

Bloom Where You Are Planted

Air Dates: September 12-16, 2022

Day One

I wonder if you know where this is found in the Bible: *Bloom where you are planted*. Is it in the Psalms, or maybe Jesus said it? Do you know? Well, the truth is, you won't find that exact phrase in the Bible, but you will find the principle it teaches very clearly given in Scripture.

When the Apostle Paul said we should learn to be content no matter what our circumstances, he was saying "Bloom where you are planted." When Jesus said not to worry about tomorrow because tomorrow would take care of itself, he was saying "Bloom where you are planted." In writing to the Corinthian Christians, Paul said, "Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them" (1 Corinthians 7:17). He was admonishing those new believers to bloom where they were planted.

Not long ago I had an opportunity to talk to a senior citizen, Betty, who is blooming where she is planted. Betty is a widow and a mom of three grown children and lots of grandchildren. She is a Jesus-lover from way back, and at this stage in her life, she is finding creative ways to reach out to others with the love of Jesus.

Betty's husband died after a very long illness where she was his main caregiver. So she spent many years simply taking care of his needs. Now that she lives alone and is still driving, she has found a way to continue to share the love of Jesus with others. She goes to the grocery store every day. She said, "That way I don't have heavy bags to carry if I just get a few things each day. And then, I just go up and down the aisles of the store, to see who God puts in my path that day."

Betty uses her daily trips to the grocery store as a way to meet people, to offer encouragement, to pray for people, and to let them know that Jesus loves them. Almost every day she has an opportunity to speak to someone—mostly strangers—and simply offer a moment of caring and concern. She has story after story of the people she has met in this way, and how blessed she is to have this ministry.

Betty didn't complain about the effects of growing older, or the fact that she was alone now, or the aches and pains that occur as you age. She is just blooming where she is, bringing joy and a ray of hope to many people who just happen to shop for groceries where she does.

Day Two

What does it mean to "Bloom where you are planted"? You've no doubt heard this expression; in fact, some people think it is in the Bible. No, this saying is not found in the Bible, but the concept it teaches is very biblical.

It begins with the word "bloom" which is a verb—an action word—and it implies that you have to be intentional about this. Blooming means producing something beautiful. So, the first word—bloom—is a directive, something you must do.

Then it says, “where you are.” Do you often have the attitude that you would do so well if only you were in other circumstances? A different job, a better house, a more-understanding mate, better-behaved children, enough money, better health—just give you better circumstances, solve some of your problems, and then you can bloom. Instead of “bloom where you are planted,” maybe you think, “Put me in better soil and then I’ll bloom!”

Some years ago a good friend was planted in a job where some of her coworkers were unfriendly and prejudicial toward her. Instead of lowering herself to their level, or being angry, or vengeful, after much prayer, God led her to begin what she called “Project Love,” intentionally inviting these coworkers to have lunch with her, and in that way breaking down the barriers between them. It wasn’t long before these same people got to know my friend, saw in her the love of Jesus, and soon came to appreciate her and that was the beginning of some long and good friendships. She bloomed where she was.

And the last word in this saying is “planted.” Bloom where you are planted. When something is planted, it is placed there intentionally, right? It’s not just a wildflower springing up on a mountainside. Someone has gone to the trouble of preparing a spot, a place, where this seed can be planted. Being planted implies that something outside of itself had a purpose for putting that plant in that place.

You know, where you are now is where God has planted you. Oh, there may have been all kinds of circumstances, good and bad, that have brought you to the spot where you are now planted, but God has this marvelous way of taking us where we are and preparing the soil for us even there, so that we can bloom where we are planted.

Would you even today pause long enough to just thank God for where you are planted. I know, it could be a tough place, but the Bible says to be thankful in all circumstances, so by faith just thank God for where he has planted you and then ask him to help you bloom in that place.

Day Three

“Bloom where you are planted.” It’s not found in the Bible but it certainly is a biblical attitude. There’s a passage in Jeremiah that is a great example of what it means to “bloom where you are planted.” You’ll find it in Jeremiah 29, and it is a letter that the prophet wrote to the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Get the picture? They are God’s chosen people, now refugees who have been forcibly relocated in Babylon. And here is what Jeremiah wrote to them:

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

Jeremiah didn’t say that they should fight to get back to Jerusalem. He didn’t say they should just get by until God provided a way of escape. He said to make the very best of the situation they were in. This was a foreign culture; there was no temple in Babylon; it was a pagan culture, worshipping many false gods. And yet this is where they found themselves—this is where they were planted.

Notice that God told them that *he* had carried them into exile, not Nebuchadnezzar. This must have been an amazing statement to them. Their God had brought them to this terrible land? Why would God plant them there? It was hostile to their way of life, to their beliefs, to their God. And yet God made it clear that they were to bloom right there in Babylon where they were planted.

I am reminded that we who are Christ-followers are called foreigners and exiles in this world. Peter writes that we should “live out our time as foreigners here in reverent fear.” We are planted here, and

while we're here we should bloom for Jesus. The exiles in Babylon were to build houses, plant gardens marry, increase in number and seek peace and prosperity for the city of Babylon. They were to bloom in Babylon, of all places.

Are you blooming where you are now planted, or have you allowed the circumstances of life to destroy your will to bloom, to steal your joy? I want to encourage you to know that God can cause you to bloom in ways you've never imagined, if you will be willing to bloom right where you are planted.

Day Four

If you want to be inspired, just Google "plants that grow in concrete" and you will see amazing pictures of all kinds of flowers and plants that are able to grow in the most difficult, unlikely places. I was totally mesmerized to see lovely flowers growing out of cracks in a sidewalk, beautiful blooms popping up from a pile of old tires—picture after picture of plants that bloomed in the most unlikely and difficult places.

That's the challenge each of us faces to make the very best of where we are, blooming where we are planted. The children of Israel were captured and taken from Jerusalem to Babylon, and through the prophet Jeremiah, God told them to bloom right there. You'll find that story in Jeremiah 29.

But in Psalm 137 we find this sad passage:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? (Psalm 137:1-4).

Doesn't sound like they were blooming there in Babylon, does it? Their joy was gone; their song was dead; they had given up because they were in Babylon and not in Jerusalem. Notice that they had the opportunity to sing the songs of Zion, the songs of the Lord. They could have shared the truth about the true God with these pagan people, but their response was, "How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?"

Maybe that's where you are. You're in some place that you don't want to be—maybe you're just bored or tired or totally unmotivated, so you've hung your harp on a poplar tree, so to speak, and quit blooming. I've been there; I know how that feels, but I just want to encourage you to remember that there is a beautiful bloom inside of you, planted there by our God, and if you'll open a little crack and let his sunshine in, you can bloom right there again and his love will shoot up through that crack and you'll once again bloom where you're planted.

So, go get that harp you hung up on the poplar tree, and by faith—not necessarily by feelings—ask God to give you a song to sing right where you are, a song from the Lord even while you're planted in that place you don't want to be. You can turn your Babylon into a garden full of God's love, knowing he loves you and sharing his love with everyone around you.

Day Five

Have you ever had the run-away blues? The run-away blues are those days, those times in your life when you'd just love to run away. When the thought of going to the airport and catching the next flight out to anywhere else, rather than where you are, sounds like a really good idea. Run-away blues—who hasn't had those days?

David expressed it so well in Psalm 55. He was in a bad place then; his enemies were threatening him, his mind was a jumbled mess, his heart was in anguish and he was frightened. Now mind you, that was

the condition of King David, a man after God's own heart, who was chosen by God to be the King of Israel. I mean, come on, David, why would you want to run-away? But listen to what he wrote:

I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm" (Psalm 55:6-8).

David was doing what he was supposed to do, as God's-appointed king, and yet he longed to fly away and be at rest. Are you right now where David was then? Well, aren't you glad he was inspired by God to put his feelings in writing and leave them for you today? It says that you aren't condemned for feeling like you want to run away. Even kings have those times. But you have a God who cares and who can bring release and relief for you, right there where you are.

After expressing his run-away desires and fears to God, David then says:

As for me, I call to God, and the Lord saves me. Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. . . Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken (Psalm 55:16-17, 22).

I just want to remind you of these words of hope, from a king who wanted to fly away from where God had planted him. Even in the midst of doing what God has called you to do, you can lose your bloom and the enemy can steal your joy. If that's where you are, just call to God—cry out to him. Cast your cares on the Lord, and he will put a new bloom inside you, and your desert will become a garden where you're blooming again, and the joy of the Lord will again be your strength.