

How a Weed Echoed Elisabeth Elliot's Teaching on Strongholds—and More

Some say a weed is just a plant flourishing where you don't want it to grow. The plant I gazed at certainly fit that description. Its tender green leaves and slim stem contrasted with the smoky-blue Florida sky as it grew in the gutter on my roof. Definitely a place I did *not* want it to flourish!

I had watched the foot-tall plant growing for several weeks. Inch by inch and day by day, I kept expecting the weed to wilt and die as it reached a point of no return. It didn't belong there. Yet there it was, tenaciously rooted in a most inappropriate place. A logical conclusion was that the gutter was filled with decaying leaves and dirt. The combination would naturally provide a welcoming environment for seeds carried by birds or the wind.

A kind neighbor offered to clean out the gutter and remove the weed. But when he climbed the ladder, he made an interesting discovery. The plant was not rooted in dirt. It was rooted in a single, decomposing piece of palm bark. The rest of the gutter was clean.

The lessons taught by this weed were not lost on me.

Importance of Perseverance

First, I was reminded of the adage, "An oak tree is just an acorn that held its ground." This plant flourished because a lone seed tenaciously clung to the only opportunity it had.

How often do I give up when life becomes difficult? It's so easy to blame less than ideal circumstances for my failures. The characteristic of perseverance is much like a muscle: It

needs exercise to grow in strength. James 1:12 (NIV) says, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial." Galatians 6:9 (ESV) reminds us to "not grow weary of doing good" and Romans 5:3-4 tells us suffering produces perseverance.

Danger of Passivity

On the other hand, the second lesson I learned sprang from an observation by a friend. After viewing the photo, she noted, "Interesting how little it takes for a weed to take root."

Hmmm ... what about the weeds in my own life? Little sins easily grow into deep-rooted and destructive habits. And they do it with little to no conscious encouragement from me. Sort of how the weed sprouted and flourished while I passively watched it grow on my roof for weeks.

I love how Elisabeth Elliot addressed this warning:

"Spiritual strongholds begin with a thought. One thought becomes a consideration. A consideration develops into an attitude, which leads then to action. Action repeated becomes a habit, and a habit establishes a 'power base for the enemy,' that is, a stronghold."

What thoughts am I tolerating today that will become strongholds tomorrow?

The final lesson reminds me of yet another adage:

Bloom Where You're Planted

There were many better places in my yard for that weed to grow, but it grew where it was planted.

Am I content in where God has planted me? Am I listening for the prompts of the Holy Spirit to share Jesus where I am and to be a blessing to those God has placed in my life? Or am I looking longingly at other people's lives, wishing I had been planted in their circumstances instead?

One little weed. Three big lessons.

What are your thoughts? {eo}

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