

Flourish in Life and Relationships

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*I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance
(to the full, till it overflows). John 10:10 AMP*

Abundant. *Plentiful. Lavish. Overflowing.*

That is the kind of life Jesus promises us. *Lots of it !!*

What image comes to mind when you think of ‘abundant’ life?

For me, it is *Flourishing. Prosperous. Thriving. Blossoming. Successful. Doing well.*

Jesus promises us this life, because we are hardwired to flourish, along with all of God’s creation – not just to exist and “get by,” or languish.

God’s desire is for us to live fully alive, overflowing with the emotions and virtues of His Spirit. He longs to lavish us with plenty of love, joy, gratitude, peace and hope.

Be Fresh and Flourishing

God’s loving and prophetic promise to Israel through the wisdom literature of the Old Testament is that we should be *fresh* and *flourish*, and embrace His *shalom* – wholeness and wellbeing. Right from the beginning of creation it was God’s vision to create order, harmony, tranquility, balance, and communion. All the fundamental forces of nature are directed toward our growth, beauty, transformation and harmony.

In the Bible, people are like trees and the soul is like a garden. These images call us to be vibrant with life, like a “tree planted by streams of water” (Psalm 1:3), sending roots deep down. We are to “flourish like a palm tree” and “grow like a cedar” (Psalm 92:12), bearing big clusters of fruit on a well-pruned vine (John 15:1–17).

We are also given descriptions of wild flowers blooming in luxuriant, vibrant growth (Matthew 6:28–30 THE MESSAGE), even blossoming in sparse, and yes dry, surroundings—like a rose in the desert (Isaiah 35:1) or a “lily among thorns” (Song of Solomon 2:2). Old Testament Scripture is full of these flourishing metaphors, and they are meant to reflect God creating us in His image, with the intention that we keep growing and flourishing through the seasons of life.

In Isaiah 35:1–10, we get a picture of what was once a wasteland becoming a place of abundance. In *The Message*, we read that the “wilderness and desert will sing joyously, the badlands will celebrate and flower—like the crocus in spring, bursting into blossom, a symphony of song and color.” Also, in Isaiah 41:18–20, the Lord promises, “I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the olive tree . . .”

These words are a proclamation of hope for you and me.

Be Vibrant, Fruitful, Full of Life

Regardless of our story or current state, you and I are designed for well-being in all areas of our life systems—our body, brain, mind, emotions, spirit, and relationships—in marriage, as parents, at school, in our work and community, in our churches, with our money, and in all our daily experiences. Even if we are broken in some way, we can still have the abundant life of the Spirit.

Unfortunately, we do live in a fallen, broken world, where life as it was intended to be is vandalized and violated. That is why Jesus came and why God desires that we always aspire to live and grow towards flourishing, as long as we have strength.

We each have our stories.

My journey, as well as yours, doesn't end with brokenness and languishing, or living from our fallen default self.

The rest of God's story with us is about His redemption and transforming plan to give us His *abundant life*. Most of the Old Testament prophets pointed toward this rescue solution: *Reestablish the shalom, freedom, and well-being that God originally intended.*

All the botanical metaphors in the Old Testament are pointing to the promise that when the Messiah comes, our desert places will bloom and flourish. This is what happens when the life of Christ and the Spirit of God come to us. In the New Testament, the new concepts of flourishing are *fullness, abundance, and fruitfulness.*

In the great prayer of Ephesians, Paul expresses the desire that “you . . . may be filled with the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19 NKJV). In the gospel of John, Jesus speaks of himself as the “good shepherd,” whose primary purpose was to provide a way for our lives to flourish: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

This new life in Jesus and the Holy Spirit is the freedom we have to become who we are intended to be. Our souls are continually being renewed “like the garden of the Lord” (Genesis 13:10). Then our flourishing life in Christ not only enriches us, but we become a blessing to those around us. When we flourish in life and relationships, we become an abundant, overflowing, fruitful source of life to nourish others as well.

Cultivate a Thriving Life

You can discover how to flourish in the midst of your current life challenges and a difficult world. It might not be what you think it looks like, but you can nourish the possibility of wholehearted, Spirit filled living more than you realize.

I have discovered that if we set aside time and make space to be in relationship with God, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be present to moments that nourish our soul, that make us feel most fully alive in God, savoring them and seizing them, we turn our heart and life toward what we are created for: the best, most authentic, flourishing self.

Like the restoration of a dilapidated garden, you can cultivate a life that is continually being transformed, redeemed, and restored to thrive with beauty and renewed potential. Pay attention and continually rediscover what the beautiful transformation of the life of Christ in you means for you.

It begins now, with the life you have to live, right where you are, made up of the moments of every day. Being fully alive with the vibrant life of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. What does that look like for you today?