

# How deep are your roots?



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Do you enjoy gardening? Are you a professional or an amateur? Maybe you are somewhere in between? I am more on the amateur side but I'm always trying to grow in my skills because I absolutely love plants and flowers. Sometimes I fail miserably and I feel a bit defeated because some plants or flowers are completely unforgiving when I mess up. Other times, I have little victories and I run to tell everyone about them with so much excitement that I'm sure they think I'm a crazy plant lady.

This winter, I thought I was doing things right when I performed a little maintenance on a very tall snake plant at our shop that was looking a little sad. I cut back some bad pieces and added in some new dirt. I also fed it some food and watered it well. I don't quite know what went wrong but within a couple of weeks, all of the tall, straight, and perky leaves had fallen over. And not just a couple of leaves—but almost the entire plant. Ugh. What a gardening failure! A plant that was a little sad when I donned my gardening gloves became a hot mess. My intentions were so good—yet the outcome was so bad.

I may never know what went wrong, but I also didn't want to lose the whole plant. So, I went to my friend, Google to see if she might have any advice for me. I knew there was no saving the whole droopy depressing plant—but was there any way I could revive part of it? My inner gardener's heart had hope after what I discovered. We will come back to this.

If you like gardening in the great outdoors, then we are in your season! Do you feel joy start to bubble up when you see perennials emerging from the ground? Does it bubble even more as the daffodils, tulips, and other early risers begin to bloom beautiful colors into your garden? And as you try to get through the rainy (or snowy) days of April, does it encourage you like it does me to proclaim "April Showers Bring May Flowers!":? Then, as we finally make it to May, does your heart nearly burst with joy to see even more beauty arising from the earth? If this is you, then we are kindred spirits because mine is bursting too!

For me, it's the same feeling I get when I paint a wall a new color or find the perfect décor for a room that I am refreshing. Likewise, when I get a creative design idea and am able to carry it out just like I envisioned, I squeal with complete delight! Sometimes I even clap my hands in rapid succession and jump around like a schoolgirl when things become beautiful.

Recently, an editor from a national automotive magazine contacted me to ask if he could talk to me about featuring my "gorgeous shop" in a piece he is putting together. He went on to say "We want to look at gorgeous auto repair shops and their waiting rooms and why an upscale shop and waiting room enhances the customer experience and creates a better environment for the team to perform."

The first thing I thought was "Wow, what an honor". But then I began speaking negative thoughts to myself about my abilities when it comes to interviews. You see, I am terrible with words in situations like these—like completely terrible. My tongue gets all tied up and I can't even think straight. I have always been able to write better than I speak and I didn't want to come across poorly or have my real thoughts not be completely understood because of my twisted-up tongue.

I had to then take a step back and realize that was pride. I love helping others make their shops beautiful and have helped many. But this time, I have the opportunity to share what I know with hundreds and encourage them to bring their shops to a better level with design. So, I swallowed my pride and agreed to the interview.

Let's pause here for a moment to get really real.

I want to talk about what people see versus what really is. When you look at any social media platform, you are going to see the highlight reels of others. The problem is, the reels aren't really real. We think others look perfect based on what they are willing to show us. But we don't see the full picture with the bad stuff—the messy stuff. Maybe you'll see the sadness from a death or the struggles someone is having with an illness, cancer, or the like—the things that are "okay" and "acceptable" to talk about.

But what about the unacceptable—the things that are considered taboo? Deep worries, fears, or depression. Addictions, infidelity, or other sin. And what about all of the insecurities one might be feeling—do we get to see those real reels so that we can really know what is really real?

Maybe you know someone who is physically attractive and constantly posts selfies that highlight their best features—beauty in the world's eyes.

Maybe you know someone who seems successful and they post beautiful houses, cars, and vacations. Maybe you know someone who seems to have a ton of friends who is always livin' it up and posting to show others their awesome social life.

Friends, I wonder, what is really real? The attractive selfie-taker may find their worth in their looks while on the inside they are just as insecure as us but in different ways. The "successful" person may have money and prestige, but they post to boast to fill a need instead of knowing true joy. And the person with friends coming out of their ears—maybe they are so busy keeping up with their social engagements and staying popular that they don't have time to pursue their true purpose—the reason God created them.

Where do you struggle? What don't you let others see? I invite you to pause here a moment and grab a pen. In the margins of this article get real with yourself and write down all the things that you might not want others to know about your life or what you struggle with on the inside.

Sometimes it helps us to get real when others get real with us. What is true is that I have been insecure about so many things for the majority of my life. "I'm not good enough", "I'm not pretty enough", "I'm not smart enough", and "How can I ever measure up?". Do any of these things run through your mind?

There are reasons for my insecurities and I have spent time hashing all of that out to help me understand why I am the way I am and why I struggle with the things I struggle with. Though I ought not share publicly what may be "too taboo" according to this world, I will say, that my life has been messy. Really, really, messy. But what do you see of me?

I once shared a struggle with an acquaintance at church. Afterward, she said, "I always thought you were perfect". Gasp! Gasp again! Oh, far from it—so far from it! She saw me as pretty, successful, smart, and extremely talented. I see the stretch marks and cellulite and so many other imperfections. I see the ways I've failed. I see how smart others are and wish I had a greater intellect. I see that most of my talents are mediocre at best. And a little voice in my head often makes me wonder "Will I ever measure up?"

Six years ago, God didn't just bring me to my knees, He brought me to my face. As I lay prostrate before Him, devastated by what was happening in my life, I was about to learn fully what the second half of 2 Corinthians 2:12 really means when it says "For when I am weak, then I am strong". That season of my life is when God began to really change me—for it was in my weakness that I needed His strength to sustain me—and on the other side of it all, I became stronger.

Don't get me wrong, when I was in that season, I was so broken that I didn't know if I could ever be put back together. But now that I am through that season, I see God's reason.

I recently heard that in a man-made biosphere, trees cannot grow to their full potential—they just keep falling over. You would think that they would grow better—they are protected and nurtured and in the perfect conditions for perfect growth. But what was found to have been missing was wind. Wind! The wind that comes with storms makes trees stronger because their roots have to grow deeper in order to withstand the wind. Not only that but when their roots grow deeper and are strengthened in all the storms—the big and little ones, it helps them survive whatever storms are to come. Those wimpy trees, growing without wind, just fell right over because they never had the opportunity to grow deeper and stronger roots.

This is what our lives are like. If we were all protected and had no troubles with perfect life reels, then we would fall over. But life has storms—big and little ones with some being violent in nature. With each storm, we grow deeper, stronger roots.

The storm I spoke of that came six years ago is when my roots began to grow deep in Christ. And even though that storm was the most violent of my life and I wouldn't wish it upon my worst enemy, I am grateful for it because it changed my relationship with Jesus. He was all I had. And ultimately, He was all I needed.

What I do when I have emotions inside and thoughts that need to be released is write. I had just finished a



healing study after that violent storm and here is part of what I wrote:

*I have learned to take thoughts captive  
To be filtered through His light  
Then I receive them back from Him  
As He shows me what is right.*

*I have learned that I am stubborn  
That I have wanted to keep control  
But it is in my very weakness  
That my Savior can shape my soul*

*I have been crucified with Christ;  
And it is no longer I who live  
But Christ who lives within me  
It is to Him my life I give*

*He will mold me and will make me  
Into who He wants me to be  
Even though He's had to use hard times  
To open my eyes and see*

*His mercy is everlasting  
He is sufficient in all His grace  
He can make beauty from my ashes  
Maybe that's why He brought me to this place*

*So instead of continuing to grieve about  
The great pain in my sad story  
I will choose to take the victory back  
And use it all for God's great glory.*

Oh friends, do you see God's goodness? It is in the trials and tribulations—the storms of this life, that God uses to help us grow deep roots in Him, to help sanctify us—to make us more like Him, and set us apart for His good purpose. And when He is in us and we are in Him, we don't have to compare ourselves with others, we don't have to be insecure anymore, and we don't have to wonder if we will ever measure up—because we are His. And when we are His, we have great value. Greater value than what others see or think of us, greater value than how we look, how much money we make, or how many friends we have. We are His children, fearfully and wonderfully made—called to know Him, abide in Him, and grow roots in Him so that we can withstand the storms of life and use every talent we have and every single thing He has given us for His great glory.

So yes, I will be interviewed and share how creating beautiful spaces in our businesses can show our care and appreciation for our customers and our teams. Perhaps this talent God has given me can be used by Him to help others grow their business and show care. Even something as small and insignificant as this can be used for God's glory. How are you using your talents to help others?

Speaking of help—are you wondering if there is any help for my snake plant that I managed to ruin? Indeed, there is! And perhaps this too is a beauty from ashes moment. You see, my epic gardening fail (a storm of sorts) allowed me to grow in my skills by propagating the tops of the leaves in water. Look at the growing roots! What looked to be ruined is being made new—just like me—and it can be just like you too.

We are all children of God. Yes, we will still have moments when we forget our value in Him and slip back to thinking about what this world values. But we can use moments like this, these words He has given me to share with you, to remind us both of where our true value comes from. Let us all see our value in Him. Let us embrace the storms in life, grow deep roots, and use every single thing God has given us and worked out in us for His glory.



**"We care for people and fix cars!"**