



Introduction

Every woman wants to feel significant, to know her life matters in this crazy, hectic world. We search for meaning and fulfillment in the things we do, wondering if anyone notices. As we dream of something more, we settle for mediocre as we allow fear, perfectionism, and doubt to suffocate our brilliance. Too often, life seems overwhelming and lukewarm instead of invigorating and focused. Add in abuse, rejection and shame from the past and there is little hope for a joyful future.

You were created to flourish! Before you were even born, God had a divine plan for your life. He lovingly wove within your DNA unique gifts, core values and personality traits that make you unlike anyone else. Then He set you out on your life's journey at just the right time to make a difference in the world, a difference that only you can make. Think of the universe as God's masterpiece, a tapestry of beautiful threads that needs your strand to complete an intricate design.

Psalm 139 says:

¹³You alone created my inner being.

You knitted me together inside my mother.

¹⁴I will give thanks to you

because I have been so amazingly and miraculously made.

Your works are miraculous, and my soul is fully aware of this.

¹⁵My bones were not hidden from you

when I was being made in secret,

when I was being skillfully woven in an underground workshop.

¹⁶Your eyes saw me when I was still an unborn child.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book

before one of them had taken place.

You *are* a miracle! And God has a unique purpose for your life. He wants you to flourish, not wither. He intends for you to use the gifts He gave you as only you can, shining brightly and passionately every day as you honor His calling for your life.

No matter what your past has done to wound you, or what your present is doing to stifle you, it is time for you to unearth your God-designed purpose and use it as a foundation for a life that brings greater clarity, deeper fulfillment, less overwhelm and freedom from your limiting beliefs as you honor the One who created you.

In Og Mandino's book *The Greatest Miracle in the World*, he wrote "The God Memorandum," which is a message from God to me and you. In it, he says,

"You are capable of great wonders. Your potential is unlimited.
Never demean yourself again!
Never settle for the crumbs of life!
Never hide your talents, from this day forward!
You can choose failure and despair, or success and happiness. The choice is exclusively yours."

Created to Flourish is your journey to finding purpose and significance. Together we will walk through a proven process to help you overcome your negative beliefs, discover who you are as created by God, cast a vision for your flourishing future and create a plan to get you there. You will learn to see yourself through His eyes as your brilliance begins to shine more brightly, and you will find greater joy in your vocation and your personal life. You'll even find encouragement and motivation for taking better care of your physical self, your "temple of the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 6:19)

Here are the stops along the way, each one including exercises for reflection, visioning and self-discovery.

Set your GPS. *What are you looking for?*

It is important to first know what you want to get out of this program. You must be clear on what you want before you can set a definite course, so setting an intention is like a destination point, giving you a place to focus on as you create your roadmap to get there. Whether it is to find God's purpose for your life, to grow in confidence, to start a new business or to lose ten pounds, your intention will keep you on track and will provide a way to measure your success at the end.

What's holding you back? *Unload your heavy baggage.*

Before you can move ahead in your new journey, you must clear your mind of critical thoughts and replace them with positive, affirming ones. You will more freely envision the flourishing life that is part of God's plan when you let go of self-sabotage and move forward with greater confidence. You will work through fear, perfectionism, self-doubt, healthy boundaries, shame and forgiveness as you trade your negative beliefs for what God says.

Who were you created to be? *Discover your God-designed uniqueness.*

You will ponder your past and examine your present as you unearth your gifts, core values, personality traits and biggest dreams. Assessments and input from friends will help you define your greatest strengths as you learn to embrace your immense value.

Where are you headed? *Envision your ideal future.*

This is your time to dream! We know that God places desires in our hearts in alignment with the purposes He has given us. With your newfound confidence in who you are, you will spend time creating a beautiful vision of your future life, using the unique gifts that will make your journey much easier.

This is who you are. *Create your life purpose statement.*

Your Life Purpose Statement sets you apart from others, just like a custom license plate. When you acknowledge your purpose, your life's journey will be clearly defined, and the words will be imprinted on your mind and heart as you plan your exhilarating future, filled with passion and joy.

Your Itinerary for a flourishing life. *A detailed plan for living with purpose.*

Now is the time to create a focused plan to live a flourishing life. With your unique life purpose statement as your foundation, you will set long- and short-term goals, with priorities and detailed weekly action plans to make the journey easier.

Fuel for the Road. *Maintain a healthy mind, body and spirit.*

You were lovingly created with a mind, body and spirit that need nourishment. Here you will plot your satisfaction with eight areas of your life, and commit to finding greater life harmony as you boost the areas that need attention.

Throughout scripture, the word flourish is used to mean bloom, grow, fly, spring forth, spread, increase and make cheerful. Webster's Dictionary defines flourish "to grow well or luxuriantly; thrive; to do or fare well, prosper; to make bold sweeping movements." Just imagine yourself flourishing in this way, as a vibrant child of the Creator who is using your God-given gifts to make a difference in the world!

There has never been a better time than today to begin pursuing a more joy-filled life, according to God's design. No more feeling invisible. No more fear and doubt. No more frustration or depression. No more settling for less than He created you to be. It's time to live a flourishing life! The world is waiting for you to fly!

A Note about the Lotus Flower

Some have questioned my use of the lotus flower as part of The Flourishing Life® and its ministry to women. There is no better symbol of my heart and this work than this beautiful flower, and here's why.

When I had the glimmer of an idea for a website for women over 50 in 2009 (before my focus shifted to life purpose coaching), I spent many hours trying to come up with just the right words for a title. Being a sucker for alliteration, I wanted something that "flowed" with the word fifty. Of course, "fabulous" first came to mind, but it is so over-used, and is more something you *are* instead of an active word. When I considered the word "flourish," I thought it was the perfect picture of what I wanted to convey. Flourish is something you *do*, it is an active word that symbolizes vitality, energy, joy and success. I had my word...now it was time to chose a logo.

I'm not sure what led me to the lotus flower, but I have always loved its beauty. When I read about how it grows, I knew it was a perfect match for the flourishing woman. This is a description that says exactly what my heart and mind were thinking back then. It is from the blog "God as a Gardener," by Carolyn Adams Roth. This is an excerpt from her blog post "Job and the Lotus Plant."

"Job was a non-Jewish man who worshipped God. He was upright in his conduct and dealings with others (Job 1: 1- 5).We read Job's struggle to understand his losses while still maintaining his faith in God. Finally, God becomes involved in a conversation with Job (Job chapters 38 – 41). God identifies himself as the creator of all things and as such Job should be able to trust God's wisdom, love, and power.

Most eastern cultures and religions identify some sort of symbolism with the lotus plant, e.g., the lotus represents creative power, purity, faithfulness, divine birth, and vitality. Vitality is the ability to live, grow, and develop. Often vitality is associated with the power to endure and survive. In the dry season in Jordan, water in ponds and streams are low and lotus seeds and roots remain dormant in the mud or cracked earth. With the coming of the rains, lotus seeds and roots grow from the mud. Leaf and flower buds emerge over the top of the water and unfold into the visible beauty of the lotus leaf and blossom. Like the lotus plant, Job's dialogues demonstrate vitality – persistent life, endurance, and growth in extreme adversity.

Like the beautiful lotus plant and like Job, we have the opportunity to grow into more vital Christians when we encounter unfavorable and difficulty situations. When we encounter these situation, the way to become a more alive Christian is not to "curse God and die" (Job 2: 9), but to cling even tighter to the giver and sustainer of our lives. When we experience desolation and despair, we need to spend time in prayer and read God's Word. Just like God judged the attitude of

Job's heart and spoke directly to Job's situation, so does the *Bible* speak directly to Christians. God tells us in Hebrews 4: 12 – 13: *The word of the Lord is living and active. The word of the Lord judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight (NIV, 2002, p. 1902). If we open our hearts to God through prayer and Bible reading, God gives us insight into our circumstance that we can use to live and grow. God provides clear perception that we can use to move beyond our present situation to a new vitality.”

The lotus flower is a symbol of the renewal of a woman's spirit, rising from the mud, cracked earth and rainstorms of life. No matter what the drought, there is always hope of beauty and significance through Christ. Every woman is created with immense value, and is a sweet fragrance to God. May your journey bring you new vitality, joy and purpose as you live out His divine plan for your life.