

Buried to Bloom



Dear Friends,

So many like tumble weeds, blow through life, without roots or relationships anywhere. This takes place because they refuse to be buried. Such burial is necessary in order that they may bloom.

In order to grow and later bloom, a seed needs to be covered and die to its present form. To keep a seed from being buried or planted, is to keep that seed from reaching its full potential.

Do you remember what Jesus said in John 12:24 when he declared, “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

These difficult times you are going through, are not times God is burying you in a cemetery, but one in which He is planting you in order that you may bloom. So don't condemn yourself to a grave yard of hopelessness, instead see this as period in your life that God is putting you in His controlled environment. It is there where you can grow in His grace.

In the midst of the dirty place you are buried, don't pretend everything is fine. Instead embrace your anguish and cry out to God. As you do this know that He hears you and wants the best for you. Then push beyond your present circumstances and pray until something happens.

Then as you push through and start to bloom don't give up even when God prunes you. Remember what Jesus said in John 15:1, 2, “I am the true vine, and my father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

Never forget, that in the same way God buried you to bloom, He will also then prune you for greater growth. This pruning often involves being brought to the breaking point after a period of great joy and productivity.

This is what happened to myself and the rest of the New Life Evangelistic Center Staff in April of 2017. In the years leading up to that date we were seeing one miracle after another. Then on April 2, 2017 the city of St. Louis made all the services to the homeless and hurting in the 1411 Locust building stop.

As I look back now I see that we were not only being pruned, but also buried. God was at work. After the closing of 1411 Locust, our Lord put the New Life workers out into the streets to directly help the homeless. Other NLEC staff members went on to start safe houses for the homeless women as the residential training programs for the men, women, and married couples were expanded throughout the state of Missouri.

The pain of the closing of 1411 Locust is still with me. I know there remained much to be done when it comes to providing day services and shelter for the homeless but I am beginning to see that we were being buried in order to bloom.

The critical issue during this process of being buried is that we remain good nourishing soil that was not poisoned by bitterness. The same is true for you now in the midst of whatever soil you feel buried in.

Jesus tells us to consider the condition of the soil in his parable found in Luke 8:5–8. There he points out the importance of good soil if the seed is going to grow and the plants are going to thrive. “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown” (Luke 8:5–8).

You have been buried to bloom. That is why it is so critical you don’t let the soil you are buried in to become hard or be snatched by the birds of bitterness, disappointment, or frustration.

Paul Brand in his essay, The Good Earth gives us further insight into this parable of the sower and the seed. In addition to seeing the seed as the word of God planted in the lives of people he shares how plants help develop good soil in which other plants can grow. “When Jesus mentions the three kinds of soil that were not productive, he tells us why. He doesn’t define the nature of the good soil except to say that it produced bountiful crops. Jesus hinted that some soil was better than others when he told the people that some seed produced, some sixty, and some thirty. The difference must have been in the soil” (See Matthew 13:1–23).

“Since the Bible does not give any clues about grading good soil, I feel free to broaden the parable to include one aspect of good soil that has meaning both in farming and in spiritual life. In botany, the term “colonize” refers to the way a group of plants or grasses takes over a piece of land. A good example is seen in sand dunes that have been built up by the action of tides and winds. They shift and change shape from year to year. Then seeds of some hardy type of grass may be blown into the area and begin to take root. If rain falls at the right time and roots have a chance to grow, the grasses may form a colony and begin to hold the sand together by their interlocking root systems. After a few years, the plants change the very nature of the sand and turn it into the beginnings of real soil. At a later stage, other less hardy plants may come and take root. What was once poor soil has been transformed into good and fertile soil. Eventually the original pioneer grasses may be forgotten as the plants and trees thrive.”

Brandt goes on to help us see that we are being buried in the soil in order that we may bloom. Now it is critical that we are buried in good soil. “Good soil is the legacy of pioneer grasses and plants now long gone. It has been said that ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.’ Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the blood is the *soil* of the church. The seed is the living Word of God. Godly people not only plant the seed, the quality of their lives affects the environment in which those seeds will grow. I pray that all of us will do our part to leave an enriched soil that will help to grow a sturdy church. I pray also, in a reversal of the parable, that we shall all be sensitive to the physical needs of future generations. We need to repent of our willing cooperation in our money-centered culture, which is depleting the natural

resources that God designed for all humankind. He gave us a good earth. Let us serve Him by helping to preserve it for our children. ‘A good man leaves an inheritance for his children’s children’ (Prov. 13:22).”

In order to do this we must always remember that we have been buried to bloom not to poison the soil where we have been planted with bitterness. To keep from doing this we need a God-centered rather than a human-centered world view. Col. 1:15–17 reveals that Christ came to give us such a view when it says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

As we consider the plants we see they were not created to just serve humanity, but to glorify God. In Psalms 19:1–4 we read, “The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor is there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, “Earth is crammed with heaven and every bush aflame with God but only those who see take off their shoes.”

George O’Keefe, the American artist, once declared, “To see takes time.” For that reason regular prayer walks observing the trees, flowers, grass and the rest of the plant miracles are so important. As we make these observations as we walk we are reminded of the seeds which have been buried to bloom as we are awakened to the wonders of God’s creation.

As we go on our prayer walks thinking about how seeds were buried so they could later bloom, we are reminded that Jesus told us not to worry, but instead, praise God in a new and powerful way. Karen Burton Mains points this out when she says, “The only way I can describe my feelings is to say that I am purely exultant. This is undiluted pleasure. Imagine! To have time to walk across the land, to feel it uneven but substantial beneath my shoes. Imagine! To have time enough; nothing interrupts me, no one demands my attention. Surely the nature of Christ the Creator shows forth in all these things, in this grand and perfect day. What a thought! The print of the originator is on all these pods. Dust them for identification, his fingerprints show forth!”

She goes on and further describes what is awaiting you when you realize you are being buried to bloom. “I want to caress these growing things. I want to hold them the way a parent enfolds an infant’s chubby foot in the palm of her hand and draws it to the mouth to kiss. I feel spiritually responsive, alive to all that can be read in these fields, along these paths, in these tall and unthwarted blooms. Oh, to lift my hands in praise and stand solid in the middle of the field and turn in a slow, deliberate dance of exaltation. To be as unself-consciously alive as these growing things! To be as completely who God has made me to be as they are completely what God has made them to be!”

Consider the miracle of the results of the seeds that once buried are now blooming as living plants. Nothing is lovelier on this planet. The true essence of human life is the greensward

covering of earth. Without the gift of green plants we would not breathe or eat. Under the surface of every leaf a million movable lips are engaged in devouring carbon dioxide and expelling oxygen. Altogether, 25 million square miles of leaf surface are daily engaged in the miracle of photosynthesis which produces oxygen and food for humanity and the rest of animal life.

Now as you reflect on this miracle of plant life, which had resulted from the burying of seeds, think about what God is about to do in your life.

At this moment you may feel tired out, worn out, and burned out. Everything has come down upon you until you feel buried by the pressures of daily living. Don't let the circumstances that seem to be burying you make you bitter. Instead trust God. Know that He will never allow you to be tempted with more than you can bare.

Now call upon the Lord in this day of trouble and believe that He will hear you by making your soil better, not bitter. Then trust Jesus that He will guide you each stop of the way, as you are buried to bloom.

Without the burying there can be no blooming. As the result of being buried as a seed in the soil God can now let you bloom until you do far more for His glory than you could even ask or think.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Rice". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the word "Rice".

Larry Rice