



April 2008

## Pack Your Purse with RESPONSIBILITY

### Feature: "Life's Sweet Aromas"

Scents are all around us...some good, and some bad. Many evoke memories from our childhood. During early Roman times, a conquering hero would bring back the treasures from his victory in a procession of triumph, burning incense to the gods all along the way. II Cor. 2:14 states, "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". Our witness is the sweet incense that spreads its fragrance to the world around us. Being the sweet aroma of Christ is a great responsibility, as verse 16 says, "...who is equal to such a task?" The answer is found in II Cor. 3:5, that explains "Not that we are competent in ourselves...but our competence comes from God". Prepare for your meeting by filling vases with cut flowers so that the fragrance fills the room; or if fresh flowers are not in your budget, use scented candles. Try the following activities: Place items with strong aromas in unmarked containers. Use fruit such as oranges or lemons, vegetables like onions and garlic, scented candles and lotions. Have everyone smell the containers with their eyes closed and try to identify the items. Use scented candles or bath products as prizes. Have each woman share a scent that evokes a special memory, a funny story, or even a life-changing event.

### Outreach Idea:

Increase your visibility in the community surrounding your church by planting tulips or potted plants. In small groups, go door to door and offer to plant tulip bulbs or other plants in each yard. Let the homeowner choose where to plant and offer to plant three or four bulbs for them free of charge. Invite the homeowner to visit your church, and, if there is a woman in the house, invite her to go with you to your next women's ministry event. (*Idea taken from "101 Ways to Reach Your Community" by Steve Sjogren*)

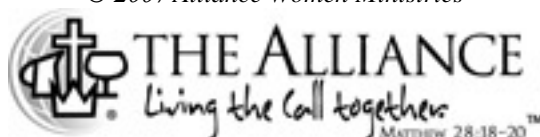
### Prayer Tip:

**Pray** that we would *be* as well as serve. **Pray** that we would desire to *be* holy. **Pray** that we would *be* in the vine. **Pray** that we would *be* filled with the Holy Spirit. **Pray** that we would *be* continually surrendering our selves to the Lord and submitting to Him. **Pray** that we would *be* faithful. **Pray** that we would *be* praying and not just talking and thinking about it.

### Discipleship Thought:

When we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are not only His disciples, but we are a part of His family. Jesus made it clear that the members of His family are those who do "the will of the Father in heaven" (Matt. 12:50).

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## Good to Go in the Dominican Republic

By Julie Stutler

Being physically fit is a priority to professional women in the Dominican Republic. Gyms and exercise classes are extremely important parts of their lives.

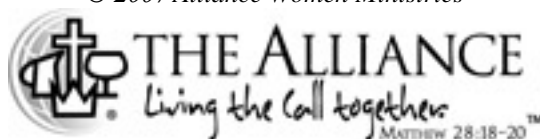
In 2003, God opened a door for us to join a sports club with the hope of sharing Christ's love. Clad in old exercise pants, a college tee shirt, and my outlet store Nikes, I enthusiastically headed for the Club to join the aerobics class. As I opened the door to the aerobic room, I quickly realized that I was walking into a different world. I found myself in the midst of very stylish professional women who even wore make up and accessories to aerobics. These ladies were fit to go in many ways. Physical fitness was a priority in their lives. Waiting for the instructor to begin, they were gathered into groups engaged in animated conversations. I tried to greet the ladies and quickly looked for a place at the back of the room. I could neither keep pace with the exercises nor the conversations. Everything about me from my North American lack of rhythm (Latin women are definitely better at aerobics!), to my clothes, lack of makeup and accessories, and social status, screamed that I was an outsider.

Four days a week, I would go to aerobics and try to become a part of the group. Hard work and friendly smiles didn't seem to make any headway into building friendships with this very close-knit group of ladies living in a very different reality than mine. God had given me a desire to share His love. Yet nothing seemed to be happening. As my very American body would fumble through the Latin rhythm aerobic routine, my heart would cry out to the Lord to allow me to be a blessing. After months of being an outsider, I was ready to throw in the towel. I didn't seem "good to go to engage this world."

God who "is able to make all grace abound to us" had other plans. When the ladies began to organize a Christmas party, I felt a nudging in my heart to do something extremely North American and offer to bring cookies. This was received with unbelievable enthusiasm. One lady, who didn't even know me well enough to know my name, told everyone that I was an expert in cookie baking. With the pressure of being acclaimed an expert baker, I prayed that these Christmas cookies would be special. Walking into the Club, in high heels and dress clothes carrying a huge plate of cookies, I was nervous, but also thrilled to be invited to the party.

I quickly became friends with the ladies who all wanted to learn to bake cookies. One lady organized a cookie baking class. Seventeen ladies enjoyed a time of cookie baking and sharing together. Along with the recipes, I also included a note that expressed my heartfelt prayer that our friendships could grow and that all would know of the love of Jesus, which is sweeter than cookies.

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God answered that prayer. As I became a part of this group, I came to realize that most had been together as friends for many years. They even referred to each other as sisters. God made his grace abound and grafted me, a North American from a drastically different social and cultural background, into this sisterhood. As they let me into their world, we shared joys, laughter and tears.

Monthly social gatherings to celebrate birthdays and holidays became a part of my regular schedule. Initially, I would meekly ask to share a simple reading, usually from the Bible, or have a prayer for food. Now, they ask me to bring the "inspirational readings" and insist that no social time passes without prayer.

One of my dreams was to be able to have a Bible study with these friends. In January of 2006, I proposed a weekly time of "spiritual exercise" after the aerobics. The ladies responded very enthusiastically and our "Spiritual Exercise Time" was instituted. God has blessed in tremendous ways. Each Tuesday, several ladies stay after the class to discuss the Bible and share prayer requests. The discussions are fantastic. Many of the ladies have expressed that this has been the first time that they have ever studied the Bible. They are so hungry and enthusiastic to know God's Word.

What an incredible joy it is now to focus with my aerobics "sisters", not just on becoming physically fit, but spiritually fit as well. God has done awesome things that only He could do. He has blessed me with wonderful friends and has given me the joy of sharing His love with my precious "aerobics sisters."

When I joined the class, I focused on all the things I didn't have and how I didn't fit in. I am still from a different cultural and social class, and definitely don't have that Latin rhythm nor sense of style, yet God made HIS grace abound in me and gave me all I needed. What I needed was to trust Him and let Him work as He chose in HIS time. It is truly all about God and HIS grace. He makes us good to go and HE engages our world.

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