

Lysa TerKeurst Wants You to See God's Beauty Instead of Pain

"The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature" (Luke 8:14, NIV).

My life hasn't been a bed of roses.

What an odd statement. It's supposed to mean that I haven't lived a life without snags and hurt. However, think of an actual bed of roses. Doesn't it have both thorns and flowers?

My aunt grew roses for years. She's the one I lived with for almost a year when I was in middle school and my family was falling apart. I remember her telling me not to run through her rose garden. After all, she had what seemed like hundreds of other acres that unfolded in wide open fields. I could run there.

But I didn't want to.

I only wanted to run through the rose garden. I wanted to spread my arms wide open and run between the rows, brushing my fingertips across all the velvety blooms. I wanted some of the blooms to burst and shower petals all around. Then I could gather the petals and spread them along my path.

As if I could carve a new place in this world lined with beauty and void of adult words like divorce, rejection and hate—I wanted my world to be soft, pink and lovely. I didn't want to think about my dad leaving our family. My heart couldn't process how he not only didn't live with us anymore, but he was also slowly pulling back from participating in our

lives altogether.

So I took a running start with my arms outstretched, only to be shocked with searing pain within the first few steps.

Thorns. Big, mean, vicious thorns. Thorns that ripped my flesh and opened up the flood of tears I'd been so determined to hold back. Suddenly, I hated that bush. I wanted to chop it down and beat it into the ground. But I couldn't do it. I couldn't bring myself to destroy something that produced such beauty.

I stood back from the source of my pain and wondered, *Should I call it a bush of thorns or a bush of flowers?* Really, it could go either way.

Suddenly I wasn't just staring at a bush. I was staring at my life. My life—Such a bed of roses.

Would I see the hurt or would I see the beauty?

Luke 8:14 says, "The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature." The seed being referred to here is the Word of God. Isn't it interesting that people who are choked by life's circumstances and never mature are referred to as having thorns in the soil of their soul?

Yes, life sometimes hands us thorns, but we have the choice to park our mind on the thorn or on the beauty it can eventually produce in us, if only we'll cling tightly to God's Word. How a person thinks is how they will eventually become.

If we dwell on the negative in life, we'll become negative and God's Word will have a hard time taking root in our souls. If, however, we acknowledge the negative but choose instead to look for the good that can come from it, God's Word will take root in our souls and produce a lush crop of beauty.

It all comes down to a choice. That day in my aunt's garden, I chose to be aware of the thorns but park my mind on the beautiful roses.

And over the years, I have come to the place in my life where I realize I can focus on the hurt my dad's absence caused *or* choose to focus on other things in my life. Beautiful things. To focus on beauty isn't to deny the pain. It's just refusing to let it steal anything else from me.

It's been more than 25 years since I've seen my dad. That's hard on a girl's heart. But where he fell so short, God has filled in many gaps. I don't have to be the child of a broken parent the rest of my life, I can be a child of God. Loved. Truly loved.

And that is a beautiful truth I can let flourish in my heart.
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