

You Smell Like Where You've Been

2026-03-29 • PASTOR MATT ROSE



2 Corinthians 2:14-16

FOR THE LEADER

These questions help you run the conversation. They are not your study. Get into the passage yourself first, because your group needs what God taught you, not just a list of questions. These also lean on Sunday's message, so a few will not land for anyone who missed it. Watch it before you lead.

WHAT THE MESSAGE WAS ABOUT

Air freshener covers a smell. It does not clean anything. Pastor Matt preached Palm Sunday with that image, and with an unexpected text: 2 Corinthians 2, where Paul takes a Roman victory procession and puts believers in it, not as the conquering general but as the captives led behind Christ, spreading his fragrance wherever they are taken. The Palm Sunday crowd waved branches on Sunday and turned on Jesus by Friday. Their praise was air freshener over something never cleaned. What actually changes the smell that comes off a person is time with Jesus.

To get started

- What smell instantly takes you back somewhere?

Looking back at the message

The air freshener image does a lot of work. Start there before the passage.

- 1 Air freshener covers a smell. A cleaner removes it. Where do you see people, including yourself, choosing the air freshener?
- 2 The same crowd waving palm branches on Sunday turned on Jesus by the end of the week. What does that tell you about the difference between praising Jesus and following him?
- 3 Pastor Matt said he would rather see people transformed than incrementally better informed. Which of those two have you been pursuing lately? OPTIONAL

Looking at the passage

Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 aloud. It helps to know a Roman triumph included captives.

- 4 Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. Where does Paul place believers in the victory procession, and who is leading it?
- 5 Paul says the same aroma reads two different ways: life to some, death to others. Why would one fragrance smell so different to two groups?
- 6 Verse 16 ends with a question: who is equal to such a task? Why do you think Paul leaves it as a question?
- 7 Jesus called some people whitewashed tombs, clean outside, dead inside. How does that image sit next to the air freshener? OPTIONAL

Bringing it home

Being led rather than leading is uncomfortable. Let that be uncomfortable.

- 8 Paul describes being led in the procession, not marching in front of it. How does that compare to how you usually picture following Jesus?
- 9 Pastor Matt said what people notice about you is a byproduct of time spent with Jesus, not of effort. How does that match your experience?
- 10 Where are you tempted to manage how you come across instead of dealing with what is underneath?
- 11 Is there a relationship where you have been quietly hoping the difference in you would speak for itself? OPTIONAL

The group together

He was pointed about faith being communal. Keep this practical.

- 12 Pastor Matt said he is tired of hearing that a person can do faith alone at home. What does being together actually add?
- 13 If the same aroma reads differently to different people, what should we expect when we talk about our faith?
- 14 Who is around you often enough to notice a change in you over time?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

What have you been covering rather than dealing with, and what would dealing with it begin to look like?

You might pray about

- For cleansing rather than cover
- For those in this group whose faith feels performed right now
- For the people who are near us often enough to smell the difference
- For willingness to be led rather than to lead

