

The Hebrew word translated as sweet has the meaning of pleasant and desirable.

נָעִים nar yeem

If you look back on your life, you are bound to remember many pleasant and desirable spots and things.

Maybe your first pay packet was pleasant and desirable: [Hand out chocolate coin] I was told sugar is a fixative. Apparently, it helps to fix things in our minds. I tried it while studying. Maybe it will help you to remember something I say today ... or someone.

There are many visual representations of sweet spots, both religious and secular. (Show examples)

Today I want to explore with you the possibility that there is a spot of spots, the sweetest spot, which is more than what these models suggest, more than a place, more than the intersection of feelings, opportunity, talents, gifts and recognition or rewards.

What is the focus of these models? Who do they center on? What place does Jesus have in these concepts?

When people look at diagrams of sweet spots, they are usually wanting to take a closer look at themselves, and their environment. Right? They want a sweeter life. Maybe they are asking the question, "What are my gifts and what should I be doing?" When you look at models of the sweet spot, ask yourself these questions: Is this life I live mine? Are my gifts and ministry all about me? Is God interested in our work or our leisure or how we worship? Can Jesus be Lord of every aspect of our life? If so, what weight do the models give His opinion on the matter? Do they bypass the relationship aspect of **asking** God about what He has in mind for us?

Do we need to know about God and His realm?

Of course. We are born into the physical world. I was born in NZ and this map I have is a good illustration because the land we are born into is more than just land. It had history and culture etc. (Put dark glasses on.) You didn't know you were born with glasses on did you? We see the world through them – "Me, me me. I'm, the king of the castle and you're ..." Me me me. You? Huh? (Show expletive card. Look in mirror, Poke tongue out.) Ugh. (turn mirror over) Mirror Mirror on the wall, I am better than you all. Right? No? (Expletive card.) Maybe we weren't as bad as that.

When we are born again, the glasses are removed. We "see" there is a world where Jesus is the king. Everything is so much lighter. We see more clearly. We accept Jesus's role as king and enter this realm. Then we are baptized by the Holy Spirit and we receive power (dynamis Acts 1:8); which enables us to become Christ's witnesses, co-heirs and co-workers, people no longer about our own business, concentrating on the pleasures of the physical world, but the King's domain: the kingdom of God. Hallelujah!

“Unless one is born again, he cannot see [perceive] the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

The kingdom of God is like the Old Testament promised land. It's a good land flowing with milk and honey. Does this sound like a sweet place?

We don't see much of it to begin with. It becomes more and more visible, real, and treasured as we get to know the king. It grows, like a mustard seed and its visibility and sweetness can too.

Lets look at some verses that suggest sweetness as a characteristic of the Kingdom of God. Each read the verse given.

The Lord is sweet:

Psalm 90:17 “May the favour/sweetness of the Lord our God rest over/among us; establish/firmly found like an unshakable dynasty or building, the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the work of our hands”

The work of our hands can have eternal fruit when we make room for the sweetness of the Lord to rest among us. How can you do that?

(Testimony. The Lord sent me on a mission in Israel and Turkey: part of that mission was like the task Joshua gave his men. “Go and walk through the land and describe it ... So the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven divisions in a book ...” I took photos to describe the land and published it in a book, but the sweetness of the Lord resting among us was part of that mission ... that wasn't always easy.)

The word of God is sweet

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Psalm 119:103).

The laws and commandments are sweet:

“More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults ...” (Psalm 19:10).

Light is sweet

“Light is sweet” (Ecclesiastes 11:7). “Your words are a lamp to my feet, a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Jesus said while He was in the world He was the light of the world (John 9:5) and now He is in us by His Spirit and we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).
(Testimony of light)

The fruit is sweet

Words: Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. ... Kind words are like honey--sweet to the soul and healthy for the body. ... (Proverbs 16:24).

The sleep is sweet

... When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet (Proverbs 3:24).

I asked the Lord to confirm the message I had prepared and He began to. One day He said, "Come and sit with me." I did, then opened my bible and the Psalm I was up to was Psalm 90. The following psalm, 91 caught my attention too. It's is believed to be an amulet poem, that was read so a person could feel God's guarding power.

It has a promise: **He who sits/remains/abides in the shelter/hidden/secret spot of the most high, lies at night/lodges the night in the shadow of Shaddai** (Shaddai is translated as almighty but comes from the word for female breast). It has the idea that those who seek His refuge, His company during the day are given it at night as well. Like a baby at its mothers breast. Isn't that a sweet spot?

(Show prayer shawl and talk about it. Tallith means little tent –little tabernacle. Wings.) When Jesus spoke about going into your closet and praying, He was referring to the secret/ hidden meeting place beneath the **prayer shawl**. Tassels and fringes – reminder of the commandments and not chasing after the **lusts of their own hearts and eyes**. Hand out Psalm. You may like to read this before you go to sleep at night.

Unity of the brethren is a sweet

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! (Psalms 133:1) We are going to do something to encourage this. It is more blessed to give than to receive and what do we have that hasn't been given to us? Take a box open it and bless the person whose name is inside with the blessing in the card. Then come back and I'll continue.

Do any on you play computer games? I don't encourage you to, but one I play is a good illustration of the sweet Kingdom of God within us. The aim is to spread the crimson jelly over the whole area. Each level is like a new task and there are new tasks created every week. You never reach the end of the jelly kingdom. (The kingdom of God is eternal) On some levels, there is an opponent, the jelly Queen, whose aim is to spread her jelly (yellow). She's like the enemy, Satan, who wants **strongholds (castles)**. (Testimony: replace lie with truth – forgiven). He wants to cover the land with his works and lies, and hide God's Kingdom and His truth, (such as the goodness of the natural world, because it also declares the glory of God). The jelly we spread is royal jelly that tastes good, heals and feeds the hungry. Us first. We work with Christ to cover the territory within making aspects of the kingdom visible. Some tasks/levels in the game cannot be accomplished without marvelous and almost miraculous explosions that reach more areas than we can touch in one go. I liken them to the wonderful things God does, that make it possible for us to achieve the task He sets before us. In the game, if we are touching the jelly, we can spread it. If we aren't we can't, and even the miraculous explosions won't increase the coverage. In God's kingdom, if we aren't tasting the goodness of God, we cannot spread it.



Miraculous explosions maybe a better way of understanding what we have translated and call the gifts of the Spirit.

There are three words that have been translated as gift: **pneumatika**, spirit (spirituals) or **charismata** – undeserved graces or **Dohreea** which is gift like a present.

Ephesians 4:7 “To each of us is given gifts (Charis, graces) according to the measure of the gift (doh ree a) of Christ”.

Christ is the gift. He is our birthday present. We receive Him on our birthday when we are born again into His kingdom.

Charismata is what we are empowered to give in many ways. Prophesying, tongues, healings, miracles etc. are vehicles of the grace and favour, the sweetness of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:31 “Be zealous about the greater charismata (gifts)”

1 Corinthians 12:4 “There are a variety of charismata (gifts)”

pneumatika

1 Corinthians 14:1 “Pursue love moreover be zealous for **spirituals** (gifts of the Spirit) especially prophecy”

1 Corinthians 12:27 Paul doesn't want people to be ignorant of the (**Spirituals**) gifts.

Paul said, “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you spirituals (some spiritual gift), to the end you may be established” (Romans 1:11).

Dohreea The word for gift (domata) as in presents is used when referring to the gift of righteousness, Christ, the heavenly gift and the Holy Spirit.

“and you will receive the gift of the Holy” (Acts 2:38).

People are given as gifts. Ephesians 4:11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. (The word gift is implied.)

God gives people to the church as apostles, prophets, shepherds, evangelists and teachers. They are given to help each Christian grow up into the full measure of Christ. The aim is that everyone attain unity and grow up into the fullness of Christ Himself (Ephesians 4). The gift of people are given so that Christ can fill, make complete, all.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). How many ways Did the Spirit work through Jesus?

The reason I want to talk about the three words for gift is, Christians often think of the gifts as the natural or spiritual abilities we have, as though we own them. We can tend to think of them as if they are ours and they are what we can do, **rather than thinking of them as the dynamite power of the Holy Spirit being visible through us**. We often limit what we think God will use us in because we think we have this or that gift or function. The full measure and stature of Christ, is not one gift or function such as prophet is it? Christ is where we're heading. We are growing up into Him.

Why is our view of ministry and gifts important?

It is so easy to gaze at ourselves too much and at others and think because we have the same gift, we should minister it like them. I did for years. I was a preacher, not a pastor and I missed opportunities. By the time I heard God telling me to shepherd His people, the pastoring door that had been opened to me before, had closed. I was a preacher and I looked at the way the church did this and presumed that was how God wanted me to do it. He showed me over the years that there are many ways to preach a sermon, including one on one encounters like He had.

Testimony of word and water Whose ministry is it?

Although what we call gifts are supernatural, there are things we can do in the natural to be a more effective tool for Jesus. If the Lord wants to use us in the area of teaching or preaching, we need to prepare ourselves by studying the Scriptures. Remember what Paul said to Timothy – don't neglect the reading of Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13) and study to show yourself a workman approved of the Lord (2 Timothy 2:15). Tongues - practice them daily, silently and out loud, sing in them - to build yourself up and keep yourself in the love of God (Jude 1:20).

What if we viewed what we call gifts as Christ in us being visible to the world, or us letting others experience the amazing and wonderful grace of the Holy Spirit, or partnering with God so His will, His kingdom comes on earth.

Can you see the difference in focus? One focuses on us, the other on Christ and what he wants and His ability. Is it about us using our gifts or Christ being able to reveal Himself through us?

“As each has received charisma (a gift, undeserved favour) employ it in serving each other as good stewards of the Charitos (grace) of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

Do we need to Know ourselves?

There are many quizzes that can be done that aim to show you your gifts and function. I've done some. The churches I've been in, have done some. They won't show us all that **God intends us to be**, only what we may be now, and how God may be using us at present.

The quizzes can be helpful, but they are usually based on **stereotypes**. **Take care not to be anxious if you do them. And don't let them cause you to bypass a relationship with Christ.** Ask Him about what he wants you to do. Ask Him how to do it. **Don't leave the Lord of tasks out of the equation.**

Hear the longing of God's heart for intimate fellowship. Out of this fellowship, you'll discover your next step on the path.

Some verses from Numbers 14

The Lord said to Moses, “Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which **I am giving to the Israelites ...**”

Some of the men returned and said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are ... We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them ... If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness!”

Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the **Lord is with us**. Do not be afraid of them.”

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: “How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say ...’

Some looked at themselves and grumbled. “I am not strong enough. I am not able enough, enabled or gifted enough.” They didn’t listen to God’s word – “I will give it to you.” They left God out of the picture and so He gave them what they confessed – “It would be better if we died in the wilderness.” They did. **What do we confess?**

Caleb and Joshua’s mission was to discover what they could about the Promised Land.

Who did Joshua and Caleb look at? Themselves? If they had just looked at themselves, they probably would have seen the same grasshoppers the rest saw, but they didn’t. They looked through the lens of God’s past provision and **promise**. **“I will give it to you.”**

They knew something of the enemy. They had spied out the land.

They knew something of God. They knew the promises of God that were first made to **Abraham** (Genesis 15:18-21), **Isaac** (Genesis 26:3), and **Jacob** (Genesis 28:13). They had witnessed God’s miraculous ability to help in the wilderness.

They also knew something **about themselves**. **The Lord was with them.**

Looking at ourselves and our gifts and skills may give us an inkling of how God may be using us today, but take care with this approach. You may end up **limiting** yourself to your **area of comfort**, when God wants you to step out into deep waters, where only His skills are needed, where the world can see Him and His explosive power.

Testimony: In the 70’s, when God told me I would be preaching and praying for people, it was way beyond my skill set. It had never entered my head that I would be doing that. I didn’t even have the boldness needed to pray out loud in church. Knowing His plan enabled me to persevere in gaining the skills I would need to accomplish this task. If I’d looked at my skills, I would never had pushed through the barriers for women preachers in those days. I have since used all what we call gifts of the Spirit over the years and you can too as you grow up into the full stature of Christ.

Looking at ourselves and present skills and empowerments can be useful in helping us to know that everyone is **unique**. But it's not so much what we are given that's unique, but how we use it –how we minister. (Testimony of a preacher/shepherd/helper).

Look at your strengths, but, take care not to limit ministry areas. As a teenager, the Lord said, "You are my song bird." I played the guitar and sang. However, He that wasn't the only thing He had in mind for me for the rest of my life. The assignments He's given me have changed. We can see ourselves as intercessors, prophets, teachers, or helpers etc and limit ourselves to those areas, when God sees **a world that needs all that He has** and longs to share.

Looking at our strengths may help us have a right assessment of our present capabilities [Romans 12:3], but take care, God promised He'd give the Israelites what they confessed, what they believed.

Once I was worrying. What do you want me to do God? God said, "What do you want to do?" I was amazed that God would ask me. On this occasion God wanted me do what I wanted to do. Sometimes, knowing what some call our sweet spot – the things we like doing and do well are just what Jesus wants us to do.

Sometimes it isn't. Being crucified wasn't a pleasant or an easy mission, yet Jesus knew the Father had made that appointment for Him. So he headed towards Jerusalem at the appointed time and wouldn't be diverted from that destination. We too are called to lay down our lives and **be living sacrifices**. Romans 12:1
Sometimes Jesus wants us to do what **needs to be done** rather than what we want to do (Testimony: Do you want me to stay?).

We know God leads with peace and joy, but sometimes it's peace and sorrow. Knowing what is right can give peace, but as the proverbs says, great wisdom leads to great sorrow.

Take up your cross and follow me. Doing the loving thing isn't always easy. It isn't always pleasant, but a sweet spot is knowing you are doing the right thing and Christ is always there. He's in it with you.

And ... If I am crucified with Christ, and He lives in me (Galatians 2:20), which is the sweeter spot looking at me or christ?

Do we need to know our enemy?

In the jelly game there is an enemy. The **Enemy** of God's kingdom wants us to see the physical world and enjoy its sweetness and its pleasures, more than God's kingdom. He wants us to concentrate on what **makes us happy**, rather than on **knowing Christ** and His will. He has a strategy and weapons. His aim is to take and make strongholds, like in the jelly game where he covers the area with his jelly. He wants to blind people to Christ and His kingdom. So he wages war.

What are his weapons?

There is work for us to do in God's kingdom. There is territory we need to take and maintain. It is serious business. The king's land is at stake. Sometimes we forget we are on the king's business. We find we are working for ourselves instead of him. What do we spend all our time working for? To pay a mortgage?

Testimony: Our daughter's practice of not living for money.

We are in a war zone. There is more at stake than just our lives. The spiritual world is watching to see what God's love is like. He is showing His character through us His children (Testimony: death and resurrection, Turkey Israel).

What if?

What if we set out to equip ourselves for what is needed, in the part of the world we can influence, instead of looking at what we can presently do?

What if we bloomed where we're already planted and made that a sweet spot?

(**Testimony:** My husband stayed in accountancy although it was boring. He didn't make it a sweet spot, but he endured it to provide for me and the children, because he believed that was his purpose. (The assessments he did always pointed to him being an accountant, but that is because assessments tend to ask questions about past successes.)

We often hear the words, *God is with us* and sometimes it's as though He's tagging along where we go. What if we asked, like Andrew did, where Jesus was staying and said to Him, we want to stay in that spot too, even if it's in the rubbish dumps of the world?

Sweet? How comfortable is holiness or dynamite?

Testimony: I saw what was the effect of my prayer and declaration in the spiritual realm. I felt the deep love that God had for each of the people there. So I raised my hand and prayed that each one would know how much God loved them. I saw the terrifying holiness of God go forth as I prayed that they would know the deep love that God has for each one of them. It was like a pure clear white frothy wave and the demons were screaming as it swamped them. Underneath was water so pure it was like a knife cutting me. It was terrifying and yet the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. Sweet? Certainly desirable. Comfortable?

What if we seek to work in the area of our strengths and Jesus says to us, "The grace (gift) of me is sufficient. Power (Dynamite) /marvelous work is made perfect in weakness? (2 Corinthians 12:9)"? Trials enable testimonies of God's ability to help.

Jesus has secret/hidden things to share with us. Intimate council both sweet and fearful. Is the Lion comfortable? The lamb may be.

Seek first the kingdom of God, not what we want, or are able or like doing, although we may find we are given every desire of our hearts as well.

“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:17).

What do you think is the sweetest spot? Is it be a place or could it be **a person**? Might it be Christ Himself, as word or Spirit or Spirit-word, or vision?

“You will make known to me the **path of life**; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In your hand there are pleasures forever” (Psalm 16:11).

Have you ever noticed how often Jesus said, I am? When people want to walk in God’s paths, He says I am the way or road. He is the good and pleasant place. When people were wowed by the temple, He spoke of His own body as greater. He is our dwelling through all the generations.

With Our old glasses on we see our homes as physical places. Just recently, I was thinking I’d like to build a house next time we move and the Lord reminded me “I am your dwelling place.”

“In Your presence is fullness of joy; In your hand there are pleasures forever.” Does this sound like the sweetest spot? His presence.

The key to the sweetest spot is not gratification now, but the grace of the gift of Christ Himself, and us **remaining** in that place with Him, so the sweetness of His rule, His kingdom can become visible and He can fill/satisfy/complete all.

Right from the beginning satisfaction or filling has been God’s intention. He sent Adam and Eve out to satisfy or fill up the earth and He still sends us out to satisfy the world.

Now he has given us the power to do so. The Holy Spirit, Christ in us.

“Go forth and satisfy the earth with the sweetness you have within you. The satisfying, filling, sweetness of the Holy Spirit, Christ in you.”

