

God's Splendor Revealed In Orchids!

Martin G. Collins

Given 29-Aug-20; Sermon #1560c

On our wedding day over 44 years ago, my lovely bride, Susan, carried a wedding bouquet of a dazzling array of cymbidium orchids. She was the perfect picture of beauty and elegance. The scene was mesmerizing as she embraced those orchids.

That perfect moment instilled in me a great appreciation of orchids. Sue, and secondarily orchids, have fascinated me ever since. Having nurtured various types of orchids off and on for many years, some with success in producing flowers and some without, either way there is a hopeful enjoyment in the prospect they will bloom.

My daughter Kristy has been involved in growing her own orchids for several years. One is in bloom in her office right now. She is carrying on what has become a family tradition of sorts.

There are thousands upon thousands of flowers in God's creation. All represent invisible attributes of God. All demonstrate His love for beauty, His careful nurturing of the plants in His greenhouse, His tremendous imagination, and His rejoicing over things that are good. God's enjoyment of flowers is indicated in Song of Solomon 2:12:

Song of Solomon 2:12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, ...

For thousands of years and on every continent, people have had direct contact with orchids. They have been obsessed with the beauty of their flowers, attracted by their heavy perfume, or intrigued by the essences that can be extracted from them. There are more than 25,000 documented species of orchids, and scientists are finding more every day. This means the number of orchids on the planet is four times the number of birds and four times the number of mammals.

Orchids are of the plant species (or scientific family name) *Orchidaceae*. These attractively flowered, non-woody perennial plants are generally terrestrial or epiphytic herbs (i.e., growing on other plants rather than rooted in soil).

In Genesis 1:11-13, we see that God called forth herbs into existence:

Genesis 1:11-13 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day.

Orchids are herbs, but they are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. However, various biblical scholars of both the Old and New Testaments have suspected that some herbs which are mentioned in the Bible are orchids since orchids do grow in the area of the Holy Land.

The smallest orchid is the size of a dime. The petals are so thin that they are just one cell thick and transparent. Orchids have the tiniest seeds in the world. A single seedpod can have up to 3 million

seeds inside! You will not see them though; they are the size of a tiny speck of dust and are only visible under a microscope. Part of the reason for their small size is that they lack an endosperm and have no nutrients within. They require contact with a specific type fungus to germinate and grow. The largest orchid weighs several hundred pounds!

God also designed orchids to trick insects into pollinating them. The reproductive parts of many orchid flowers are shaped and colored to look like the kind of insect they hope to attract. Once the insect is interested, the orchid's pollen sticks to the bug until it flies off to find another orchid that it mistakes for a mate.

Pollen from an ancient fossilized orchid was found by scientists on the back of a bee encased in amber, as detailed in a 2007 study in the journal *Nature*.

Some orchid flowers bloom for mere hours, while others last up to half a year. Job 14:1-2 says,

Job 14:1-2 Man who is born of woman Is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue.

Phalaenopsis orchids are versatile enough to last in a cut flower arrangement longer than most. That is why the moth orchid, which is of the genus *Phalaenopsis*, is the most popular in homes. Every one of us in the room has probably seen them in stores—Lowes, Home Depot, WalMart—especially around Mother's Day. Sue has taken care of a beautiful moth orchid for the last 4 months, since Mother's Day. It was already in full bloom with about 8 blooms. The last flower recently fell off after more than 16 weeks of blooming, but the plant lives on and will produce flowers again.

Although most flowers fade away, the orchid plant can live up to 100 years. This makes them a challenge to grow and cultivate. They take what seems like forever to sprout and turn into a plant. It takes patience and a very green-thumb to grow orchids from seeds. (Remember I mentioned the seeds are so small you have to look at them through a microscope.) The plant's first flowers will not appear until at least 5 to 7 years after germination. The houseplants you find in stores are often a decade old. That is how long they have been growing before the store can sell them with flowers on them.

Orchids promote a calming environment. They add a warm and cheerful design touch to an otherwise dull room.

Vanilla is a species of orchid. Ancient Aztec inscriptions tell us how the fruit of the tropical climbing orchid genus *Vanilla* was used by early Aztec peoples to flavor a traditional drink made from cocoa beans. The genus *Vanilla* has climbing stems that may reach lengths of several hundred feet. The "flat leafed" vanilla plant is one of the most widespread.

After germination, orchids require minimal care. You do not have to be well-versed in horticulture to raise a healthy, thriving orchid. They are easy to water and have minimal additional needs, like filtered light, and have little or no additional nutritional needs beyond the fungus in bark or moss it grows upon.

Orchids have a bilateral symmetry that resembles the human face. One type is called a Monkey orchid because it has a face designed into its center that clearly looks like a monkey's face.

If a line is drawn vertically down the middle of the flower of an orchid, the two halves are mirror images of each other. Often when you look at an orchid, it seems to be looking back at you.

It is truly amazing how much intelligent design and care has been designed into the plants of the earth by our God. The most basic thing that flowers and humans share is life; flowers and humans both are born, grow, reproduce, and then die.

Isaiah 40:5-8 The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."

(The song we sang earlier contains Psalm 103:15, which says that the love of God lasts forever in the same comparison to flowers fading.)

Like a seed, the Word is small and seemingly insignificant, but it has life and power within. The Word must be planted to do any good; but when it is planted in the heart, it produces fruit, as we heard in the sermonette by Ted Bowling ["Listen, Wait, and Then Speak"]. God's Word is eternal, and the fruit it produces is eternal; but the things of the flesh (or that are physical) do not last. Whatever we do in obedience to the Word of God will last forever! But whatever we do in the energy of the flesh may look good for a time, but will then die. "But the word of our God stands forever."