

*Called to Flourish*

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*“They shall again live beneath My shadow,  
they shall flourish as a garden;  
they shall blossom like the vine,  
their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.”*

**Hosea 14:7** New Revised Standard

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## Introduction

*“He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us again.”*

**2 Corinthians 1:10** New International Version

It is 2021 and the chorus is “2021 has to be better than 2020.” 2020 certainly was an astonishing, breathtaking year; it felt like someone punched us in the stomach.

There is hope ahead. Vaccines are being distributed...

I was going to have a list but I can't think of any other reason for hope being ahead. Oh, yes, our God still reigns!

*And I heard a sound like the roar of a great multitude, like the rushing of many waters, and like a mighty rumbling of thunder, crying out: “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.”*

**Revelation 19:6** Berean Study Bible (BSB)

Life changes. You and I will always be confronted by change. *Called to Flourish* gives us a chance to express our frustrations and receive assurance from God. Our mighty God still wants the best for us and I am convinced He calls us to flourish in our relationships with Him and in our crazy world of bright joy and dark unknowns.

Responding to God's call to flourish is a process. Give yourself time, especially in our upside-down world, to internalize ideas presented here and make small changes. But begin the process. Don't wait. The 31-days of Bible concepts here are seeds you and I can choose to plant, feed and see the result in ourselves, our families and our world this year and the years ahead.

*“It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds sown upon the earth. But after it is planted, it grows to be the largest of all garden plants and puts forth great branches, so that the birds of the air nest in its shade.”* **Mark 4:31** BSB

At the same time we plant, you and I are going to have to pull some weeds. I define weeds as anything growing where I don't want it to grow, taking up space and nourishment needed for what I intentionally plant. Pulling weeds can be physically taxing; deciding to pull out something green and blooming but in the wrong place at the wrong time may be equally, or more, difficult. Their elimination might even be prickly. But, there isn't room for both weeds and plants in my physical garden or my spiritual garden.

I hope you enjoy this study. There is one page for each of 31 days. It is **very important** to have a printed version so you can write down your thoughts. Date them. If you are receiving *Called to Flourish* by e-mail, please don't distribute the study to others but give them my e-mail address so they can purchase their own copy. It will make the study more valuable to them and give them more incentive to work through it.

Please send me your feedback. I know I can learn from you and your insights.

*Lisa*

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# Called to Flourish

**Day 1**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*"So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth." Hosea 6:3 NAS<sup>1</sup>*

Sometimes we feel like winter will never end. It will! Spring is around the corner. The never changing God is still ahead of us leading and behind us protecting. (**Exodus 13:21, 23:20**)

Babies are being born. Birds are singing. The ground is warming. Plants are budding. The earth is thriving, growing, rejoicing around us. It was all called by God to flourish. Even rocks, pretty but dead, would be singing out hallelujahs if all else was silent. (**Luke 19:40**)

Can you hear God calling you? His voice is loud and can be heard above madness, fear and heartbreak.

*The voice of the LORD is powerful, The voice of the LORD is majestic. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire. Psalms 29:4-5, 7 NAS*

Read **Isaiah 55:3**. What happens when we listen to God's majestic voice?

He is calling you and me to turn to Him, depend on Him and put Him first. You are meant by God to flourish in your relationship with Him. You are called to flourish as part of His joy and His kingdom.

Read **Isaiah 55:12**. How is the world around you rejoicing because you are His?

Your presence, and your contribution to God's design, was announced to creation at the beginning of time. God is concerned with your well-being. He made you and you are worthy of care both from others and from yourself. You are accountable for protecting and taking care of yourself.

Read **Ephesians 2:10; Psalms 139:14; Genesis 1:27**. Why is your care important?

At the end of each day's Bible seed there will be a suggested way to begin a conversation with God. Conversation. Have a conversation with God now. Thank Him for His voice that can be heard above the din. Thank Him you are part of His joy and His kingdom. Thank Him you are meant for great things as part of His Kingdom. Ask His help to remember these truths throughout the day and to take care of His workmanship — YOU. Listen for a reply. That is the best part of prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> NAS is New American Standard Version.

## *Called to Flourish*

**Day 13**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*“Because he loves Me, I will deliver him; because he knows My name, I will protect him.”*

**Psalms 91:14** BSB

Plants settle where there are plentiful resources: good soil, water, light and shelter from wind and cold. We human beings also gravitate to places we are nourished and protected. There, we revitalize physically, emotionally, mentally and relationally. You and I constantly and desperately seeking such a place.

The most nourishing place we can be is where you and I have a personal relationship with the Living God, as Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden. This place is always available. Circumstances can never lock us out of it. It is a safe place. Sometimes we forget that. Safety is important. It allows us to prosper.

Read **Ezekiel 36:35**. What had to happen to the cities as they became inhabited? This protection enables people to prosper.

How do you define fortified? Or, give an example of something that is fortified.

Why do you need to be fortified and protected?

How do you feel when you are unprotected?

God gave every living thing some source of protection. Orange trees have sharp thorns, so do roses and pyracantha bushes. Those sharp thorns of protection are there whether we notice them or not.

Read **Psalms 91:14** (above). You are meant to be protected. I need to add that to my physical emergency kit from yesterday. How is getting your body healthy protecting you and your family?



My fence protects my garden from the three big dogs in my neighbor's yard. It allows my garden to grow. The fence has a gate so I may decide who and/or what enters my garden.

Have a conversation with God. Acknowledge and thank Him for His willingness and ability to fortify and protect you. Ask Him to build trust and faith in you so you are able to give Him control of your life. Ask His forgiveness if you have felt guilty for wanting protection, or, annoyed when His protection is different from what you think you had in mind.

*Called to Flourish*

**Day 16**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit.  
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners will be converted to You.”*

**Psalms 51:10-13 NAS**

**Psalms 51:10-13** is David’s prayer; it is remarkably similar to God’s promises in Ezekiel, although the Psalm preceded Ezekiel by 500 years. Read it (above) and in your Bible version.

You and I need a willing and steadfast spirit to stay alert, motivated and on a healthy path. Staying on a healthy path allows us to move through a crises — especially if it has dragged on to become a lifestyle — and come out on the other side in better shape than when the crises started. Week 5 and Week 6 of *Body Surprised!* focuses on God’s desire for us to be steadfast and disciplined. God enables us with these qualities. Go back and review those chapters if you need an extra boost this week. (If you would like a copy of *Body Surprised!* e-mail [info@bodydesigned.com](mailto:info@bodydesigned.com).)

Look at **Psalms 51:10-13** again. What happens when God sustains you with a willing spirit?

How are others impacted? Try to think two steps beyond the obvious.

What situations have diluted your willing spirit in the last month?

Do yourself a favor. Be honest about the annoyance and stress you face. Ask God for the willingness to set priorities, be realistic and plan ahead.

How can you plan ahead to welcome — put yourself in best position to receive — God’s spirit of willingness with which He wants to sustain you? For me, my willing spirit improves when I make efforts to stay on a regular, or even challenging, schedule of getting up and going to bed. I make time for my online group Bible study. We laugh, we pray, we enjoy God’s Word. These things make best use of my time and bolsters my energy and immunity.

Here is the question again: how can you plan ahead to welcome God’s spirit of willingness?

Use David’s prayer to begin a conversation with God. Ask God to sustain you with a steadfast and willing spirit. Ask Him to help you plan ahead so can deal well with stressful situations. Ask for a new confidence to call upon and rely on His power.

*“His shoots will sprout, And his beauty will be like the olive tree  
And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon.” Hosea 14:6 NAS*

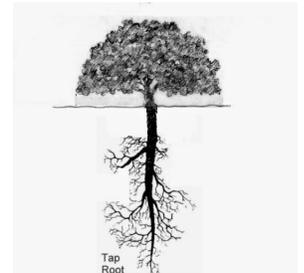
God compares you and me to trees in **Hosea 14:4-7**. Read this passage. What words or thoughts in this passage give you the impression God wants you to flourish in any situation?

I want to open your eyes to the depth of these verses and the enormity of God’s message to us in both this passage and **Psalms 92:12-15** (Day 6). You are compared to the olive tree, the cedar and the palm tree; they all have amazing attributes. Let me tell you more about the cedars of Lebanon and their ability to flourish.

They are mighty and majestic trees, tall evergreens which have been prized for thousands of years for their high quality timber, oils and resins.<sup>2</sup> It was prized in ancient Israel. There was cedar wood everywhere in Solomon’s temple, even in the most holy places of the temple. *“All was cedar, there was no stone seen.” (1 Kings 6:9-18)*

The Hebrew word for cedar means powerful.<sup>3</sup> These trees can grow up to 131 feet tall with a trunk diameter of 7 feet. So, they could be as tall as a 13 story building. They are blatantly visible.

Cedars of Lebanon live in cold high mountainous regions. They thrive and easily regenerate their forests. Legend has it they react to changes of the seasons by stirring their vast branches, inclining their needles upward as snow begins to fall so they can sustain an immense snowfall.<sup>4</sup> A cedar of Lebanon changes to protect itself.



As the cedar relentlessly endeavors to find nourishment to grow tall and wide, it reaches through good and bad soil. These cedars have deep, anchoring, tapering roots working into the soil like a screw into wood. The root allows the tree to grow in calcareous (chalk...think of the White Cliffs of Dover) and arid slopes (regions severely lacking water...think the tundra of Russia) and even between rocks. Cedars grow well in cool and deep soils. Regardless of the soil, cedars continually seek what they need to thrive.

Have a conversation with God. Thank Him that He wants you well, blossoming and growing even in rocky soil. Tell Him about the challenges you face to find nourishment to grow and reach for Him through the current confusion and isolation. Ask Him for His power to continually seek what you need to thrive, like the Cedar of Lebanon.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.arkive.org/cedar-of-lebanon/cedrus-libani/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://voiceofthetrees.blogspot.com/2011/08/cedar-tree-of-power-and-dignity.html>; <http://www.paghat.com/libanimyths.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.habeeb.com/cedar.of.lebanon/cedar.of.lebanon.info.html>