

Looking for answers in life? Look to flowers

Spring really is “bursting out all over.” The death of the winter to the new life of spring is indeed a wonderful time to celebrate the death of Christ and now his new risen life in this Easter Season.

All around us we see the spectacular beauty of flowering trees and bushes, and all kinds of various individual flowers. Yet, my favorite flowers are the ones that are so easy to miss. I admire the lowly dandelion pushing its way up through cement sidewalks. I admire lowly violets growing in gravel pits. I’m impressed with the flowers that bloom in woods and hillsides without the chance of a human being ever noticing them. In an early radio script that I wrote back in the 1970s, I once compared Christians to wild flowers who are “doomed to decorate a world too busy to notice.”

What meaning do I find in all of this? The first thing I find is that I admire perseverance. I admire the dandelion growing in the crack of a city sidewalk. It shouldn’t be able to do that! What life force drives it?

We could all learn a lesson from the dandelion and other wild flowers that flower in inhospitable circumstances. Life is not easy for any of us. Friends and loved ones die. Relationships end. Jobs change or are lost. The certainty of youth gives way to the questioning of old age.

It’s easy to give up, to give in to depression and fear and anxiety. Or, we can feel the feelings and push through them. We can become, as Anne Kaiser Stearns puts it, “triumphant survivors.”

There is a life force in us that is nothing less than the life of God. “I have come that you might have life, and have it to the fullest,” Jesus said. His life force was able to push aside boulders that sealed his tomb and emerge into new life. With that same force we can push through the challenges of life.

The second meaning I find in the flowers that grow in complete, or relative

obscurity, is that life is its own meaning. A flower doesn't seem to much care whether it is on display in Longwood Gardens or Sherwood Gardens, or whether it grows somewhere that the human eye will never see it. Life is its own meaning.

Flowers don't seem to get depressed as their vigor wanes, as their petals drop, as their time in the sun comes to an end. They give glory to God where they are and as they are. And then they go back to God, back to the force that gave them life in the first place.

We humans could learn valuable lessons from the wild flowers. We often ask questions such as: "What's the meaning of life? What's my purpose in life?"

The answer that the flowers teach us is that life is its own meaning. We give glory to God just by being who we are, where we are, as we are. Flowers aren't impressed by celebrity status. (Neither are children. Watch how easily they ignore 'important' people.)

The truth is we are all equally important, all called into existence by God to show God's glory in this time and space. We weren't born to be somebody else!

Michelangelo was once asked why he spent so much time working on details of his painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, details no one could see from the floor. He responded simply: "Because God sees it." Jesus noticed the wild flowers. God notices us. It's enough.

To sum it up, then, the 'little flowers,' the wild flowers, teach us important lessons. We learn, first, to persevere, to keep on going through difficult times. As Robert Schuller put it, "Tough times pass. Tough people don't."

Secondly, we learn acceptance – acceptance of ourselves as we are and acceptance of others as they are. Grow where you are planted.

So if you want to know the purpose or the meaning of life, go for a walk in the fields or in the woods, and notice the flowers that no one else notices. The flowers have the answers.