

Flowers and Financial Security

By Mechel Wall

The Lord has increased my capacity, enlarged my abilities, and made much more of me than I would have become on my own.

The fact that I had never graduated from college always bothered me. I knew that if anything happened to my husband, I wasn't prepared financially to provide for our family.

Then the unthinkable happened. I received a gut-wrenching, life-shattering phone call.

"Call 911!" my distressed husband yelled. "I'm pinned under the tractor!"

I called for help and then made it in record time to the land he had been clearing, passing a long line of emergency vehicles on the gravel road to our property in Pea Ridge, Arkansas, USA. Barry was alive, but he was indeed pinned beneath the engine of a tractor that had flipped.

Using hydraulic rescue tools, emergency workers lifted the tractor and pulled Barry free. His legs, soaked in diesel fuel, looked broken in several places. He was rushed to a trauma center, where he received a priesthood blessing before having his legs X-rayed.



We were surprised that not one bone was broken, but the back of one of Barry's legs had been severely burned by diesel fuel. The crush injury had also led to toxification of his kidneys. His life was in jeopardy.

After Barry spent five tense days in the hospital, his toxin levels finally began to drop. Months of dressing changes, skin grafts, surgeries, and hyperbaric oxygen therapy followed. Once he felt well enough, Barry resumed his sales job from home.

"No One Would Hire Me"

This experience was a wake-up call. As I spent the next few years contemplating what I could do if I lost Barry, I did volunteer work, attended workshops, and applied for several part-time jobs. But I had no marketable skills, and no one would hire me.

We live on a farm, with pastureland for a few animals, so I began to research farming as a living. One day an idea came to me: flowers. After researching flower farming, I decided to give it a try. I went to a conference for flower growers and prepared to transition from pastureland to row crops. Then, in November 2016, I signed up for a

Self-Reliance Services class on how to start and grow my own business.

Our Own Flower Shop

The 12-week course was exactly what I needed. I had a basic business plan and lots of fun ideas, but I lacked organization. Ideas came up in class that I hadn't considered before. I acted on each one. As I worked that first year growing and selling flowers, the suggestions and principles I learned in the class came into play:

- I found a low-interest business loan.
- I expanded my market to include farmers markets and flower shops.
- I booked several events on our farm as an expansion of my services.

In late 2017, after my first year of farming, I realized that selling to flower shops was taking too much time. "What if I opened my own flower shop?" I wondered. The local flower shop had closed, and the building had become an eyesore. So my husband and I bought it, fixed it up, and opened a flower shop that also sells art and local crafts. In addition, I opened a plant rental and interior plant design business.

I sell my flowers through our shop and at coffee shops, boutique stores, and a kiosk at the local airport. Each day, I harvest what I need.

The Lord Cares

I have a testimony that the Lord cares about my business. He has helped me create financial security for myself *and* part-time jobs for several women who want to work flexible hours and for students working their way through school. One of our daughters manages the flower farm, and two of our sons do much of the farm work, including helping to build a greenhouse. Barry helps in the evenings and on weekends, doing the heavy lifting.

We all support each other and work together. It has been a blessing for everyone involved. I keep busy but still have time for my family, Church callings, ministering duties, and volunteer work.

Working from the time I plant a seed or a bulb to when I present a flower to a customer gives me a tremendous sense of accomplishment. I have no doubt that the Lord has enlarged my abilities and made much more of me than I would have become on my own. ■

The author lives in Arkansas, USA.