

A Fern in a Cactus World

For the gentle, sensitive woman who's been told she needs to toughen up

TAMMY LODGE

Regulated Woman

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A Fern in a Cactus World

For the gentle, sensitive woman who's been told she needs to toughen up

Made a Fern on purpose

TAMMY LODGE

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Welcome

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

Have you spent years wondering what's wrong with you? Feeling too sensitive, too soft, too much, or not tough enough for the world around you?

Maybe nothing is wrong with you. Maybe you're a Fern, living in a Cactus world.

A Cactus thrives in harsh, dry, blazing places. It's tough, spiky and built for survival. A Fern is different. It flourishes in shade, moisture, shelter and gentle light. Put a Fern in the desert and it will wilt, however hard it tries. Not because it's weak, but because it was never designed for that place.

The Gardener made you exactly as you are, on purpose. This booklet will help you understand how you were made, what you need to flourish, and how to stop trying to be a Cactus.

This booklet will help you:

- recognise whether you're a Fern, a Cactus, or a Fern in a Cactus mask
- understand what you need to flourish
- take off the mask, gently
- trust the Gardener with where He plants you.

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Fern or Cactus?

Two kinds of plant

A FERN	A CACTUS
Gentle and sensitive	Tough and resilient in harsh places
Needs shelter and shade	Thrives in blazing sun
Needs regular watering	Can go a long time without
Notices everything	Lets things bounce off
Hurt by harsh words	Spiky when threatened
Grows best in a safe, nurturing place	Survives almost anywhere

Neither is better. God made both. But they need very different conditions to flourish.

Which one sounds more like me?

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The Fern in a Cactus Mask

Pretending to be tough

Many Ferns learn early that softness isn't safe. So they put on a Cactus mask: spikes on the outside, wilting on the inside.

Tick what's true for you.

- ☐ I've been told I'm "too sensitive" or need to "toughen up".
- ☐ I hide how much things affect me.
- ☐ I act tougher than I feel.
- ☐ I can get prickly when I'm hurt, then feel awful afterwards.
- ☐ I push through harsh environments, and wonder why I'm exhausted.
- ☐ I feel like I don't fit, but I can't explain why.
- ☐ I've spent years wondering what's wrong with me.

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Not Wrong, Just Planted Wrong

The problem may be the soil

A Fern dying in the desert doesn't need fixing. It needs replanting.

You may not be broken. You may simply have spent years in the wrong conditions: harsh relationships, critical environments, relentless pace or dry seasons with no nourishment.

> *But the godly will flourish like palm trees and grow strong like the cedars of Lebanon. For they are transplanted to the Lord's own house. They flourish in the courts of our God.*
> Psalm 92:12–13

The environments where I've wilted:

The places where I've flourished:

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The Gardener Knows

He made you on purpose

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Psalm 139:13–14

The Gardener doesn't make mistakes. He didn't make you a Fern by accident, and He doesn't expect you to become a Cactus to be useful.

He knows exactly what you need: how much light, how much water, how much shelter, and when you need repotting.

He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle.
Isaiah 42:3

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What a Fern Needs

The conditions for flourishing

A FERN NEEDS…	WHAT THAT MIGHT LOOK LIKE FOR ME
Shade and shelter	Safe people, safe places and rest
Regular water	Time with God, His Word and worship
Rich, gentle soil	Kind, nourishing relationships
Gentle light	Encouragement, not harshness
Protection from wind	Boundaries, and less exposure to chaos
Steady care	Rhythm, routine and a slower pace

The Lord will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring.
Isaiah 58:11

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Too Much Sun

When the world is too harsh

Ferns scorch in full sun. For a Fern woman, “full sun” might be:

- ☐ A harsh, critical or competitive workplace
- ☐ Constant noise, rush and pressure
- ☐ Relationships with lots of conflict or criticism
- ☐ Endless busyness, with no shade or rest
- ☐ Always being “on”, visible and performing

He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength.
Psalm 23:2–3

Where I need more shade:

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The Dry Season

When I'm not being watered

A Fern without water curls up and goes brown at the edges. Spiritually and emotionally, we can dry out too: running on empty, disconnected from God, with no one pouring into us.

For I will pour out water to quench your thirst and to irrigate your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit on your descendants.
Isaiah 44:3

WATERING THE FERN

- ☐ Time with God every day, even five minutes
- ☐ Worship music that fills me up
- ☐ A friend who refreshes me
- ☐ Rest that actually restores me
- ☐ Time in God's creation

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Living Among Cacti

Prickly people

Cacti aren't bad. God made them too, and many have beautiful flowers. But a Fern planted right up against a Cactus will get pricked.

LIVING WELL AMONG CACTI

- ☐ Love them, without trying to become like them.
- ☐ Don't take every prick personally.
- ☐ Keep a healthy distance where needed.
- ☐ Set boundaries, kindly and clearly.
- ☐ Find Fern friends who understand you.

Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.
Romans 12:18

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When I've Got Prickly

Grace for the Fern who grew spikes

Sometimes a Fern who's been hurt too often grows spikes of her own: sharp words, defensiveness, coldness or snapping at the people closest to her. Then she feels terrible afterwards.

That's not who you really are. It's the mask doing its job. But it can still hurt others.

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.
Ephesians 4:32

WHEN I'VE BEEN PRICKLY

- ☐ Notice it, without beating myself up.
- ☐ Say sorry where I need to.
- ☐ Ask: what was I protecting?
- ☐ Bring the hurt underneath to God.
- ☐ Receive His grace, and try again.

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Taking Off the Mask

Gently, and in safe places

The Cactus mask protected you once. But it's heavy to wear, and it keeps people from knowing the real you.

> *But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there.*
> *Psalm 51:6*

TAKING IT OFF

- ☐ Start with God. He already sees the real me.
- ☐ Then with one safe person.
- ☐ Admit when something hurts, instead of getting prickly.
- ☐ Let my gentleness be seen, a little at a time.
- ☐ Stop apologising for how God made me.

Where I wear my Cactus mask most:

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Fern Friendships

Finding your people

Ferns grow well together. They shelter each other, hold moisture around each other and create the conditions for each other to thrive.

The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.
Proverbs 27:9

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help.
Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

FERN FRIENDS…

- Notice how you're really doing.
- Don't make you feel "too much".
- Are gentle with you, and honest with you.
- Point you back to the Gardener.

The Fern friends in my life, or where I could find them:

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Ferns Are Strong Too

Gentle is not weak

Ferns are some of the oldest plants on earth, and they are surprisingly resilient. Some are among the first to grow back after a fire.

Gentleness isn't weakness. It's a fruit of the Spirit.

> *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*
> *Galatians 5:22–23*

> *God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.*
> *Matthew 5:5*

Jesus Himself said, "I am humble and gentle at heart" (Matthew 11:29).

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Being Repotted

When the Gardener moves you

Sometimes the Gardener lifts a plant out of soil that's no longer good for it, and plants it somewhere new. It can feel unsettling. Roots are disturbed. But it's for growth.

> *They will be like great oaks that the Lord has planted for his own glory.*
> *Isaiah 61:3*

WHEN I'M BEING REPOTTED

- ☐ Trust the Gardener's hands.
- ☐ Give my roots time to settle.
- ☐ Don't judge the new place too quickly.
- ☐ Let go of the old pot.

Where the Gardener may be moving me:

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Rooted in Him

The deepest soil

But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought.
Jeremiah 17:7–8

Whatever the conditions around me, my deepest roots can go down into Him. He is my shade, my water and my shelter.

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
Psalm 91:1

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My Fern Care Plan

What I need to flourish

WHAT I NEED	WHERE OR HOW I'LL FIND IT
Shade and rest	
Watering by God	
Safe people	
Gentle encouragement	
Boundaries	
A slower pace	
Time in creation	

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Prayers and Declarations

A PRAYER FOR A FERN

Gardener, thank You for making me a Fern.
Forgive me for the years I've spent wishing I were a Cactus, or wondering what's wrong with me.
Thank You that You made me gentle and sensitive on purpose.
Show me where I need shade, water and shelter.
Help me to take off the Cactus mask, gently, in safe places.
Plant me where I can flourish, and root me deep in You.
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

I DECLARE

I am a Fern, and the Gardener made me on purpose.
I'm not broken. I'm made for different soil.
My gentleness is a strength.
I take off the Cactus mask.
My roots go deep into God.
I will flourish where He plants me.

My Journal

Growing as a Fern

DATE	WHERE I WILTED OR FLOURISHED	WHAT I NEEDED

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A Closing Blessing

May you know that the Gardener made you a Fern on purpose.
May He lead you to shade, water and shelter.
May you take off every mask, and be fully yourself in Him.
May your roots go deep into His love,
and may you flourish like a well-watered garden.
Amen.

Flourish where He plants you.

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My Notes and Prayers

Regulated Woman

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

regulated-woman.com

become@regulated-woman.com