



**Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice.**

*Proverbs 27:9*

### **Good smells and good advice**

Walk by Bath and Body Works at the nearest mall, and you will be bombarded by vanilla, fresh rain, and summer berry (whatever that is). Step outside on the Fourth of July, and it's likely you'll be able to tell that someone in your neighborhood is grilling. Smell is a funny thing. A good smell can lift our spirits. A bad smell can kill our mood. Solomon compares good advice to a wonderful smell.

At times, our friends need our counsel, but our advice isn't very good or very godly. Someone wrongs them, and you are filled with rage on their behalf. "You should totally get back at them!" Your friend wants to do something you know is wrong, but you want to be supportive, so you blurt out: "You should do what makes you happy!"

Sometimes you are the one who needs good advice but get bad instead. You needed someone to tell you a hard truth, but the people around you just told you what you wanted to hear.

Later in the aftermath of bad decisions, the smell of this bad advice makes us sick to our stomachs. Why didn't we just say/seek the right things? A cloud of stink only enhances our misery.

Jesus gives the best advice. To the guilty and burdened he advises, "Come to me and find rest." To the fearful and anxious he says, "Cast all your anxiety on me." To those wrestling with relationship issues he says, "Love as I have loved you." To those who are feeling lonely he says, "Know that I am with you always." To someone about to do something harmful to their souls he says, "Be careful that you are standing firm on what I've taught you." These pieces of wisdom are so good, they are better than even the smell of summer berry (whatever that is). They are so valuable because they come from God himself.

What does Jesus teach us here about wisdom for our friends? 1) Make sure your advice is well grounded in God's Word. That's yet another reason to make Bible study a priority. 2) Surround yourself with friends whose heartfelt advice comes from a heart where Jesus makes his home. I thank God for friends over the years who told me exactly what I *did not want to hear* and kept me from making terrible mistakes in the heat of the moment. 3) Be the friend and surround yourself with friends who tell you about the love and forgiveness of Jesus. I'm so grateful to God for friends whose wisdom took me back to Jesus' cross and empty tomb again and again. The fragrant smell of their words still brings me joy to this day!

**Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, only you can teach me to be a good friend. Help me not only give sound, biblical advice but also surround myself with people who will do the same for me. Amen.**