

JUST A LITTLE WHITE FLOWER

I don't think it could ever be said of me that I have a green thumb. I have no problem growing vegetables but when it comes to flowers, it isn't a pretty sight. It's sad because I love flowers and enjoy sitting outside surrounded by them. Moving into our current home stirred my desire for a garden again because there are six built in planter boxes right on the front porch. The boxes look so cold when they sit empty, so each season I fill them with fake flowers. It is a step up from being cold and empty and from a distance they look pretty but let's face it...fake is fake! A couple of years ago I decided to step out once again and plant some real flowers in those planters. My husband and I went to the nursery to buy potting soil and the cheapest flowers we could find. Cheap because I have even been known to kill cactus...and they grow in the desert!! However, not being a quitter, I came home very excited with my white, pink, and orchid colored flowers, along with my little gardening shovel and potting soil. I dug out those planters, added the soil and planted the flowers. I nurtured them like crazy and much to my surprise (and to the surprise of my family and friends), my planter boxes were full of life and beauty. I loved sitting on the porch that spring and summer enjoying the fruit of my labor. Now, for those of you that can grow anything, you may not fully understand what I'm saying...but I was thrilled. I had accomplished something I'd never been able to do before! Of course, they eventually did what flowers do and they withered away. I pulled up what remained of the dead flowers and got rid of them. I confess that I did not take the time to plant new flowers last spring. Life got busy and before I knew it, it was too late.

I was talking to the Lord not long ago and simply pouring out my heart to Him. It seemed as though I had sown and sown into the lives of people and would see fruit for a little while only to see it fade away or get stolen. Someone would seem so hungry for the truth and then it was as if life choked out all that had been released to them. There were also areas of personal breakthrough I had been contending for that I hadn't seen come to pass. I was in a place of fighting discouragement. I hadn't stopped believing, but I was wearing down and I just wasn't seeing the results I had hoped for. As I spoke with the Lord that morning, He reminded me of three scriptures immediately. The first was from Isaiah 55:11: "So shall My word

be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” He pointed out that “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19). He also encouraged me that “all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20). I received those words and was quickly reminded that the Father wants to give us good things. I so needed this encouragement from Heaven. I just needed a little boost...a little pep talk from Daddy God...a reminder that I was not in this thing alone. I had no doubt He was answering my cry and speaking to my heart. A little bit later on that day, He clearly spoke to me again. He said, “Remember, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” (John 15:16). He was most assuredly revealing Himself to me through His written Word and I took those passages and stood on them once again so thankful for His continued presence and love.

Now the planter boxes were back to being cold and empty and every time I would leave the house, I was reminded that they desperately needed my attention. Shortly after hearing the words of encouragement from the Lord, my husband and I were leaving the house one morning when something caught my eye. Low and behold...right there in the planter box was one beautiful little white flower in full bloom. It was apparently left over from two springs before and I knew it could only have been there for a day or two. In my spirit I immediately realized this was the tangible encouragement I had been looking for and so desperately needing from my Father. I had not watered that planter. I had not pulled weeds from that planter and yet, He chose to raise up one seed...one white flower...at just the right time...seasons later to affirm to me that the fruit would remain. I knew He was encouraging me in that at least a portion of what I had poured into co-workers, family, friends, children and grandchildren remained because His Word will never return void. I knew I had to step up and stand on His promises again and stop looking at what I was seeing in the natural.

That little flower was very special to me but shortly after it appeared, some children were playing in our front yard and my little flower didn't survive their visit. I walked out to find white petals scattered all around and the stem broken in half. What remained of the stem was barely sticking in the soil. It had almost been plucked up by the root. I was a little upset because seeing that flower every morning was a beautiful reminder to me of God's promises. Oh well, I had seen, heard and felt the Father's heart for me so I would hold that dear and remember the little flower with a smile. I soon found out that the Lord wasn't finished speaking. He had another surprise in store for me. A short while later...much to my amazement...there stood another beautiful, healthy, single white flower in the same planter box. Oh joy!!! I sat on the front porch just thanking Him for being so kind and for going above and beyond to teach me and remind me of His goodness. In that brief time of visiting with Him, He taught me that little seed remained in my flower box dormant for one full blooming season, and then came out the next. And even after some very rough treatment, and being plucked up by all but a thread, it bloomed once more. It looked just as healthy and beautiful as ever. The Lord was showing me that although I don't always see the result of my sowing, the seed remains because He is faithful. He also showed me that sometimes the enemy wreaks havoc on the seeds we've planted and we think they've been taken or tossed out. Yet, because of who He is and what He says...and because He is always good...some of those seeds remain.

One final lesson came from this. He chose to use gardening as an example to someone who struggles to keep cactus alive. You see, we plant the seed. He causes the growth. I planted those seeds that spring and babied them. I even fretted over them when the wind would get up or the nights were unseasonably cold and yet God, two seasons later opened a seed that I didn't even know was there and caused it to grow without my help. Imagine that!! We are to sow those seeds in the lives of those we come in contact with and those we love, water and feed them when we can, and then we must entrust them to the Father's care to grow them however He chooses. He can open a seed that is planted in a heart full of weeds...in a heart that hasn't been nurtured and cared for...in a heart that has suffered at the hand of a ruthless enemy and he can cause that seed to grow. He can preserve and keep that seed in the midst of a life filled with less than desirable conditions and winds of adversity. He

sees the seeds that remain that we can't see. When I looked at my empty and cold little planter boxes, I didn't see life...I saw barrenness. Yet, there was something planted under the soil hidden from my sight. I had no idea anything existed underneath that soil except maybe a few weeds. In the same way, when we look at someone's life from the outside, we often times get discouraged because we don't see any results from our sowing. We don't see that 'life' that comes from a relationship with Jesus. The enemy would love for us to call it quits...get discouraged...let them go...give up on the promises of God; but just like my little white flower, we don't see what's stirring under that soil. We can't see that seed that's being protected. We can't see the work the Father is doing behind the scenes in that life. At any moment, maybe when you least expect it, that fruit can pop up and that life be transformed. That life can go from barren to beautiful in the blink of an eye when the Lord is the gardener.

Last, but certainly not least, I was reminded just how much He loves us. He loved me so much that He was willing to preserve and take care of one tiny seed in my little flower box to show me He's heard every prayer. He's seen every tear. And just like He took care of and preserved that one little seed in the natural, He is able to preserve the seeds sown into the lives of those I love so dearly. Why? Because He loves us and He is good. It is not His will that any should perish.

I hope you can get a picture in your mind of my one little flower in my planter box and be encouraged that just as that seed remained...so shall the seeds that you plant remain. Very simply, to be discouraged is to lose courage. It is kind of funny how I took much courage from a little bitty white flower.

