

Bloom!



# Bloom!

✿ SERVING GOD ✿  
WHERE HE HAS PLANTED YOU

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I acknowledge and thank God for guiding me to write  
this book. To Him be all the glory.

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and encouraged me every step of the way.



# Introduction

## My Burden Is Light

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*For my yoke is easy to bear,  
and the burden I give you is light.*

Matthew 11:30

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**D**O YOU EVER think, *Am I doing enough to serve God? Am I talented enough? Is the church the only place where I can serve? How can I serve God when I don't have time? I'm already overwhelmed with all my responsibilities and commitments!* Many of us grapple with these questions and concerns. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves. But those are our thoughts, not God's.

In the Bible, Jesus tells us His yoke is *easy*. We are the ones who make it harder than He intended. God's Word is full of stories about how God chose men and women before they were born and used them in unexpected ways to fulfill their purpose in His plan. God is doing the same with you, right where you are. This devotional will help you to see that He has an amazing plan that includes you, and He has placed you exactly where you need to be to play

## *Bloom!*

your part. With Christ, there is no guilt, no shame, and no condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

For years, I struggled with the same questions above. Between working full time and raising a family, there just wasn't enough time to serve God effectively, at least in the way *I thought* I needed to serve Him. Surely, I needed to be in some type of full-time Christian service to please God and “seriously” serve Him. I had a lot of guilt about this. I'd ask myself questions like, *Why am I wasting my life in this worldly job? Shouldn't I be doing something more for the kingdom?* I kept working, squeezing in as much ministry as I could. But it never seemed like enough. I still felt guilty, stressed, and exhausted.

Then I began to realize that God created me to serve Him in very different ways than I had thought. He chose where and when I was born, gave me specific talents and experiences that have shaped me into who I am today, and placed me in specific relational gardens so I could bloom for Him. He doesn't need me to be a missionary to another country. He doesn't need me to quit my job and go into full-time ministry. He can, and is, using me exactly where I am. I simply need to bloom where He has planted me! This insight has changed my life. It has eliminated so much stress and frustration, replacing the guilt with peace, joy, and satisfaction in serving God every day in all areas of my life. Now this doesn't mean God won't call you to be a missionary in Africa or to serve in full-time ministry—if He does, He has prepared this for you all along and you'll likely know it. But for most people, we are called to serve right where we are.

## My Burden Is Light

Not too long ago, God placed a desire in my heart to share this message with anyone who feels too busy to serve God as much as they would like to. Maybe you are like I was, serving in the church every week, and maybe at special activities, but still feeling like you're not doing enough—missing the fact that serving Him right where you are in your daily life is enough.

This book will take you on a thirty-day devotional journey to help you seek this truth. The message is twofold. The first section will focus on accepting who you are, showing you that God has orchestrated your birth and your life perfectly to grow you into the person you are today—a beautiful and unique flower in His marvelously planned garden. The second half focuses on the many different areas of your life where you can serve God every day—the various gardens you tend. Your gardens—home, work, social circles, church, and the world—are all ripe for planting and watering seeds of kindness, love, and faith. Opportunities abound for you to demonstrate and share your love and faith in Jesus in all areas of your life.

I pray God uses this devotional to help you see He has placed you perfectly in His well-planned garden of life. He is just waiting to see you bloom! Serving God has never been easier or more freeing once we take our expectations out of the equation and put aside the guilt. Jesus's yoke really is easy, His burden light. I'm excited for what you will discover.



# Day 1

## Uniquely You

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*For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

Ephesians 2:10

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THERE ARE OVER 350,000 species of plants in this world. And even within the same species, each plant is unique. Have you ever looked at each rose in a garden? No two are the same. Each is different and beautiful in its own way. So are we. There is no one exactly like you. You are a unique blend of talents and experiences, with a life that is yours and yours alone. As it says in Ephesians 2:10, God has created each of us uniquely and placed us where we are to fulfill His plans.

I was born the youngest of eight children, and we lived in a rural, one-stoplight town in Pennsylvania. My graduating class was fewer than one hundred students. I was a small-town girl who loved my family and never dreamed of leaving my hometown. I expected to get married, work at a local company, and live out my life there. But in 1988, I

## *Bloom!*

moved out of my small town into a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. And now, thirty years later, I am an executive at a large company, leading an organization of over six hundred people. Me, an executive? I never would have imagined that. I still have those small-town roots in me, but now I also have years of experiences that have shaped and changed me. God, the Master Gardener, had a plan for me since the beginning and has cultivated me into who I am today.

God also made you to be one of a kind. He made you just the way you are for a reason. You are not a mistake, a surprise, or a random accident. God chose to create you. He planted the seed of life in you. He chose when and where you'd be born. He is watering and caring for you to help you grow and bloom beautifully. There are times when the sun shines brightly and life is good. And, there are difficult times as well. I know it's like that in my own life.

Plants require pruning to grow to their fullest. The gardener cuts off the bad parts, and sometimes he even cuts off some of the good to let the rest bloom more fully. Like plants, we grow from both the good and difficult people and experiences in our lives. All of it comes together to make us into the people we are now.

To me, no other story in the Bible tells this better than Joseph's story. In the Old Testament, Joseph, son of Jacob, is a great example of a person who God perfectly created and developed to play an important role in His plan. Joseph's story, as told in Genesis chapters 37 and 39–45, is a strong example of God building up a person throughout their lifetime.

## Uniquely You

At the end of the story, Pharaoh made Joseph second in command over Egypt to prepare for and manage the food supply for a predicted famine. He had the right skills, the right heart, and the right position to make a significant difference for hundreds of thousands of people, ensuring that the food supply would last through the seven years of famine. How did he get to be the “perfect” person for the job? Was he simply born into it? Far from it. Joseph’s story shows how a combination of being born at the right time, into the right family, and in the right place, as well as possessing God-given talents and a lifetime of experiences, all came together to do amazing things for God.

As we move through the following days, we’ll follow Joseph’s story, and you will learn more about how God has made you into the person you are today. I’ll be sharing some of my own stories, and we’ll spend more time thinking about how God shaped Joseph as well. I’m excited for you to grow in your understanding of how God has designed you to be uniquely you—how the timing and place of your birth, your talents, your personality, and your experiences have grown you into the incredible person you are right now.

### **Reflection**

1. Take a few minutes to read about Joseph as he ruled in Egypt in Genesis 41:46–49, 53–57. How would you describe him? Then, take a few minutes to read about Joseph at the beginning of his story in Genesis 37:2–11. How would you describe him then?

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2. Think about who you were as a child and who you are now. How are you similar to the person you were in your past? How are you different?

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3. God loves you. You are His unique masterpiece. What are some of the things you most appreciate about yourself . . . things God created in you?

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Uniquely You

4. Is there anything God is saying to you today as you read and think about the lesson?

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**Today's Prayer**

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You for creating me. Thank You for choosing just the right time and place for my birth and for giving me the experiences, both easy and hard, that have shaped me into the person I am today. Help me to appreciate the work You've done in me.

In Jesus's name I pray, Amen.