

# Flourishing in the Test & Trials Season

## Flourish Even in the Hard Places

Have you ever noticed a flower that is growing through the crack in the sidewalk, or out of a cement wall? Just recently I saw a flower growing in the middle of a parking lot. How has this flower not been run over by shopping carts or cars or been stomped on by feet?

In Psalm 52, David is in a hard place, but he flourishes despite what is going on around him. And it is all because of his mindset; he declares **he is like an olive tree, flourishing in the house of the Lord** (Ps. 52:8). Perhaps David saw an olive tree as he penned these words, and used the beautiful, lush and abundant olive tree as a reminder to him to bloom where he is planted. In verses 8-9, David reminds himself of three things that help him to flourish even when life is hard.

1. He celebrates the presence of God, v. 8. He recalls the house of the Lord, a physical location that represented the presence of God. Despite the fact David couldn't actually go to the temple, he knew that God was near and present with him. He could flourish because no matter where he was, God was with him. Even when we feel alone in hard places, we can be certain that God is there.
2. He trusts in the character of God. Verse 8b says **I trust in God's unflinching love for ever and ever**. Unflinching means that it is reliable, steadfast, and constant, and is without error or fault. David is so certain of God's unflinching love he declares he will trust in it, to live in dependence, reliance and complete confidence in the Lord. In verse 9b he also says, **And I will hope in your name, for your name is good**. David is confident that although the circumstances and situation doesn't appear or feel good, He knows without a doubt that God is good.
3. He chooses to praise God. Verse 9a says, **For what you have done I will always praise you**. David is choosing to praise God, rather than to sit and complain about how hard life is, how unfair it all seems. He celebrates the Lord is with Him, He trusts in the character of God—His faithful love and goodness—and how God has done these things before in his life, so he is confident that God will come through this time as well. Trust in God's future faithfulness is rooted in gratitude for God's past faithfulness. What God has already done is a resume for what He will do.

I don't know about you, but I want to flourish—in good times and in bad times, in easy seasons as well as more challenging seasons. I want to be like the flower that pushes through the hard cement and blooms in the most unlikely of places.



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### Territorial Women's Ministries Department

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## Flourishing in Relationships: Conversation Starters

Here are some great conversations starters for you to discuss this month.

- ◆ What is your favorite thing about spring?
- ◆ What is your favorite flower and why?
- ◆ On St. Patrick's Day we wear green. What's your favorite green thing? Favorite green food?
- ◆ What was the high-point and the low-point of your day? Your week?
- ◆ Spring is a time of new beginnings. What is a new thing God is doing in your life?
- ◆ What is the best thing a Christian can do in the midst of suffering?
- ◆ When was a really hard time in your life, and how do you know God helped you through it?
- ◆ What Bible verses speak to your heart when you are going through difficult times?

*“God uses our trials to build our faith, draw us closer to Him, and give us a testimony of His faithfulness for others to see.”* Dr. Michelle Bengtson

### Additional Resources

Check out our website for more resources to help you flourish in the tests and trials season: <https://usw-womensministries.org/>

Bible Study: *Faith to Tackle the Storms*

Devotional: *Flourishing in the Tests and Trials Seasons*

Craft Idea: *Mosaic Tiles* can serve as a reminder that God takes our brokenness and makes it into something beautiful.

Flourishing Story: Read Major Deborah Greene's story of *God's Blessing in the Seasons of Life*.

## Praying In H.A.R.D. Times

When life gets hard, and the struggles keep coming, prayer sometimes seems to be the last thing we want to do. But during the difficulties, more than ever, we need to be turning to the Lord in prayer. Praying through the trials and the suffering isn't easy, but here are some keys to praying in and through the hard times of life.

**H—Hold onto God.** During the struggle season is **NOT** the time to give up God. Hold on tightly to Him, despite how you feel. Cling to Him and don't let go. *“I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.”* Psalm 63:8

**A—Admit your honest feelings God.** It is okay to be honest to God—He knows what you are feeling anyways. He gave you those feelings. If you are hurting, let God know. If you think the situation is unfair, it's ok to tell God. Got questions? Ask them as well. God can handle it all.

*“My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?”* Psalm 6:3

**R—Recall God's character.** No matter how you feel about the current situation, bring to mind what you know about God's character, and His ability. Keep reminding yourself of who God is. *“You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you.”* Psalm 86:5

**D—Declare praises to God now!** Don't wait until everything is good again, praise Him in and through the struggles. Despite what you are experiencing and how you are feeling, God is always worthy to be praised. *“But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.”* Psalm 59:16



*See what God's Word has to say about enduring hard times.*

## Flourishing in the Word

Trials, troubles and struggles will happen. Let's look to God's Word for how to flourish despite them.

March 1	Psalm 27:1-14	March 17	2 Corinthians 12:1-10
March 2	Psalm 32:7-11	March 18	2 Thessalonians 3:1-5
March 3	Psalm 46:1-11	March 19	2 Timothy 3:10-4:8
March 4	Isaiah 41:10-13	March 20	Hebrews 10:32-39
March 5	Matthew 5:10-12	March 21	Hebrews 12:1-3
March 6	Matthew 10:16-31	March 22	James 1:1-12
March 7	John 15:18-25	March 23	1 Peter 1:1-12
March 8	John 15:26-16:15	March 24	1 Peter 1:13-2:3
March 9	John 16:16-33	March 25	1 Peter 2:4-2:10
March 10	John 17:1-19	March 26	1 Peter 2:11-2:25
March 11	Acts 14:21-28	March 27	1 Peter 3:1-7
March 12	Romans 8:18-30	March 28	1 Peter 3:8-22
March 13	Romans 8:31-39	March 29	1 Peter 4:1-11
March 14	1 Corinthians 1:1-13	March 30	1 Peter 4:12-19
March 15	2 Corinthians 4:1-18	March 31	1 Peter 5:1-14
March 16	2 Corinthians 11:16-33		

### Flourishing Ideas from the Territory

**Gilroy, CA** enjoyed a cupcake decorating class. Pretty to look at, and tasted even better!

**Homer, AK** have cards laid out as you enter the sanctuary, so that people can take and write an encouragement to people who haven't been in attendance for awhile.

**Mat-Su Valley, AK** did a "Soul Healing Love" program and made bath salts and talked about the need for God's healing and restoration in their lives. **Salinas, CA** did the same program but made a soothing homemade coconut oil sugar scrub.

**Ridgecrest, CA** had two months where the theme was "How Great Thou ART" and each week they did a new art project such as made edible butterflies with fondant, yarn art creations, rustic crafts, painted with vegetables, and even made adorable 'painter's palette' cookies for dessert. In **Saipan**, many are struggling to feed their families. So the Envoy's wife, Annie, takes her fishing gear to the pier and assists interested people with the tools and know-how to catch their own fish and sends her catch home with those who most need it.

**Sitka, AK** did WM in the minivan. They grabbed a drink from McDonald's and drove out the road. They enjoyed a lovely time of worship including prayer and singing. As they drove along they got to see the salmon literally jumping out of the water!

## Flourishing Through Adversity

In her book, *Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young writes these words, as if God is speaking to you:

*“Make friends with the problems in your life. Though many things feel random and wrong, remember that I am sovereign over everything. I can fit everything into a pattern for good, but only to the extent that you trust Me. Every problem can teach you something, transforming you little by little into the masterpiece I created you to be. The very same problem can become a stumbling block over which you fall, if you react with distrust and defiance.*

*The choice is up to you, and you will have to choose many times each day whether to trust Me or defy Me.*

*The best way to befriend your problems is to thank Me for them. This simple act opens your mind to the possibility of benefits flowing from your difficulties. You can even give persistent problems nicknames, helping you to approach them with familiarity rather than with dread. The next step is to introduce them to Me, enabling Me to embrace them in My loving Presence. I will not necessarily remove your problems, but My wisdom is sufficient to bring good out of every one of them.”*



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***“And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28***

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## Flourishing Fun in March

1. Dr. Seuss Day is March 2nd. Enjoy reading some of his books, and perhaps even enjoy Green Eggs and Ham (green eggs could also be enjoyed on St. Patrick’s Day—March 17)
2. Celebrate Women’s History Month or International Women’s Day on March 9.
3. Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day on March 17.
4. March 19th is Let’s Laugh Day, a perfect excuse to share a joke or watch your favorite comedy.
5. National Tea for Two Tuesday is the 3rd Tuesday of the month, March 21.
6. Take a Walk in the Park Day is March 30th. Enjoy the spring air.
7. It’s March Madness Time! Play some basketball.
8. Do some spring cleaning!
9. Visit a Botanical Garden or local flower farm and enjoy the beauty of Spring.
10. Watch a cooking show and try the recipe at home.

