christ. I love, love, love it when Christ has revealed Himself to me, especially during a crisis. I always try to address it as the fragrance of Christ and remind myself that He is on the premises.

Scripture teaches us about God's favorite fragrance and He does not like imitations either.

2 Corinthians 2:14-15 But 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. For we are the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

Wow - the fragrance of the knowledge of Him - the aroma of Christ - have you ever considered what aroma you are giving off?

My Great Grandmother lived in a home full of aromas. She was frequently baking apple pie or stewing down some fresh okra. As I sat down on her worn out couch, I would be surrounded with that musty-old-things smell and the ever-present mothball smell when she pulled things out of her closet. My favorite aromas from Grandma Craig are somehow captured on the pages of her Bible. Perhaps it is because her Bible was open so much that the smells are still captured in there. It is amazing to me that today, twenty-plus years after her death, I can open that old white KJV Bible, hold it up to my nose, close my eyes, and imagine Grandma sitting right next to me. The power of aroma!

As a woman today, we need to be alert as to the fragrance we leave behind. Is it one that our loved ones will cherish when they get a whiff of it years after we are gone?

So to have the fragrance of the knowledge of Him, what does that smell like? Just like my dear 14-year-old son gets a special fragrance after his lacrosse matches, we also get a fragrance from

the activities that fill our days. Consider yourself a purveyor of fragrance, ladies, spraying it on all around. The real question is what fragrance have we been filling up with?

Ephesians 5:1 says, "Be imitators of God as dearly loved children." This is not a "who died and made you king" attitude. Instead, fill your days with love, long-suffering attitudes, merciful and gracious actions.

The next verse from Ephesians says to "live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Many of us just bounce through life, but as aroma bearers of Christ, we must choose purposefully to love. Do you speak love? Do you act love?

Think of walking through your house, past your family with the bottle of the aroma of Christ. It is up to you whether they smell it or not. That touch, that time spent together, that hug, that special note, those favorite cookies - it all smells of Christ.

The power is released when someone smells the fragrance of Christ. I love, love, love it when Christ has revealed Himself to me, especially during a crisis. I always try to address it as the fragrance of Christ and remind myself that He is on the premises. When you are aware of His aroma, you aware of a love that passes all understanding but do not see Him, be reassured that He is there.

So picture a cute purse atomizer. It is empty until you fill it. Then, it is up to you to spray the world around you. Spray the aroma of Christ - let those around you realize that He is near. ■

There is a joke that fits this topic fairly well. It goes something like this. There was a person whose neighborhood became flooded. He ended up on the roof of his house. The waters continued to rise so he decided to pray. "Oh God, please rescue me from this disaster and spare my life." Suddenly a man showed up in a rubber raft. He said, "Hey get in. I have enough room for us both." The man on the roof said, "No thanks, I know God will rescue me." A few minutes later a person in a large boat shows up and says, "Come on down and climb in my boat." However, the man on the roof said, "No thanks, I know God will rescue me." Then a helicopter hovered over his house and threw down a rope and said, "Tie the rope around you and I'll lift you up and out of here." But the man on the roof said, "No thanks, my God will rescue me." The waters rose and the man drowned. When he showed up in heaven God was there to meet him. The man asked God, "Why didn't you rescue me?" God answered, "I sent three people to rescue you, but you turned them all away!"

How many times have we all prayed for God's blessings? How often have we become frustrated at ourselves for not doing the right things that bring God's blessings into our lives? I asked God. "I know I get frustrated, how does it make you feel?" He then showed me "God was standing

## Mishandled Blessings

Steve Countryman



at a door of a house. His arms were piled high with gifts or blessings. They were all gift wrapped and all different sizes. So many gifts that you could not see His face. He rang the doorbell and waited for someone to answer. He waited but no one came. They all had their reasons for not answering the door. One said that it was not for them because they were not expecting any blessings right then, the timing was not right. Another one said that it could not be for them for they were busy looking out the window at the road because their blessings could only come that way. Yet there was one who answered the door and said that there were too

many blessings and no place to put them. Another one came to the door and looked out at all the blessings and said that they were the wrong blessings and closed the door." What a terribly sad sight that was! Our preconceived ideas of God's blessings are part of the problem. What our blessings should look like, when our blessings should show up, from whom our blessings should come from, and how they are supposed to come are some examples. How many times have we closed the door on God's blessings?

It pleases and blesses God to bless His Children. Psalm 84:11 "For the Lord God is a sun and shield;

the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless". John 10:10, "I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance" (to the full, till it overflows). Ephesians 3:20 "Now to him who is able {and willing} to do immeasurably more than all we ask {think} or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" .

Immeasurably more you cannot dream big enough. You cannot imagine large enough. You cannot think great enough of all of the blessings that God has in store for you! One thing that I am slowly starting to learn is that with such great and powerful blessings that God is pouring out, that I need His wisdom to manage those blessings correctly. To utilize, to share, to organize, to prepare, to invite, to invoke, to cherish, to be thankful for and to praise God for. Not to be wasteful, not to be arrogant with, not to ignore, not to assume, not to abuse, not to misuse, not to lose, not to complain about, not to be proud or flaunt about and not to tell God how to. We must aim to stay in that constant state of awe and thankfulness over God's goodness, His giving heart, His generosity, His wisdom, and His compassion.

Thank you Lord for all of your blessings, all that you do and provide and for being my God! ■



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