

Flourishing in Times of Uncertainty Bible Study
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Flourishing means to grow in a healthy and vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment. At first thought, I picture flowers so beautiful and fragrant, but that could be because my brain wants to grab the most obvious first two letters of both words! Flourishing flowers are lovely, but with deeper thought, I think of my most favorite spot on planet earth (so far!) the Redwood Forest on the coast of California. This forest is home to some the world's tallest and oldest trees. Many of them more than 2000 years old and reaching heights well beyond the Statue of Liberty. Just standing at the base of one and tilting your head back as far as you can looking up, up, up, gives perspective to the height of these trees which touch the heavens. It is a sight to behold! The still-standing trees keep growing 3 to 5 feet a year, though they have no mind of their own to do so, they were meant to be a tree unlike any other! They began the size of a tomato seed and wowie! to see one now, one will think, how could you have ever been so small and insignificant?

Some of the most memorable trees to me since my last visit were the ones still standing amongst the devastation of their tree community. Trouble was not so far from them, some had scars of trouble themselves, lightning struck, disease struck, burl poachers struck, lovers with a pocketknife struck, or strong wind that huffed and puffed till it blew them down. The trees still standing just kept doing what they do, grow, grow, grow and get this; it's origin is from about the size of a tomato seed! From seed to tree, it remains on the same trajectory- to become a Redwood tree! The only way it was able to remain the same yet flourish was by growing into the gigantic wonder it was meant to be. This is flourishing!

God intends that His creation grow and flourish. Every foundational truth in the Scripture is meant for our flourishing. Redemption in Christ, and abundant eternal life through Him. The forest around us may be uncertain, and at times full of trouble, but we know what we are meant to do! Flourish!

In this Bible Study, I will like to guide the participant through 3 spiritual foundations given by Scripture that promote flourishing in times of uncertainty.

PART ONE: (Surrender)

When I stand at the bottom of a Redwood tree, looking up and seeing the tops of the trees bend and sway with the wind I wonder what would happen if they didn't? The force of the wind would break their tops off. But instead, they surrender, they let the wind blow as it will and when it is over, they are still standing, still growing, still flourishing. They have surrendered to the process. As Christ so lovingly calls us to surrender as well.

READ Isaiah 45:9. What does this verse indicate about the way in which God flourishes us?

READ Jeremiah 29:11. Describe the flourishing that comes from surrendering to God's plan.

READ Romans 12:2. In what ways does conforming to the world hinder our surrender to God? Describe what flourishing comes from a mind transformed by God?

So much of life is us growing without any say in the matter whatsoever. Can a baby keep herself from growing? Can a mid-life adult stop herself from aging? I see more spiritual, emotional and mental growth in myself from my surrendering to the process far more than my trying to "fix myself" or "figure it out". When we are doing this, we are relying on ourselves, not Christ. It is vital that not only seek God's will and way, but to surrender as well. Surrendering can feel like a precarious place to be, but it is an act of faith which leads to our flourishing! "He who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it." Philippians 1:6

PART TWO: (taking Dominion)

The seed of a Redwood would not have grown if it had been thrown on concrete, instead, in a damp and nutrient rich forest, protected from danger, it flourishes! Flourishing happens in a favorable environment. The opposite must happen in an unfavorable environment. Biblically, we can track that flourishing is the way life is supposed to be! In the beginning, God pronounces everyday of creation leading up to the creation of mankind GOOD! And every day topped the previous day, culminating with the creation of man, and then the Garden of Eden where he placed His final creation- woman. God created the Garden of Eden as the perfect home for His children to thrive and flourish. He charged them to be fruitful, multiply, and take dominion.

It is evident that God has granted us freedom to exercise our sovereignty over our little corner of the world through His charge to mankind. Why wouldn't you do the best you can to create an environment for yourself in which you can flourish in? I mean, if a Redwood tree had legs, do you think it would plant itself in the middle of Death Valley. Sometimes we do this! We ignore God's intention for us to flourish and instead go off and suffer on purpose that we may be a martyr- a victim. I think often of the Scripture of which Jesus says "greater is He who is in you than he that is in the world" As we grow in consciousness by His light in our lives, we become increasingly aware that choosing flourishing, choosing to thrive, and choosing to be victors in our lives will very often be regulated by our ability (or lack thereof) to take responsibility for as much as we are responsible for. We have the power and the responsibility to set-up our lives to thrive and grow in the best soil possible. This also means that we are responsible for our soil as well. I choose as much as I can to fill mine with the Holy Spirit, with discipline, with good friends and family, with

purpose, with learning, with creativity, and with plenty of play! This is a flourishing environment for me. What is a flourishing environment for you in which you can take dominion?

READ Genesis 2:4-25. Describe the environment, or home, that Eve was in? In what ways was she set up for success?

READ Psalm 23. Describe the flourishing relationship taking place in this passage between David and his Shepherd.

PART THREE: (support of one another)

The Redwood trees flourished because they were in a complex community of other living things. Every living thing played their part. We flourish when we help others flourish!

READ Jeremiah 29:4-7. In which way must God' children surrender here? Describe the environment they are creating. What two things must they seek and what is the benefit?

READ Matthew 6:1-4. Who is flourishing here? Why? What will hinder the flourishing?

In closing, discuss what additional Scriptures came to mind during this study. Share the evidence of flourishing (vigorous growth) and thriving in your life.

Pray for one another.