

Flourishing in the Dry Season

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“The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.” (Isaiah 58:11)

It is wonderful to be in a season of life when things are blooming, happening, and coming to fruition. God's miracles seem to be popping up everywhere and there is little that can drag your spirit down. You hardly have to try as you feel yourself...well, flourishing! We've all been there, enjoying moments of peace and joy and confirmation that we are on the path God has laid out for us.



This is not where we are setting down our feet this time. Think of a dry, arid desert. Nothing for miles and miles except endless stretches of sand and heat waves visible to the naked eye. Eyes aching from the harsh sun, skin blistering past the point of sunburn, heat radiating up through the soles of your shoes, throat parched and sandpaper-rough. What would you do for a single sip of water? How far would you crawl to reach a small patch of shade? You would cry but for the fact that you don't have enough spare moisture left in your body to produce a single tear. Have you ever been in a place like this? Perhaps not literally or physically. But what about spiritually? I have. It's a 'yes' to both.

I went to high school in Santa Cruz, California, close enough to the ocean that my surfer classmates would run onto campus just as the bell rang, shoes forgotten in the car and still towel-drying their ocean-soaked hair. If they remembered, they would do the courtesy of dusting the sand off their feet and legs before rushing into class. Admittedly, it was a pretty fantastic place to be a teenager. The summer before my senior year, my Officer parents were appointed to Mesa, Arizona. Mesa means, "An isolated flat-topped hill with steep sides, as found in arid and semi-arid areas of the U.S." We were headed away from the cool water of the Pacific, toward vast expanses of sand, cacti, lizards, and broiling HEAT. I did not take well to all the jokes meant to cheer me. "Hey! You're moving to the biggest beach in the world!" "You'll be able to get a tan year-round!" (I am Danish and English. The ability to tan is not even in my DNA). I found myself, for the first time ever, dreading a move.

There are times in life when we can feel the desert coming; a palpable transitioning from a time of abundance and moisture, into the scorching heat of a spiritual desert. We may fight it, try to delay it, but it still comes. What brings it on? What specific purpose could it possibly have? Even

if we could pinpoint the what and the why, how LONG will we be in this dry, hot, lonely, near-uninhabitable atmosphere? It's an unanswerable question. We do know this: It is hard to flourish in the dry season.



I found myself in a dry season that stretched a span of nearly 16 years as one after another, my 2nd, 3rd, and 4th children were diagnosed with autism. There wasn't nearly the amount of awareness, information, and treatments back in the day, as there are now. I wanted to praise God for the lives of my 4 children. I wanted to delight in their presence, savor their giggles, and hold silly conversations that only toddlers can provide. I wanted to see them thrive and

flourish. That was not God's path for them or, ultimately, for me. Oh, how I longed to talk with Jesus in the night hours, pouring out my sorrows to Jehovah Rapha, the Lord who heals. But by day's end I had nothing left. Watching my children struggle to learn, communicate, and use the most basic of fine-motor skills was emotionally exhausting. On the outskirts, our oldest was feeling sorely neglected. My husband was as hands-on as he could be after a long day at the office. My spirit became a dry husk, on the brink of shriveling completely and blowing away in the hot desert wind.

Years before, in training school, I claimed Isaiah 58:11 as 'my' verse.

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."



During this long, dry season God would continually bring this verse to mind. So many times I shoved the verse away as if it were not a promised cup of cool water, but merely a mirage meant to torment me. I knew it was not meant to taunt me, but rather to remind me He had made a promise, and I should focus on that. But it was oh, so difficult.

It was while visiting my parents in Mesa, Arizona (yes, they retired there!) that my dad showed me

the most recent collection of his photographs: desert cacti in full bloom. As we chatted, he shared how amazing it is that these cacti could flourish and bloom in the heat of the dry desert. A cactus is incredibly heavy because it is 90% water, having constantly gathered moisture from the environment, storing it up for the dry season.



Then it hit me, full-on. **Be a cactus!** If I so immerse myself daily in God's Word and His presence in each season, I will have 'hydration' stored up to keep me alive during the dry season. I would still need to allow God to rehydrate and soften my crackling-dry spirit, but in His loving care I **WOULD** make it through this desert. He would cause me to thrive once again. **I WOULD FLOURISH!**

And that is exactly what happened. Years earlier as a teen, I could not escape the physical desert of my new Arizona home. But God was faithful and brought me the gift of my now husband of 32 years. Years later, I could not hide from the spiritual and physical exhaustion that parenting brought me, but God was faithful, and continues to be faithful as I watch my 4 boys grow into fine men who love the Lord, each to the best of their abilities.

When the dry season comes, and we know it will, fall back on God's promise. He *will* guide you always. He *will* satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and he *will* strengthen your frame. You *will* be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. In the meantime, if you are flourishing in a season of abundance take advantage of those showers of blessing. Soak up the living water into the very core of your being. And when the dry season comes it will be stored up and ready to sustain your soul. You *will* **FLOURISH**, like a beautiful desert cacti in full bloom.

