

BEAUTY  
BEYOND  
THE  
THORNS

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DISCOVERING GIFTS  
IN SUFFERING

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**Quotes from Beauty Beyond the Thorns**  
by ©Darci J. Steiner, Author



“I see beauty beyond the thorns because I see him.”

“We want our thorns removed, but the pain from the thorns is the very tool that is healing what most needs to be healed in us—our souls. Satan uses thorns to puncture, but Jesus staunches our wounds with himself.”

“Joy and suffering can coexist in the same space; they can be experienced together.”

“God may use our suffering [and healing journey] to provide gifts to those around us. When the bleeding woman reached out in faith to touch the fringe of Jesus’ cloak, he not only healed her, but—those watching in the crowd found healing for their faithlessness and hopelessness.”

“Sometimes, we learn best from our life experiences, but failing to learn lessons from the lives of others, is like staying in a house caught on fire because you’ve never been burned. You don’t have to wait to learn to get out of a burning house until you are stuck in one—you get out because you have learned from other people who haven’t been as fortunate.”

“It is within suffering that God reveals himself to you just like he revealed himself to the world at the cross. Suffering provides opportunities for you to understand the sufferings of Jesus and draw closer to him. The cross is where darkness and light meet. When you feel you are in the dark, you will find love and hope at the cross.”

“Whether your suffering is short or long, he is your refuge from the storm. Jesus—he is the beauty beyond our thorns.”

## Chapter 1 – The Gift of Hope

*“How can we understand hope without having faith?”*



“I am learning I can survive my worst fears. Even twice. I am learning to sit in fear and not be afraid because I know God’s plans for me are always good. He showed me that before. I believe gifts in suffering are most often given in hindsight so we can grow in trust during its ravages. When I suffer, I am called to a place of discomfort, a place I do not want to be, but a place where God chooses to grow me. It’s a place where I must turn around to face him so he can lead in the direction of his choosing. I am not in control. But that’s a good thing!”



“Suffering in our lives often doesn’t make sense, but God always has a purpose for it, always for our benefit. Jesus dying on the cross didn’t make sense, but God had an immense purpose for it—the salvation of our souls. He is our ultimate hope. His plans are better than ours, so we have reason to hope even though we don’t understand his allowance of our troubles. Faith is being sure of what we hope for.”



“The cross I am carrying, and thorns I bear, are paving the way toward receiving a heavenly crown. ‘Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him’” (James 1:12).

## Chapter 2 – The Gift of Perseverance


*“How can we know what perseverance is until we’ve run out of strength?”*





“The revolutionary Jesus was in town leading a revolutionary way—those previously considered on top of the religious hierarchy are bump, bump, bumped to the bottom, and those who mourn, the meek, poor in spirit, pure in heart, and those persecuted are now considered great in the kingdom of God.”

## Chapter 3 – The Gift of Compassion

*“How can we know what compassion is until we’ve emulated it to the degree Jesus exemplified it?”*

 “...Jesus wasn’t reliant on a person’s expression of faith to heal them. He healed people who had faith, and he healed those with no faith.”

 “Jesus was more concerned about man than the law, but the Pharisees (religious leaders) were more concerned about the law than man.”

 “When we suffer, we are carved, and it hurts. God chisels us through anguish to fulfill the ultimate purpose he has for our lives and even for those around us. Love includes pain because love is the chisel that forms us into who he designed us to be.”


### **Chapter 4 – The Gift of Deliverance**


“How can we know what it means to be delivered until we've surrendered?”

 “God uses the people who pray prayers to answer those very prayers.”

### **Chapter 5 – The Gift of Love**


“How can we know what love is without allowing ourselves to receive it?”

 “This better-than-a-Hallmark love story is about the Jesus of the Bible, who traded in his crown of thorns to offer us not a small finger ring of gold and diamonds, but instead a heavenly eternal crown.”

 “The Bible says God has set eternity in our hearts so that one day we might seek and find him. He made us to want to be in a relationship with him” (See Ecc. 3:11).


### **Chapter 6 – The Gift of Grace**


“How can we understand grace until we’ve realized our profound need for forgiveness?”


 “Suffering has confirmed for me there is a God, for miracles can only come from him. He has healed pains and solved problems no other being, or icon, could solve.”


## **Chapter 7 – The Gift of Courage**

“How can we know what courage is until we do something beyond our capabilities?”

 “If we go into hiding, others cannot see God working gloriously through our limitations. God may not choose to heal our physical imperfections during our earthly life, but our hearts can heal, and we can move closer to God the souls of many who are watching us. Like this man [the man with the withered hand], we must courageously choose to obey God and not run away, even when we are afraid. We must have courage to face where we have never been.”


 “Pain and imperfections in our lives do not equal a lack of love from God. Instead, they reveal, at the right time, a divine and perfect purpose packed with love.”

 “My life is different now, and I am often avoided and looked at and treated as weak. And I was, and am, but at the same time, I’m not. I’m stronger now—more courageous. I am stronger now in many ways than when I could walk. Suffering has taught me not to look at those who are obviously suffering with woeful eyes, but instead to look at them with the utmost respect.”

 “I want to have courage to hold out my disability to God for him to use in the way of his choosing. God will be with me wherever I go. I need only to be strong and courageous.”

## **Chapter 8 – The Gift of Joy**

“How can we know what joy is without having suffered?”

 “How can we fully know and appreciate joy without having suffered? Joy is born from suffering.”

## **Chapter 9 – The Gift of Community**

“How can we know what community is until we make space for others?”

## **Chapter 10 – The Gift of Transformation**

“How can we be formed without carving and chiseling?  
He is forming us into who he intends us to be.”

## **Chapter 11 – The Gift of Faith**

“How can we know how to have faith without  
learning from others who embody it?”

## **Chapter 12 – The Gift of Mercy**

“How can we know what mercy is until we’ve practiced gifting it?”

## **Chapter 13 – The Gift of Repentance**

“How can we know what repentance is until we  
walk toward the cross instead of a comfortable life?”



“Matthew's life changed drastically when he followed the homeless man instead of his wealth. He chose honesty over fraud and humility over prosperity. He walked next to Jesus as a student to learn about this curious upside-down way of life.”



“Matthew chose to be a lowly sheep and gave up his wealth that didn't satisfy. What he gained in his repentance is priceless and eternal.”

## **Chapter 14 – The Gift of Endurance**

“How can we know what endurance is without being refined by fire?”

“Jesus likes to give people nicknames, according to who he sees us *becoming*. Like to Simon, he gave the name Peter, meaning the "Rock," even though Peter was not rock-solid. God saw who he was becoming instead of focusing on his weaknesses. And you know what? Peter eventually died a martyr's death for his beloved friend and Savior, and he chose to be crucified upside-down. What kind of faith is more rock-solid than that? He must have had a compelling reason to give his life in this way. He understood the ‘why.’”

“We may never know the reason God allows us to endure the flames. Job never understood the ‘why’ in his suffering. God never told him, even though they conversed. If God had described to Job the reason for his suffering, Job wouldn’t have exemplified his faith the way he did by *not* knowing.”

“Enduring suffering can become a gift because it is an opportunity for us to grow from who we are into who God intends for us to become.”

## Chapter 15 – The Gift of Direction

“How can we know what direction to go when we do not have control of our steps? Our plans get thwarted, but from God's perspective, our path always points to him—True North.”

“God has worked everything for my good in the past, so when I doubt he will in my future, I must look back and remember his faithfulness.”

“Humility is our strength that leaves room for God’s grace to be sufficient. There is beauty beyond the thorns—Christ. He has reasons to allow thorns in our lives. Paul wrote more books in the Bible than anyone despite his fleshly thorn. Isn’t that beautiful? See how God used Paul’s thorn for good? He wants to turn our weaknesses to strengths too.”

“Pride is more dangerous than a thorn. If you’ve been given a thorn, it is for your protection; it has been gifted because there is something beautiful that is being purposed for you. God knows the ‘why.’ His grace and knowledge are sufficient. You can trust him. Suffering has taught me what matters most in life is not what we see, but what God sees.”

## Chapter 16 – The Gift of Fulfillment

“How can we know what fulfillment is until we let God alone fill?”



“We try to fill ourselves with things that don’t fulfill. Food never fulfills—the lack of it or the overabundance of it.”



“Only God is the heart-shaped peg that fits into our heartfelt need.”



“True worth isn’t found in appearance. We can only find it by believing how God feels about us. In him is where we find our *true* identity.”



“Satan and his minion demons try to separate us from God. But don’t let them. Fight them with the truth about who and whose you are. Instead of food and other addictions, God’s Word can be our go-to comfort.”

## Chapter 17 – The Gift of Provision

How can we not know what provision is when God made creation to reproduce fish, fowl, beasts, plants, and trees?



“God provides for our needs daily. Like his disciples were expected and taught to figure out a way to help meet the needs of the hungry, we too are given the task of helping those who need a hand. We are called to compassion—to notice needs around us and respond in love. God will miraculously multiply our efforts to make a difference in ways we cannot even see.”



“God provides us with resources, and he will multiply our efforts, but we must take the step of giving before he can multiply.”

## Chapter 18 – The Gift of a Shepherd

“How can we understand the gift of our Shepherd if we don’t understand the needs of a sheep?”





“We must see people. We must be compassionate. We must reach out and touch others; our efforts will help heal something in those people.”

## **Chapter 19 – The Gift of Touch**

“How can we understand the value of touch if we've never held the hand of a sufferer?”



“I find it ironic that Jesus didn't have to touch lepers to heal them, yet he did. His perfect love and compassion touched them because he wanted to initiate their emotional healing, not just their physical recovery.”



“Many of us have given up reaching out in faith to ‘touch’ Jesus. Instead, we are waiting for Jesus to ‘touch’ us. When we feel he hasn't, we claim he is non-existent or doesn't care. We have a choice: Do we turn toward God in trust, or do we turn away from him in bitterness? Will we remain bitter and angry, or let God reveal himself and his beauty beyond the thorns to us throughout our suffering?”

## **Chapter 20 – The Gift of Gratitude**

“If we don't express gratitude, is it because we feel entitled?”



“Are we so used to God doing things for us we take him for granted? Afflictions in my life have deepened my gratitude for things and people I used to take for granted. Think about a wound you have had in your life, like a skinned knee. God formed new skin cells and healed that wound. Isn't that remarkable? I mean, I can't make new skin cells. Can you? Oh, how often we take our Healer for granted.”

## **Chapter 21 – The Gift of a Good Samaritan**

“How can we know how to be a Good Samaritan if we don't allow ourselves to be inconvenienced to help someone in need?”

## **Chapter 22 – The Gift of Forgiveness**

“How can we know what forgiveness is until we have been utterly broken by our sin?”

## **Chapter 23 – The Gift of Sight**

“How can we know what sight is without following the One who sees?”



“You may not understand the whys of your life sufferings, but like Hagar, once you realize God sees you, you can be strengthened to carry on fulfilling your purpose. Living with chronic pain has clarified my purpose. Various callings have been eliminated and illuminated, providing a path I do not question. My purpose hasn’t been compromised; it’s been defined.”



“Once we know God sees us, it will strengthen us to see others more clearly.”

## **Chapter 24 – The Gift of Wholeness**

“How can we be whole if we hide behind our pain?”

## **Chapter 25 – The Gift of Obedience**

“If Jesus learned obedience through suffering, how will we?”



“In the classic Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the listening crowds that life going forward would be backward. Before, kings lived in palaces; now, the King is homeless. Before, the Pharisees dictated the behavior of society; now, the love of God would. Before, those who were sick, outcast, and oppressed were on the fringe; now, they would be honored. Before, victory came from winning wars; now, the war would be won by the Savior of the world dying on a cross. It all seemed so backward because it was. It still is. How many people do you know that consider meekness a strength? Or aspire to be gentle? Or strive to obey God instead of following their desires?”



“How do you honestly feel when you look to embrace the way of life described in the Beatitudes? Poor in spirit. Mourners. Meek. Hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Merciful. Pure in heart. Peacemakers. Persecuted because of righteousness. Insulted. False accusations and evil said against you because of him. Are you willing?”



“Upside-down. Inside out. Backwards. In this world, we are blind, but the Bible can help us see if we listen. The God who sees all does all he can so we also will see.”



“We too learn obedience through suffering because it is most often during suffering that we pray and turn to the pages of God’s Word, looking for him and answers to life.”

## **Chapter 26 – The Gift of Light**

“How can we appreciate the light unless we’ve encountered despairing darkness?”



“We have been given a light to follow—God. He may seem like a dim taillight to you now, but you will find it becomes brighter the more you follow and invest time and energy into learning about him. The closer you get to him, the more he will illuminate your path, no matter the darkness you have encountered.”

## **Chapter 27 – The Gift of Trust**


“How can we understand trust without living humbly?”




“Sad truth is that Satan is remarkably successful at promoting self-rule and autonomy over humility and trust in God. But God didn’t create us to be above others or to function self-sufficiently. He made us to have a relationship with him and with others. He made us to value other human beings, not promoting ourselves above another or above him.”




“When things are taken from us [like from Job], and we still worship God, we defeat Satan too.”


 “Like in Job's story, God does not tell us why he allows suffering in our lives. Some of us expect that if God were good, he would give us a comfy life. That is an American tale, not a biblical one.”


 “Hardening our hearts is a venomous ploy of Satan’s, and we are amiss if we listen to his hiss to mistrust the only One who is wholly trustworthy.”

## **Chapter 28 – The Gift of Adoration**

“How can we feel God’s love if we don’t accept his adoration of us?”


 “If love is not freely received, it can only go so far before it is obstructed.”

 “People betray us, tell us we are worthless, use us. Joseph’s brothers intended to harm him, but God used his suffering for the good of many people, including saving the lives of his brothers themselves. God adored all of them, and Joseph’s thorns ultimately brought glory to God because Joseph adored him.”

 “To endure suffering is a more extraordinary feat than winning a marathon. The finish line of a marathon is only a steppingstone to more remarkable accomplishments for the sufferer.”

## **Chapter 29 – The Gift of Empathy**

“How can we understand the empathy of Christ until we grasp that he himself suffered temptation in every way?”

 “...Guess what prepared Jesus for his ministry? Experiencing the wilderness—suffering and thorns. Who better to help those hurting than those who have themselves undergone trials? Without experiencing the thorns in the wilderness, we would have no perseverance, empathy, compassion, understanding, joy, courage, gratitude, or deliverance.”

☞ “What other religion has a god who has been willing to suffer and die a horrific death? Jesus was nailed to a cross, hanging naked for hours in front of the crowds. #MeToo. What other god has done this for you and miraculously risen from the dead? #NoOne.”

☞ “Heartache sucks the life out of you unless your life aches for Christ.”

## Chapter 30 – The Gift of Brokenness

### How can we find comfort from God in our brokenness if we don't accept Jesus was pierced for our transgressions?

☞ “All of us are broken. We come from broken families with broken hearts, and we grieve broken dreams. We are broken up with and have breakdowns. We barely break even or are flat broke. Our bones break, and our spirits break. Our houses get broken into, and our skin breaks out. We are broken vessels with a broken compass and no clear direction. We wonder when we will have a breakthrough.”

☞ “Jesus knows brokenness. He understands each brand of brokenness, and he knows our brokenness does not have to be the end of our stories or define us. Life does not end during seasons of brokenness, but it changes us. We can find refuge in the One who broke himself so we can be healed. The benefits of having suffered deliver a superior understanding of the benefits of the cross.”

☞ “Jesus had the power to but did not stop the Roman soldiers and others from physically breaking him down. He didn't stop them because he knew *the victory was in the breaking*; the victory was beyond what was physically seen, in the spiritual realm. Reason lies beyond the pain, beyond the thorn, beyond our comprehension. We cannot see what God sees, but if we did, as Timothy Keller says, ‘... God gives us what we would have asked for if we knew everything that He knows.’ God sees the benefits of our pain. Our hardest seasons can become some of our most glorious memories and training ground for our future journey. The past will speak for itself in time. Our hoped-for outcome may never transpire, but we can change our perspective to live for what God is producing in us, instead of focusing on our limited view.”

☞ “Give me a nail or a blanket, and I'll choose the nail any day. The cross provides lasting comfort—the blanket, a temporary fix.”

❧ “How can we be overcomers unless we’ve been underdogs? Finding meaning provides direction in our lives to help us live our life's purpose. If we are to live in the image of God, we are to bear suffering because Jesus did. How do we gain peace? Piece by piece—one moment, one day, one minute, one second at a time.”

❧ What do we do when we feel our will is better than his? My will seems safer because it doesn't include chronic pain. But I must remember everything he allows in my life is to lead to one result—the salvation of my soul. I don't have the power to save it. In this pain, I'm sharing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—where darkness meets light.”

❧ “His cross was to die for me, my cross is to live for him. Suffering is the rite of passage to deeper communing with him.”

❧ “I don't know if I will ever walk again, but I will always walk with him.”

❧ “We are broken but have access to a superpower—the Holy Spirit who can guide us through darkness.”

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