

SUNFLOWERS FOR JESUS

02/05/20 | Episode 14

In this story, Carlos expresses his love for Christ through his love of Sunflowers in a short story that was inspired by a poem titled, "God's Garden", written by Leda Diedrich, 2018.

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The title of today's story is, "**SUNFLOWERS FOR JESUS**", which is inspired by a poem titled, **GOD'S GARDEN**, written by Leda Diedrich, copyright, 2018, used with permission.

According to Ms. Diedrich, "**God's Garden**" is an expression of God's grace, in which He showed me just how precious each human life is to Him, and to His creation. He loves each one of us into being...individually...intimately...regardless of whether we recognize or acknowledge His love. He nurtures and cares for each of us, and we grow and bloom in His time...with His fragrance...and His color, like flowers in a well-tendered garden."

And now, "**SUNFLOWERS FOR JESUS**"

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Once upon a time in the small town of Smile, Kansas, there lived a young farmer whose name is Adam Hembree, however, to the locals, he is known as *Sunflower Adam*. The reason the locals call him *Sunflower Adam* is not difficult to figure out. Adam dedicates a large part of his farm to growing sunflowers. In fact, as Adam likes to say, *Sunflowers for Jesus*.

People would come from all over, usually between mid-August to early September just to see the sea of sunflowers grown by Adam which have a short window of about two weeks to bloom.

During one such visit, a young couple who had recently married, heard about Adam's sunflower farm and decided to stop and visit as they traveled to their honeymoon destination. It was one of those rare days when no one but Adam was at the farm.

"Welcome to Smile, Kansas," Adam said cheerfully as he greeted the couple. **"My name is Adam and I own this farm. Are you here to see the sunflowers?"**

"Yes," the couple replied.

"Well, you're in luck." Adam said. **"Right now, the flowers are in full bloom; when they are at their brightest, smiling ever so grandly as they look toward the son – that is son ... S-O-N, rather than sun ... S-U-N."**

"Son...S-O-N?" the newly wedded husband asked.

"Yes" Adam responded back. **"I grow these sunflowers for Jesus. I like to think that each time I tend to each individual flower with love and care, it is as Jesus does with us. We are the flowers that grow in His garden, no two alike, each of us loved absolutely by Him, as we, like these sunflowers, play a role in His great plan of salvation."**

"Wow" the newly married husband said. **"I have never heard a garden expressed in quite that way. What a powerful analogy; a perfect way to describe your sunflowers."**

"Why, thank you," Adam responded.

“Each individual flower that you see is cared for by me. Just as we are cared for by God. While they may appear the same, they are not. The same is true with us. Some are not as bright as others. Some get sick and die. Some are so happy it almost seems like they are dancing. Each time I look at these magnificent flowers stretching themselves to the best of their ability to spend the day looking upon the son – that is son spelled S-O-N, I think of how much joy, despite our sinful nature, that we give to the Lord and why He loves us so much. While I did not create these flowers as the Lord created us, I plant them, grow them, tend to them and share them with others just as Christ does with us. That is one reason why I love sunflowers as much as I do. For me, they are the closest flower that resembles each of us as we grow in God’s Garden.”

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THE BACKSTORY

A listener on COFFEE BREAK WITH CARLOS MICHAEL suggested that it would have been nice regarding the **“SUNFLOWERS FOR JESUS”** short story presented in Wednesday’s episode of COFFEE BREAK – Episode #14, if there had been a backstory regarding the couple who visited the sunflower farm and Adam. I am happy to oblige.

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The couple’s name is Jeff and Susan Robinette. They live in Omaha, Nebraska. They met and fell in love while attending the University of Nebraska. Jeff is a forensic anthropologist. His job is to work with law enforcement agencies examining human skeletal remains. Susan is a schoolteacher. Both are members of the Presbyterian faith.

The reason for the visit to the sunflower farm is because Susan has always loved sunflowers and is considering opening a flower shop. Because she loves sunflowers so much, she wanted to specialize in creating beautiful sunflower centerpieces and bouquets each year when the flowers are in season. She was aware that Kansas, which is known as the Sunflower State has farms like Adam’s that are open to

the public whenever the sunflowers are in bloom. Being they were headed to Austin, Texas for the start of their honeymoon, Jeff said to Susan, **“Hey honey, we are going to pass through Kansas on our way to Austin. The sunflowers will be blooming during that time. Why don’t we stop and visit one of the farms? Who knows, maybe you will make a business contact for your flower shop.”**

The stop was also an indirect wedding gift for Susan. Jeff understood just how much she loved sunflowers and what a visit to a sunflower farm would mean to her.

After visiting the farm, the couple continued on their honeymoon.

They spent a weekend in Oklahoma City before spending a week in Austin. From Austin they drove to California where they spent two weeks before driving back to Omaha.

Susan eventually did open her flower shop and Jeff went on to become a successful forensic anthropologist. They eventually had two sons, Jeff Jr., and Douglas Michael and lived happily ever after.

Whatever happened to Adam – the young man who owned the sunflower farm?

He eventually met and married a local Smile, Kansas girl named, Abigail Westmore. They met at a local fall festival. They married and had one son, who was named David Adam after his grandfather (Abigail’s father) and his father (Adam).

The couple were very happy until the day Abigail was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. David Adam was 8 years old when his mother was diagnosed with cancer. It was a devastating time for the family.

Jeff and Susan eventually become very good friends with Adam and Abigail. They even attended their wedding. When Susan heard that Abigail only had so much time left, she and Jeff took some time off and together with their boys, spent the last few weeks of Abigail's life assisting Adam on the farm and helping with Abigail.

Just before she passed Abigail made Adam promise that he would not give up the farm and that he would continue to grow the sunflowers. Like Susan, Abigail dearly loved those sunflowers.

Adam promised Abigail that he would do just that. Together with his son, David, Adam did as he promised growing those sunflowers every season until his own death. He eventually renamed the farm, "ABSU FARM" in honor of his wife Abigail and his friend, Susan, both who deeply loved sunflowers almost as much as Adam did.

That is the backstory to the characters from Wednesday's short story, **"SUNFLOWERS FOR JESUS."**