

TheSenses

What does God smell?

We have five senses, sight, touch, taste, hearing and of course smell.

What are senses?

There are the data collectors for the body.

Why do we need data collectors?

Because without data we cease to be able to function.

They give us critical insight into the various basic dimensions that we as humans operate in.

SIGHT gives us insight into the visual dimension of our surroundings for both pleasure (a beautiful flower) and warning (a charging lion).

TOUCH gives us insight into the tactile dimension and much more close up picture of our surroundings, both for pleasure (sun warming our cold skin) and warning (the kettle is hot).

TASTE gives us insight into the flavor dimension and even more close up picture, both for pleasure (the first coffee in the morning) and warning (the milk is off).

HEARING provides insight into the audible dimension of our surroundings both for pleasure (Led Zeppelin's Stairway to Heaven) and warning (there's a car coming).

And lastly, what's left?

SMELL, gives us insight into the olfactory dimension both for pleasure (the smell of the coffee beans for the first coffee in the morning) and warning (the milk is off).

As humans we don't need all five to function and all of us have varying interpretations to each of the dimensions (it's green, not its blue) and usually, as we get older, the sensitivity does wear off anyway.

However the point is, the sensors are our data collectors.

They give us critical input that we need to function in this most complicated world that we find ourselves in.

Let's take a step back.

In whose image were we formed?

In God's of course as the Bible shares with us:

Gen 1v27

*²⁷So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

So now it gets interesting

Have you ever thought about what senses God has?

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Can He **see** for example?

2 Chr 16v9

⁹*For the **eyes** of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him ...*

—

Can He **touch**?

We'll for touching we need go no further than Jesus who had a lot of personal contact with people during His time on earth.

Mat 8v1

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ²A man with leprosy¹ came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

*³Jesus reached out his hand and **touched** the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.*

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What about taste?

There is not much in the Bible about God tasting anything.

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What about hearing?

We know He can hear from these words in Isa:

Isa 59v1-2

*Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save,
nor his **ear** too dull to hear.*

*²But your iniquities have separated
you from your God;
your sins have hidden his face from you,
so that he will not **hear**.*

—

And lastly smell, can God smell?

Yes He can and it seems He really enjoys it.

Noah's sacrifice

God is sensory and we are made in His image but if we read the Bible it appears that smell is the one sense that is mentioned more than the others.

We first discover God's enjoyment of smell in the OT.

Noah has just left the ark and the first thing he does is build an altar.

Gen 8v20

*²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹The LORD smelled the pleasing **aroma** and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every*

inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

I had to read through this one a few times to get the magnitude of what happened.

Noah finally leaves the ark after approx 370 days and a cataclysmic world wide event, the flood, intended to, “*wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground*”, according to God in Gen 6v7.

Put yourself in that position today.

Makes our concern whether our local coffee shop has our brand of beans in stock and other issues that we consider important, look a little petty.

The point is, feel the moment.

Life on earth has died.

Noah has had a year to think about what happened.

His thoughts could have gone in any direction.

(Put ourselves in this position, 2013 move our business to Capetown, 2014 move back to Jhb but keep up our relationships here, 2015 move back to Ct and keep up the relationships in Jhb, and we have stayed in as many places.

God, what are you saying, what are you asking, what do you want from us)

Noah had his questions, he was human.

Remember his life had also been totally uprooted.

No more favourite coffee beans for him.

No more favourite anything, mattress, friends, work, anything, life ended.

One year in a boat with countless animals, smelly animals, producing waste that was even more smelly. I cannot even comprehend the logistics of all the animals and the size of his workforce.

Needless to say he had a lot to consider.

The waters go down

He leaves the ark.

He could have done many things because he surely would have felt that life owed him.

But no, he focused on one thing.

The first thing he did was build an altar and sacrifice clean animals to God.

And what happened next?

²¹*The LORD smelled the pleasing **aroma** and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.*

God smelled the aroma and made two decisions.

Remember, before the aroma, no decisions.

Decision 1 - Never curse the ground again, in spite of what people will do in the future.

Decision 2 - Never again destroy all living creatures.

Because of a smell, the aroma.

Or was it the smell.

Or was it what the smell represented?

In this case it represented the heart of Noah, who, in spite of everything that had happened to him, worshiped God first.

No complaining.

No me time.

No demands.

No questions.

He was about to start a new phase in his life and a sacrifice to God was the way to go.

And because of his devotion,

God made His decisions

And our lives have been transformed ever since.

Before the aroma - God's plan was, if man messes up, flood the world and start with the few who were faithful.

That was the plan.

Then came the aroma.

And God probably thought, "This man has got it. In spite of everything he went through, the first thing he did when he was able to, was sacrifice an offering to God and hence the aroma.

Maybe God thought, "if this man got it, maybe there are others who can get it as well".

So no more cursing the ground and no more wiping out unrighteous mankind.

The power of a smell, an aroma.

Thank you Noah.

OTsacrifice

And that is only the beginning.

What followed in Exodus and Leviticus was a description of the various offerings made to God and burned on the altar, all of them a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma presented to the Lord.

The source of the aroma was often meat and fat but could also be grain and oil and flour and incense, all of which constituted, "*an aroma pleasing to the Lord*".

So what were these various offerings?

There were five type of offerings.

- The burnt offering (Leviticus 1; 6:8–13; 8:18-21; 16:24)
- The grain offering (Leviticus 2; 6:14–23)
- The peace offering (Leviticus 3; 7:11–34)
- The sin offering (Leviticus 4; 5:1–13; 6:24–30; 8:14–17; 16:3–22)
- The trespass offering (Leviticus 5:14–19; 6:1–7; 7:1–6)

These offerings were either Voluntary like the:

- Burnt offering - expressing devotion and commitment to God or used as an atonement for unintentional sin. This could be a bull, a ram or a bird.
- Grain offering - to express thanksgiving to God in recognition of God's provision and goodwill towards the person making the offering and would take the form of a cake or baked bread and often accompanied by a drink offering of wine.

- Peace offering - a sacrifice of thanksgiving and fellowship followed by a shared meal and could consist of an unblemished animal and/or various grains or breads.

OR Mandatory like the:

- Sin offering - to atone from sin and cleanse from defilement and could consist of a young bull, a male goat, a female goat, a dove or pigeon or fine flour, depending on your financial circumstances.
- Trespass/Guilt offering - to atone for unintentional sins that required reimbursement to the person sinned against and would always be a ram.

This was for the individual.

What about corporate offerings.

- There was the daily offering of two lambs
- The monthly offering of two young bulls
- The Passover with its offerings of bulls, a ram, lambs, flour and oil
- The Feast of weeks with its offerings of bulls, a ram, lambs and new grain
- The feast of Trumpets
- The Day of Atonement
- The Feast of the Tabernacles

What is the point?

The question is, how often would each of you be at the altar with an offering, either voluntary or mandatory.

Now multiply that by the nation of Israel and what do you get?

Picture it.

What should have been the perfect scenario.

In a fully functioning, tied to God community like Israel, there would be a continual smoke of sacrifices, rising up from the Tabernacle and later from the Temple, a pleasing aroma to the Lord, representing a nation that was in a state of continual obedience to their God.

Jesus' sacrifice

So here we sit, thousands of years later and we ask ourselves, "Does God still sniff the air waiting for the smell of a burnt offering?"

I would say Yes and No.

No we are not required to burn animals on the altar anymore.

Yes, sacrifice is still happening.

Except it has become a lot more personal.

In the OT when you had to atone for a sin, you had to take a goat and cut it's throat, you had to feel the effect that your sins had, it required the shedding of blood and you had to shed it.

But the Law could never be kept perfectly and it required the sacrifice of the last and perfect lamb.

Rom 3v25

²⁵*God presented **Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,**^m through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate **his** righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

And His sacrifice was also received as an aroma.

Eph 5v1

*Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ²and walk in the way of love, just as **Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God***

The Bible says Christ gave himself up.

He could have been Christ in Heaven but he gave himself up to be a man on earth.

And so Christ, the lamb of God was offered as a sacrifice of atonement.

A fragrant offering and sacrifice to God

It set the stage for a change in how the aroma of obedience that reaches God is generated.

From the burning of an animal sacrifice to the offering of our own bodies as a living sacrifice.

An aroma

A warning

Something is coming.

A decision has been made.

A life has been given up.

In Noah's day, his sacrifice and the heart behind it, the aroma it produced changed the way

God thought about the process of dealing with Mankind

He was a kind of shadow Christ.

When Jesus was sacrificed, He was a fragrant offering.

But this time the effect was universal and changed everything.

It was the perfect and therefore last sacrifice. And sins past, present and future were atoned for.

And we all sit here as beneficiaries of it.

And as last series asked, “And now what?”

Where does this whole business of sacrifice and aroma and fragrance have to do with me?

Mysacrifice

I’m glad you asked.

Because the art of sacrifice hasn’t stopped.

Paul reminds us what it is about.

Rom 12v1

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to **offer your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ²Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will*

Here’s the thing with a sacrifice.

There is not much left when it’s burned up.

Paul says that in the light of God’s mercy, meaning, remember what God has allowed in spite of who we are

Therefore

We are to offer our own bodies as a living sacrifice.

Which leads to

God considering it holy and pleasing, a true and proper worship

Here’s the thing, the one leads to the other.

If we don’t get God’s mercy and the affect it has had on our lives then the result is no sacrifice, no desire to please God.

When we get God’s mercy, we joyfully offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, which is then holy and pleasing to God.

What is the evidence of this?

You start smelling good to God.

And what smells good to God?

2 Cor 2v14-16

¹⁴*But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread **the aroma of the knowledge of him** everywhere. ¹⁵For we are to God **the pleasing aroma of Christ** among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.*

¹⁶*To the one we are an **aroma** that brings death; to the other, an **aroma** that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?*

And by now we know what produces aroma.

Sacrifice.
A burning up.
Something must die.
Just like Jesus said, *"Whoever loses their life for me will save it"*. (Luk 9v24)

Again we start with thanking God.
He uses us to *"spread the knowledge of him everywhere"*.
Here's the cool bit.
When we share the knowledge of God.
It creates an aroma.
Guess who can smell it?

Because when share about Jesus,
Allowing ourselves to be used by God,
*"we are to God **the pleasing aroma of Christ**"*
Did you get that?
When we share about Jesus, God is enveloped by the pleasing aroma of Christ.

So every time you smell something, think about God and what smell represents for Him, the life of a disciple rooted in Christ and living a life of obedience to Him.