

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

31. How to Bloom Where You Are Planted – Part 1

You are listening to episode 31 of the Encouragement for Real Life podcast, How to Bloom Where You Are Planted - Part 1. Thank you for being here. Goodness, spring is on its way, isn't it? Can you feel it? Boy I can, and let me tell you, I cannot wait. Are you excited for spring as I am? It'll arrive officially in a couple weeks, and with its arrival, I tend to let out a sigh of relief with the reality that winter is behind us. As we look to spring our thoughts may turn to planting, and blossoms, and blooms, and the landscape of earth turning green and lush again. But the earth isn't the only thing that can bloom in this season. It's not the only thing that can grow and blossom right now. We can as well, and actually, we are encouraged to. This is the subject of this week's episode. Hang with me here for the next short while as we discuss blooming right where we are. Let's find some encouragement for our real lives right now.

Spring. What images come to your mind when you think of spring? Maybe green grass, blooming daffodils and tulips, buds on trees, a freshness in the air, and a time to resume outdoor activities (especially for those of us who have been cooped up all winter long here in the Midwest)? Earth comes to life in spring, and each year it does, I stand in awe of God's marvelous creation.

Soon green will replace the dried brown that covers our lawn. My crocuses that have popped through the dirt will burst with color and my daffodils will soon follow. Buds will begin appearing on the trees and bushes, and yes, the warmer weather will begin stick around for a while.

I'm giddy with excitement thinking about it all.

I love spring. Spring is a of sowing, planting, and growing. Not only for the earth, but maybe it's also a season of growth for ourselves. Stretching, sprouting, flowering, growing. Because we are encouraged to bloom, right where we are. Right where we are today. In our real lives right now. We don't have to wait until the kids are grown, or for our dream life, or for life to slow down. (Because, really, will life ever slow down?) You and I don't have to wait to bloom until we have more money, or until we receive the promotion, or for the timing to be perfect. (Because, really, will the timing ever be perfect?)

No, you and I can bloom beautifully right where we are.

So, what does that even mean?

What does it mean to bloom where you are planted?

Some may think it means to make the most of your current situation. Kinda like making lemonade out of lemons.

Some may describe it as doing the right thing. Making good choices.

Others may think of it as becoming the person God designed you to be. Maturing in your faith through grace.

And others may see it as a pathway to accepting who you are, right in this moment.

I don't think any of these are incorrect. In fact, you may think of something entirely different than these when it comes to blooming where you're planted.

I looked up the word *bloom* for us. Dictionary.com defines bloom as: to produce or yield blossoms; to flourish or thrive; to be in or achieve a healthy state of beauty or vigor; to glow with warmth or with a warm color. Thesaurus.com adds: develop, prosper, open, bear fruit.

Blooming where we are planted is thriving where we are. It's flourishing where God has us. It's bearing fruit and making a difference in this world. It's glorifying God in all we do.

When I think of blooming where I'm planted, I can't help but think of myself as a plant. Or maybe a flower. My favorites in spring are tulips and daffodils. I think of God as my Master Gardener, and He's got a rather large garden He cares for. I'm just a small flower in a big garden.

If you've gardened, you know full well all that goes into planting and maintaining a garden. As the Master Gardener, He goes to great lengths to care for each plant/flower. He does all He can to help it grow into its full potential. After all, He formed each seed Himself and He knows how beautiful each one is.

Isn't it amazing how a flower blooms and how each one is different and unique? With the proper care, adequate water and light, and maybe some fertilizer too, over time the flower transforms from a little seed into something amazingly beautiful. And, when each flower is blooming in the garden, the garden is simply breathtaking.

Each one blooms where it is planted.

Kind of like you and me. I invite you to picture yourself in His garden today as a beautiful flower or strong plant. See yourself placed strategically and perfectly to grow in the Master Gardener's care. Not only are you beautiful and strong, you are unique. No other flower or plant is like you. You are designed to bloom in the ways only you can. As you do, you add your own uniqueness to His garden. It glorifies Him and it benefits others.

You made my whole being; you formed me in my mother's body. I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way. What you have done is wonderful. I know this very well. Psalm 139:13-14 NCV

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God loves each of his plants/flowers (meaning you and me) in His garden. He loves all of His creation! If He didn't, He wouldn't have created it. And He designed each one of us to grow, to flourish, to bloom in special ways. He places us where we'll grow best and as we do, we help others grow, too. When you and I bloom where we are planted, we are doing what God designed us to do. And that gives Him glory and points others to Him.

The garden radiates with color when we each bloom, right where He has planted us.

The garden is beautiful when you bloom where you are planted.

You'd think this term or idea of "bloom where you are planted" is in the Bible. Because it sounds like it could originate from God's Word. But it's not. I looked. I scoured. It's not even clear who first coined this beautiful phrase. But I did find a few verses that support this notion and way of living. They are full of encouragement and hope to bloom where we are in our real lives right now.

Blooming by the faith we've been given:

So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. 2 Peter 1:5-7 MSG

Blooming by what's sown:

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 2 Corinthians 9:6 NIV

Blooming by not giving up:

So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Galatians 6:9 MSG

Blooming is God's work:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered the plants, but *God* made you grow. It's not the one who plants or the one who waters who is at the center of this process but God, who makes things grow. 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 MSG

Blooming in God's ways:

For as the earth bursts with spring wildflowers, and as a garden cascades with blossoms, so the Master, God, brings righteousness into full bloom and puts praise on display before the nations. Isaiah 61:11 MSG

These verses encourage us to allow God to grow us, mature us, and to enable us to bloom in how He designed us to. These are listed in the show notes for your reference if you'd like to dig into them a little more. They are beautiful, aren't they?

I walked along the east side of our home over the weekend, and I got a bit excited about what I saw. The crocuses and the daffodils Mom and I planted next to our home years ago have popped through the ground. Green leaves, just a few inches tall, stood waiting to bloom with color.

I followed the sidewalk to the flowerbeds on the north side of our home, but no green could be found. Anywhere. Only brown dirt and dried remnants of last year's flowers greeted me. The daffodils or crocuses were still asleep within the earth. This got me thinking about location.

Location matters in blooming.

The flowers on the east side of our home always bloom much earlier in spring than those on the north side. Every single year. Yes, location makes a difference. It directly impacts a plant's growth and blooms. When a flower that needs full sun is planted in the shade, it just won't bloom to its potential. Same goes for a flower that needs the protection of shade. If it's planted in the full sun, it will soon wither and likely die. Where a flower is planted matters.

So, do you suppose our location affects how we bloom, too?

Take for example my son. When he graduated from high school a number of years ago, while many of his buddies knew what direction they were headed in life, he had no clue. I remember hard conversations we had regarding his unknown future and the stress he experienced of having what appeared to be no direction.

So, after praying and searching, he enrolled in our local community college the following fall. And soon he was soaring. Not only did he find his passion there, but doors began to open, and he found his direction.

His location mattered.

The classes my son enrolled in and the experiences he encountered at that particular college, pointed and positioned him down a fulfilling and thrilling path. God placed Zach in this location to open his eyes to a bright future. He went on to a 4-year college where again he experienced incredible opportunities, and he is now blooming in a career he enjoys and thrives in. Plus, God opened doors for him to begin his own photography business and has blessed hundreds of people through Zach's gifts and talents through his camera lens.

Thousands have a similar story. A being-in-the-right-place-at-the-right-time kind of story. Not a coincidence, but a perfect plan revealed at just the perfect time. And blooming followed. Maybe you have a similar story or maybe this describes your experience. Maybe because of the location God had you in, you've bloomed abundantly, and you continue to bloom.

Or quite possibly, you feel you fully haven't bloomed yet. But you know it's coming. You know God is working behind the scenes, growing you, maturing you, guiding you. It won't be long, and your blooms will be in full color.

No matter where you are in the blooming process, it's okay. Give yourself permission to rest in this truth. You'll bloom when you're supposed to, in the ways you are supposed to. You'll bloom right where God wants you to bloom and when He wants you to bloom.

One of my favorite verses describes just this.

And don't be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God's place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. 1 Corinthians 7:17 MSG

Sure, this verse refers to relationships, but we can believe God has us right where He wants us. We don't need to second-guess. God knows where we will bloom best. He knows what's best for us. And if God wants to move us, He'll let us know. For now, we can confidently bloom right where we are. For our growth, for the good of others, and for His glory.

Will you pray with me?

Father God, we praise You as our Creator, our Sustainer, our Hope, and our Joy. Thank you for designing each one of us intricately and uniquely. We are in humble awe of how magnificently You formed each of us. As we are discussing blooming where we are planted today, we trust You with where You have us. We desire to bloom where You have planted us, with the gifts and talents You've blessed us with. Please help us shine bright for You and point others to You. May we bloom for Your glory. Lord, and if where

we are isn't the place for us, show us. Move us. Prompt us to be aware of Your leading. We are listening and paying attention to You. I especially pray for each one listening to this podcast right now. Meet the needs of each one and remind each one how very much You love him or her. Guide and encourage each one today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

In our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook, this week we are continuing the discussion of how to bloom where you are planted. I invite you over to join in the conversation and to be encouraged. The link to this fun group is in the show notes.

I invite you to subscribe to, rate, and review this podcast so others can find this encouragement as well.

And come back next week as we will continue in this discussion, part 2, of how to bloom where you are planted. We will discuss how comparing ourselves to others affects how we bloom, how to bloom when life isn't easy, and what happens when we've been replanted. Come back to be encouraged.

I am cheering you on, friend. Bloom right where God has you this week. God bless you.

Julie Lefebvre