

197. While You Bloom: How to Flourish Where You Are

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure, your host. Life is remarkable, sometimes raw and always real. And some days we could use a little extra encouragement for our real lives. Here you'll find that, along with personal life impacting stories, helpful life hacks, timely inspiration, biblical insight, and a fresh perspective.

The Encouragement for Real Life Podcast equips you to be a light in this world and to shine bright wherever God has you. I'm glad you're here today.

Julie Lefebure: Well, welcome to Encouragement for Real Life. Last week we kicked off this new series of Bloom Where You're Planted and we took a deep dive into what God may be doing in the seasons before blooming, which is sometimes a hard season. [00:01:00] And we also normalized how we can feel buried when we don't see any growth or progress happening in our lives. It's a, it's a common feeling. And you know, just because we can't see it doesn't mean God's not at work.

Today we pause to appreciate growth. The growth that God is doing right where we are, in the places that He has us right now. It might not be where we expected or where we wanna be, but it's where God has us right now.

We know His plans are best for us, right? And we remind ourselves of this truth in this episode. Friend, don't miss what is growing in you right here, right now, and what God is doing in your life. In this episode, you'll learn how to flourish right where you are. So let's find some hope and encouragement in this episode together.

[00:02:00]

Julie Lefebure: If you could be any kind of flower, what would you be? My flower gardens are full of my mom's flowers. She she had quite the green thumb, and people from all over town would compliment her on how wonderful her flower gardens were. And she spent a lot of time out there weeding and caring for them and just making sure that they were growing. She did have some beautiful flower gardens and I'm so grateful that she lovingly planted some of her favorites in my flower gardens here at our home. You know, she did that before she passed away in the fall of, of 2006. And each spring and summer when those perennials start to peak through the ground, it just makes my heart smile. And all summer long when I get to enjoy the same flowers

[00:03:00] that came from the plants of my mom's flower garden, it just almost takes my breath away.

I, I absolutely love our backyard that it blooms all spring and summer. And if you follow me on social media, I, I end up sharing probably a lot of the blooming flowers. And this year is no exception of how beautiful they are already popping up and, and, uh, some have already bloomed and some will be blooming soon. I'm not as gifted though with flowers, with growing them, as she was. I don't have quite the green thumb as she did. But I'd say keeping them alive this long might just say something, right? So maybe I have a little green thumb. But nothing like hers.

But regarding the flower that I would like to be you know, I wouldn't mind being a Lily of the Valley. Do you know what those are? They smell amazing and their little white, bell shaped flowers are just so [00:04:00] delicately beautiful. Plus I remember that they were my dad's favorite. They were my dad's favorite flower. And he was not a flower loving kind of guy. So that kind of makes 'em special too.

But the only downside to these flowers is that they only bloom in early spring, and at least mine do, and they don't bloom for very long. Maybe three to four weeks max. So, yeah, there's upsides and downsides to that. But I also wouldn't mind being a Zinnia. I don't know if you know what a Zinnia is, but a Zinnia might be my favorite because of their varied colors and shapes and that they bloom really all summer long. Last year, my Zinnia flower beds, I had two full flower beds of just Zinnias. I just sprinkled them on the ground and I watered them. I had so many Zinnia plants, they bloomed all summer long. And the fun thing was that I was able to pick some, cut them and put [00:05:00] them in a vase inside our home. So there's a benefit to being a Zinnia too.

But no matter what kind of flower you'd like to be, the truth is that if it's cared for properly, each flower does what it's designed to do. It blooms, right? Right where it's planted. It doesn't wish it was someplace else. It's just happy to bloom. It does what it's supposed to do.

But what if a Lily of the Valley came to me one day and said, I, I want to be planted in the sunshine like my friend, the Zinnia. From experience, I know that Lilly of the Valleys, that they grow better in shady areas. And, if I moved it to a sunny spot, well it would likely suffer and it will probably die. And the same goes for a Zinnia, who loves the sun or partial sun. If I moved it to a, to a shady space, because maybe it wanted to [00:06:00] be in the shade, it wouldn't

flourish as well as it could. And so there is a proper place for each of these flowers. And there's a proper place for us too.

But don't we do this too? Don't we sometimes wish we were planted elsewhere or in a certain location that maybe someone else is blooming? Or that we were designed differently. Maybe we wish we were designed differently, maybe like someone else. Oh, I wish I had her blank. I wish I had her this or that.

You know, one thing though I've never seen or heard a flower do is compare itself to another. It just blooms. What if we simply did the same? You know, God has us right where He wants us. He knows what's best for us. He's got good plans and, and purposes for our lives. And He knows what conditions and situations that we'll thrive the best in and, and how we will [00:07:00] grow to our fullest potential.

And the thing about Him is this. He won't give us anything than his best. If you've been around on this earth for any length of time, you already know that. That He won't give us anything than His best. Even when our ideas of what's best may be different than His. Trusting God in our blooming seasons and in our blooming spaces sometimes takes courageous faith. I know. I get it, but that faith always pays off.

I'm reminded of the scripture in Jeremiah chapter 17 and this is verses seven and eight. And in the New Living Translation it reads, "But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a river bank with roots that reach deep into the water. Such [00:08:00] trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green and they never stop producing fruit." Hmm.

When you and I, when we keep our Lord as our hope and confidence, we will produce fruit even if we think we should be blooming someplace else or like someone else. God knows what He's doing friend. God is using you right where He has you. Do you know that? Can you see it? He's blooming good things in you, right this very moment.

And you know, if you've been around here for, um, I guess a year or any sort of time in the last few months, you may remember how God impressed upon my heart last summer to rest. You may remember too, that it was not what I wanted. It was not what I wanted to do. I thought last summer was gonna be a very productive [00:09:00] season in my life as I was ready to begin writing my next book. But every time I sat down to write, sat down at this desk to write, the

words would not come. And I couldn't force 'em because I knew they wouldn't be God's words. They would just be my words that would fall flat.

So eventually surrendering my will for God's I continued with my normal work responsibilities and other responsibilities, but instead of pursuing my next book, I rested in God's presence. I walked outdoors more instead of maybe inside here, inside our home on the treadmill. And I ate my lunch in the sunshine on the back patio instead of here at my desk. And I even took a 15 minute nap here and there whenever I felt like my body needed one. That's not like me. And it felt strange, [00:10:00] but I knew it was what God wanted me to do in that season. And I knew His will was better than mine, even though I really wanted to follow my will.

But I was reminded one day of the, the Bible verse that I chose at the beginning of the year. And I always choose a, a Bible verse along with a word for the year. And this one was Colossians chapter one, verse 10, and in the New King James version, it says this, "That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

I slowly began to understand that I was fully pleasing God by walking in His rest. I was still bearing fruit as I did that. I was still bearing fruit, it was just not the fruit that I thought I would be bearing in that summer. Not the fruit that I wanted or expected, [00:11:00] but the fruit that I needed.

And I learned that rest was not laziness. It was not wasted time. That rest was preparing me for the next season. And God used that quiet season to deepen my, my roots in Him. To really get down deep with Him and my faith to grow. And He showed me that just because I couldn't see the growth didn't mean that it wasn't happening. He was shaping my heart, strengthening my trust, and preparing me for something that I couldn't see yet. And I was blooming in a way that I didn't expect. And you know, looking back now, that season was far from wasted. I would consider that it was holy ground, and I'm grateful for it.

And now as I, I read that Colossians verse again from last year and [00:12:00] place it next to the Jeremiah verse that we just looked at, you know what I notice? Is that they both speak of bearing fruit. You know, and this is what happens when we trust God in the blooming. We will bloom perfectly and will bear fruit when we're in God's unique will for each of us. And I love how He can use scriptures in His Word to confirm, you know, even something from last year He confirms that in me today. That we are bearing fruit, we are bearing fruit even if we don't feel like we are. Even, even when we don't see it happening, God is at work bearing fruit.

And as in the case with me, sometimes we have an idea in our minds of what the blooming is supposed to look like. When we aren't blooming in that particular way we think that we're not blooming at all. But in reality, God is already working. He's [00:13:00] blooming us in ways that we may miss if we're not paying attention to it or if we're looking for something else. We may not think we're blooming, but in God's eyes we are.

I mean, think of all the ways that He's blooming you today. Through quiet faithfulness. In the moments you choose obedience over comfort. In your unseen prayers, when you whisper trust, even though you don't have the answers. Through the way you love others. Every kind word, every act of grace, it's blooming something eternally beautiful. When you show up despite your feelings. He honors your willingness, not your perfection. As you renew your mind in truth. Each time you reject the lie and speak life instead, something magnificent [00:14:00] grows. Through surrender and trust. When you release control and let Him lead, your roots deepen. In your waiting seasons. Waiting isn't passive, as I learned last year. It's where He strengthens your faith and your patience. When you forgive. That hard act of letting go and forgiving, it softens your soil for something new to grow. In your worship. Even when life is heavy, lifting your eyes lifts your spirit. Through small daily yeses. Your small steps matter more than you know, and God multiplies them in ways you can't expect.

So just look at all the ways God is blooming you to flourish right where you are. Just because you may not think you're blooming, doesn't mean that you aren't. You are friend. Look around [00:15:00] and notice. See how He's blooming you right here, right now.

I've come up with three truths to remember while you bloom, and while we may be in this season of blooming, even when we don't feel it. But the first one is, excuse me, there's purpose in this part. You don't have to wait to be fully grown, to be impactful or valuable. You don't have to be in fully bloom. You, you, you know, blooming sometimes come in stages. So embrace this season that God has you in. He is using it for your growth, for the good of others and for His glory. And it's a good thing that we don't bloom all at once actually. Because we bloom a little at a time and beautifully, a little at a time. All thanks to God.

The second is your roots still matter most. Return to that Jeremiah passage that we just read. You know, it's important to keep in mind that our roots matter more than our [00:16:00] blooms. We stay connected to our source, God, through time with Him and reading His Word, in prayer, in worship, listening to His voice. And when we do, as that passage says, we won't be bothered by heat

or drought and our leaves will stay green. And we won't stop producing fruit. The deeper the roots, the stronger the growth.

And the third thing is to keep showing up to the light. You know how flowers grow towards the light. God sees you showing up even when it feels hard or uncomfortable, or even invisible. Sometimes growth comes from surrendering daily, the daily ins and outs of our lives. Kind of like I had to surrender last summer. But even small acts of faith and obedience are a part of growth and the most encouraging part. The most encouraging thing is that those small, [00:17:00] seemingly insignificant acts do not go unnoticed by God. So keep growing towards God. Keep growing towards the sun.

Friend, while you bloom, God is using this part of the process to shape your purpose. So what might God be doing in you and through you right now? Even if you don't feel like you're in full bloom?

If this message speaks to your heart today, well, I have some resources that may support you while you bloom, such as my books Right Now Matters, or the Right Now Matters Bible study, my one-on-one Abundant Life Mentoring, and the tools that you'll find in my free resource library on my website to help you keep growing in Christ. You'll find all of these in the show notes. The links are there. You'll find them there.

And if you live close in location to me, I invite you to our [00:18:00] next Women's Evening of Encouragement in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It's on Thursday, June 5th from 6 to 8:00 PM at A Place for Friends. That's where I normally hold my events. And this one is titled, The Life You Long For: Living Fully in the Here and Now. You don't have to wait for the perfect moment to live the life that God has for you. We'll discover how to live fully, freely, and joyfully right where you are. The thing is there's only 25 seats available and tickets are \$25, so if you want to attend and feel inspired that you could just use some encouragement right now, you'll be able to find all of this information on my website, and the link is in the show notes for this as well.

Would you pray with me?

God, thank you for what You do, uh, in us and through us. Lord, you are blooming us right [00:19:00] now. Right now as we listen to, uh, Your call, Your words, Your voice, Lord, we know that You are blooming us. It may not feel as if we are blooming in the ways that we want to, but Lord, Your ways are more perfect than ours. We can trust You in the blooming. We can trust You in the journey, and we know that Your plans and Your purposes are good for us.

So, Lord, meet us in these areas today. We thank You for the blooming that You're doing. Help us to bloom beautifully, for Your glory and for the good of others. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Oh, it's good to remember isn't that God is with us in every moment. In every detail He cares. A journal prompt. You know I've been giving some journal prompts lately. A journal prompt today regarding this subject could be, What fruit or beauty do you see God bringing out in you in [00:20:00] this current season? Let me say that again and I'll put it in the first person. What fruit or beauty do I already see God bringing out in me in this current season?

Friends, you're not blooming too slowly, you're not behind. You are exactly where God has you. He's planted you for this specific time in this specific place. And while you bloom, He is with you.

Thanks for being here today. If this episode blessed you, I'd love for you to share it to leave a quick review or subscribe so you, so you don't miss what's coming up next week. Next week we're gonna take it beyond the bloom. And we're gonna look at how God uses what's grown in you and me to make an impact in this world.

So I look forward to that, and I'll see you back here next time. Until then, God bless you.

[00:21:00] Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more@julielefebure.com and until next time, stay encouraged.