



Planted with Purpose

GOD'S CULTIVATION BRINGS OUR TRANSFORMATION

Lesson 2: The Beauty of Dirty Places

(Chapters 1 – 6)

This lesson is the first in a series of bible studies entitled "Planted with Purpose." This lesson series is a type of companion study of Bishop T. D Jakes' book entitled "Planted with a Purpose" Although this series will feature some of the themes of Bishop Jakes' book, it will not precisely follow the author's premise or literary structure. Nevertheless, you may find that using the book along with these lessons will greatly enhance your learning experience. The chapters in parenthesis under the lesson's name refers to the chapters read in Bishop Jake's book in preparation of this lesson – Blessing to You!

The Beauty of Dirty Places

Jer 18:2-3

2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. KJV

The young prophet is given directions from the Lord to go on a field trip to the potter's house. The Lord tells Jeremiah that this experience with the potter will allow Jeremiah to hear what God is trying to say to him. What was so significant about the potter's house? It was a dusty place surrounded with dirt, muddy clay and lots of broken pieces of clay jars, bowls, cups and vases. But it was in this very kind of environment that that creativity of the potter thrived. The potter's house was the womb where imagination gave birth to invention. Yet to the untrained eye it just looked like piles of formless clay, dusty floors and broken pieces. **QUESTION:** What was God wanting Jeremiah to learn from his visit to the Potter's house? The truth is that God does some of his best work in the dirt. **Gen 2:7** And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. KJV Another starker example of the beauty of dirty places is found in this parable of Jesus:

Luke 13:8-9

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it do KJV

The process of spreading manure doesn't necessarily provoke images of cleanliness and sanitary conditions and yet the experience is extremely beneficial to the growth and development of plants. In fact, in this parable its use is one of the only means employed to save this fig tree from destruction.

From these examples we can better understand and perhaps even appreciate the humbling experiences God brings us to and takes us through in order to mold us into a glorious display of his perfect will for our lives. **QUESTION:** Why would God have us experience some "messy" people and "messy" situations?

God Never Abandons Us

Mark 5:2-3 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: KJV

In the previous lesson we posed the question “What is the difference between being buried, and being planted?” Some responded that one main difference is that the expectations of each one is different. We acknowledged that a person’s perspective of these events greatly affect their interpretation. For instance, from the seed’s perspective it looks a lot like being buried, but from the farmer’s perspective it looks like planting.

In the case of this poor man, at first glance, he appears completely abandoned and deserted. He has been deemed as a hopeless case by those in his community. Now tortured and controlled by devils, he has been left to make his dwelling among the graves of the dead. In total despair and spiritual deprivation, the man resorts to inflicting pain upon himself cutting himself and carving the symbols of his demonic infestations into his own body. Here is a man that appears buried deep beneath a crushing assortment of torments; nevertheless, it is to this poor man’s rescue Jesus comes! After Jesus had successfully cast these demons out of this man, the man now cured of his condition desired to come along with Jesus and his disciples. But Jesus’ tells him in: **Mark 5:19:** Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. KJV

QUESTIONS: What impact could this man’s testimony have on others? How might our dire experiences benefit others? **Read 2 Cor 1:4**

Coming Out Better Not Bitter

Ps 119:71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. KJV (Ps 119:67)

In my lifetime I have met older people who upon entering the twilight years of their life seem to harbor bitterness concerning their life’s summations. These individuals show an almost hateful covetous spirit towards the achievement of younger generations whose current accomplishments appear to exceed their own. I believe that the things they we experience in life have the potential to make us better or leave us bitter; but the choice is up to us. Bishop Jakes writes: “...**when God escorts you out of your season of pain, be sure to leave behind the sorrow, bitterness, and anger...**” Jakes explains how Nelson Mandela the great South African civil rights advocate who served twenty-seven years in prison for striving for equal rights in South Africa once said “**As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.**”

When we allow it, God will transfer the bitterness of our afflictions and hard experiences into sweet lessons and life-saving events that served to develop our spiritual character and improve our godly witness. We must remember that God is planting us not burying us. As mentioned earlier, the planting stage can be a real time of isolation, unexplained occurrences that can leave us feeling defeated, mistreated and abandoned by God and by others. Even after emerging from that dark place and brought into the blessings that God has now prepared and presented to us, the negative residue from those past experiences can serve to diminished our ability to embrace and celebrate the bright blessings of God before us.

Let It Go and Live: (Cut the Rope)

There are countless people who have suffered all types of wrong doing at the hands of other people. Often church folk are the worst culprits. Holding on to bitterness and anger will only serve to rain on your own parade; leaving you too emotionally exhausted to truly enjoy where God has brought your to.