

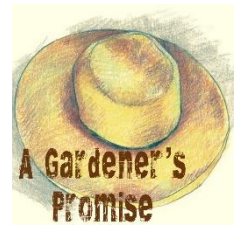
Choosing & Olive and Oak Trees

by [Shelley S. Cramm](#) In: [A Gardener's Promise](#) on Feb 22, 2023

The Lenten season began yesterday, February 22nd, and the Garden in Delight Devotions Blog responds with a special 7-week series called “A Gardener’s Promise.” We all know God planted a garden in Eden, but what does that have to do with Jesus dying on a cross, the event that is the obsession of Lent? Since we know how the crucifixion story ends—with Jesus laid in a garden tomb (John 19:41), appearing back-to-life as a gardener to Mary (John 20:15), and walking down the road with his followers to Emmaus, hometown to the florist growers’ industry (Luke 24:13)—God’s identity as a gardener must be very relevant. Jesus is the one who confirmed God’s gardener status, after all:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. John 15:1 NIV

[My Father is the Gardener](#) journeys through the garden work of God, to relish in near-ridiculousness the delight of this metaphor; A Gardener’s Promise Lent Series journeys through the book’s journey as a companion guide. Blog posts each week will make the reading more personal, with journal questions, plant photos and planting tips as a bonus to the book experience, a way to work out God’s profound assurance in the backyard, arriving at Resurrection Day with a deeper grasp of what Christ has for us in revival life.



Chapters 1 and 2 – Choosing & Olive and Oak Trees

Can you remember the moment? A memory or maybe a garden journal that records the story of deciding to plant your garden, or a section of your yard or windowsill? Was there a day when you declared, you must rip out this hedge and have hydrangeas, or that another spring cannot come and go without crocuses! The commitment to beauty that we make—after arranging an orderly plan or filling our garden center shopping cart on a whim—is a small measure of the abounding pleasure of God the Father, our Gardener. We are His choice; our lives have been landscaped by Him long ago, and He waits with gentlemanly patience for each of us to choose Him.

A wonderful metaphor, the choosing aspect of garden work draws us right into the heart of our relationship with God, for he has chosen each of us.

Shelley S. Cramm, My Father is the Gardener, 2022, page 1

Olive and Oak Trees

Olive and oak trees are some of the first trees to be named in the Scripture story of Genesis, and they seemed fitting testimonies for the garden work of Choosing. Both trees have a stately, mesmerizing presence in the landscape, though in divergent ways.



Olive trees, *Olea europaea*, are unique and mysterious in the American landscape, for only our zone 9 states in the south and west are hospitable to these ancient trees. Most likely you will grow an olive sapling in a pot, so that it can be brought indoors during winter's freezing days. They also make great houseplants for several years at least and are plentiful at fine garden centers.

Read more about olive in the Plant Guide: [Olive – Garden In Delight](#)



Oak trees, by contrast, are very common in our countryside and city parks. *Quercus* species are adapted to nearly every hardiness zone. While one of the most prominent species of the holy land is *Quercus coccifera*, the Kermes oak, an evergreen species with oval, serrated edges, any oak in the landscape will impart a certain measure of mightiness, conveying the stature of God's righteous life that will grow in those who chose Him.

Read more about oak in the Plant Guide: [Kermes Oak – Garden In Delight](#)

Journal Questions Chapter 1

Follow along in Chapter 1 of [My Father is the Gardener](#)

And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Genesis 8:11 ESV

- What is your favorite way to enjoy olives: olive fruits as a snack, as a salad or side dish ingredient, as olive oil? Have you ever grown an olive tree, in a decorative pot, or a full grown tree in your zone 9 landscape? What features come to mind as you describe the fruits and trees?



- As you read about the imagery of olive trees in "Olive's Peace and Blessing," what blessings are you in need of in your home? God's

command to “increase, multiply and fill (Genesis 9:1)” is intended to prosper your family; what do you want to bring to Him for this blessing?

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servants whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.” Isaiah 43:10 NIV

- Is it a fresh revelation to you that God has chosen you; that you are “handpicked,” or that you are His?
- When did it finally sink in for you that you belong to God, and He is delighted about that?
- Write out [Deuteronomy 7:6](#) in your handwriting:

In Christ, he chose us before the world was made. He chose us in love to be his holy people—people who could stand before him without any fault. Ephesians 1:3–4 ERV

God has followed a design from the beginning, and his plan continues unfolding through the epic dramas of the Bible into our quiet garden lives this very day.

Shelley S. Cramm, [My Father is the Gardener](#), 2022, page 8

- Think of a time when you knew God was personally at work in your life – maybe you can only see it now, looking back at events and how they unfolded.

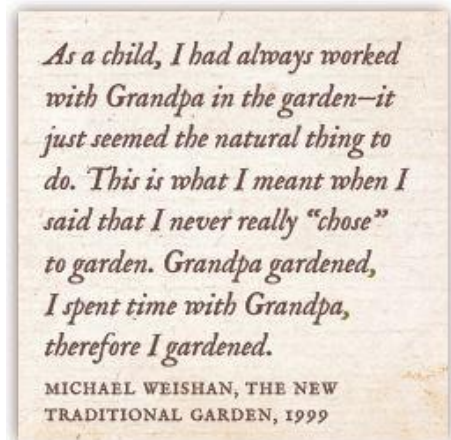
The Lord of hosts has sworn: As I have designed, so shall it be; and as I have planned, so shall it come to pass Isaiah 14:24 NRSV

- Think of a difficult time in your life (we all have them!). Were you aware, however faintly, that God had a plan; that is, that He would bring a good outcome ultimately?
- Write out [Romans 8:28](#) in your handwriting:

- What Words or thoughts helped sustain you during this time? What did you think about to help you keep working or keep moving forward? Was working in the garden a way to cope during this time (or was it the double-whammy of winter!)?
- Does grasping God’s gardener-character help strengthen you for the next set of setbacks?
- Write a prayer for yourself affirming God’s plan and design for your life, despite the troubles that may come:

How joyful are those who fear the Lord— all who follow his ways!
 You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How joyful and prosperous you will be!
 Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine, flourishing within your home.
 Your children will be like vigorous young olive trees as they sit around your table.
 That is the Lord’s blessing for those who fear him.
 May the Lord continually bless you from Zion.
 May you see Jerusalem prosper as long as you live.
 May you live to enjoy your grandchildren.
 May Israel have peace! Psalm 128: 1-6 NLT

- Did you grow up in a faith-full household? That is, did your parents or grandparents teach and talk about God and his ways with you growing up, as [Deuteronomy 6:6-7](#) urges?
- Does it seem, as author Michael Weishan wrote, that you never really “chose” God because that’s just the way your parents or grandparents lived?
- Or does your revelation and relationship with God have a decision point, a determined, private moment apart from your upbringing when you chose Him, to follow Him?



- In Psalm 128, God's Word reveals the relationship between a person's faith and the blessing that comes to their family and succeeding generations. Spend time in prayer for your descendants, even if you don't have a spouse or children yet:



*But I am loyal and gracious
to the thousandth generation
of those who love me
and keep my commandments. Exodus 20:6 CEB*

Journal Questions Chapter 2

Follow along in Chapter 2 of [My Father is the Gardener](#)

It is an incredible risk on his part; with great courage he lets us freely choose him instead of creating us to follow him in thoughtless stupor.

Shelley S. Cramm, [My Father is the Gardener](#), 2022, page 15

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. Isaiah 61:3 NIV



- Do you have an oak tree in your landscape? What species of oak? Is it deciduous or evergreen? Did you plant it, or was it planted by someone before you (for you)? What is it that you appreciate about this tree?
- When the Bible speaks of righteousness, it means right before God, or right standing with God. Read [Romans 4:24](#). How do we receive credit for righteousness?
- Have you made the choice to believe in Jesus and be made right before God? Reflect on your decision day and what stands out to you.
- Julia Ellen Rogers, in *Trees Every Child Should Know*, 1909, wrote: “To begin with, any tree we meet, which bears acorns, we at once recognize as an oak. By this one sign, we are able to set this great family apart from every other tree.” How is this statement about the oak tree’s seed a parallel description of the followers of Jesus?

And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden” Genesis 2:16 NIV

We have freedom now, because Christ made us free. So stand strong in that freedom. Don’t go back into slavery again. Galatians 5:1 ERV

- What is a favorite aspect or most treasured part of your garden? Write a thank you note to God for the freedom to plant it in this way and how much you enjoy it.

“... but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:17 LEB

You may think you are on the right road and still end up dead.
Proverbs 14:12 CEV

- Do you trust God to help you choose well? Does it seem normal to ask God for wisdom, or does it feel forced? Is it easy for you to ask Him, or easier to forget about Him when it is decision time?
- Write out [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) in your own handwriting:
- Do you have an example of a time when you went through a “narrow gate” and not the wide one ([Matthew 7:13](#))?

Follow them, because they make a path that will lead to a long successful life in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
Deuteronomy 5:33 CEV

- In your own words, write down some of God’s promises to His people:
- What are some circumstances that make it hard for you to believe these promises?
- How does the garden imagery of [Psalm 1:2-3](#) help your belief?

But if you don't want to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Joshua 24:15 GW

- How does the daily routine of garden care connect you to Jesus' prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread"?



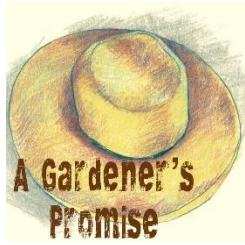
Yet [Abraham] did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:20-21 NIV

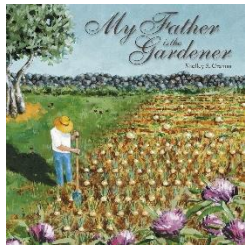
Closing Prayer

O Lord, I praise you for the deep simplicity of the Garden of Eden story. You planted the garden, thereby making it clear that You are with me always and intentional in what You do: Garden, Gardener, planning, and design are integral. To think you landscaped my life long ago is fantastic (Ephesian 1:3, 1 Peter 1:2)! But then again, You begin things with the end in mind. Thank you for all of these Words and the practice of choosing that I engage in as a gardener in Your image, and remind me this week that You are ready to help and guide me every day. I am grateful to belong to You. Thank you for choosing me. In Jesus Name I pray, Amen.

For the Lord will never walk away from his cherished ones, nor will he forsake his chosen ones who belong to him. Psalm 94:14 TPT



A Gardener's Promise explores God's forever-with-you devotion to us. More than a casual sentiment, God's love is an enriching commitment to dig into everything together, a promise to hang your hat on. Part journal questions, part planting guide, this 7-part series has been created as a companion to [My Father is the Gardener](#), [Devotions in Botany and Gardening of the Bible](#), a way to work out God's profound assurance in the backyard, arriving at Resurrection Day with a deeper grasp of what Christ has for us in revival life.



Enjoy Shelley's latest book, a perfect study for Lent and the herald of spring. *My Father is the Gardener* digs into the plants, gardening, and landscapes of the Bible, unearthing inspiration in the routine ways of caring for plants and keeping a garden. Now available at BRIT Press, Powell's Bookstore, and Amazon. [Click to order: www.gardenindelight.com/books/my-father-is-the-gardener/](#)

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