

INTRODUCTION (8mins)

So just to re-cap, we've been reading from John 15 where it Jesus is the true Vine, we are the branches and we are encouraged to remain in him as he remains in us – where the Lord's very life-source flows in and through us, joining us all together... Where it talks about how we've been chosen and grafted in... given a new life and purpose of fruitfulness, love, peace and joy.

The Vine and the Branches

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2 He cuts off** every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit **he prunes^a** so that it will be even more fruitful. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. **5** “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

And today, I'd like to go a little deeper on this concept of pruning...

- 🕒 What it is
- 🕒 What it can look like... feel like...
- 🕒 And why it's necessary...

POINT 1 – OUR PURPOSE IS TO BE FRUITFUL

I don't know about you, but I just love the richness and the many layers in the Word of God... and what I've found really interesting is even many Layers of the Garden analogy that's woven throughout the Bible...

Yes we are a branch, grafted in the vine, but we're also a tree... with leaves, fruit and flowers... You are also but one plant in a magnificent garden
... and yet the seed of faith is planted in the garden of your heart – where your relationship with God can flourish...

A tree, a vine, a garden, bearing fruit, growing into a mighty oak of righteousness -- a shelter for birds to nest and creatures find rest and shade...

All these different word pictures and analogies; they all essentially paint a picture of God's purpose for our lives – to flourish, thrive and be fruitful...

This is God's desire for you – that you would prosper; body, mind, spirit and soul...

Not to be dry, desolate, barren.

But if God wants me to flourish and have love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, kindness... He cuts? He prunes?... Doesn't cutting equal pain?... You know that's like cutting of an arm or a leg, right?... That hurts!...

And He cuts off whole branches? Whole limbs?... on purpose?...

Have you ever thought that?

Well -- that's what was going through my mind when I first experienced pruning in my life...

POINT 3 – PRUNING PRINCIPLES FROM A PRO

Let's get some insight into the principles of pruning -- the gardener's perspective ...

VIDEO...

There is definitely an art and a science to pruning!

I like what he said right near the beginning... It seems counter intuitive... But there is a purpose to pruning! ... There's heaps of youtube videos, books and magazines out there, all teaching people how to grow and get the most out of their gardens!

And like ...

Matthew 7:11 New International Version (NIV)

"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

If earthly gardeners know how to prune and cultivate earthly plants and trees, how much more wisdom, love and care does our heavenly father take in cultivating us?

POINT 4 – THE PURPOSE OF PRUNING

As we've learnt from the video, the purpose of pruning is to:

- ① Remove diseased and dying branches
- ① To maintain size and shape
- ① Improve structure and strength
- ① Encourage new growth and
- ① Encourage greater fruitfulness

What also struck me when watching that video, is how knowledgeable that guy was about how different plant species require different pruning techniques and approaches...

He knew when and where to cut... the differences in season... how much to cut and why... and I am so encouraged to know that our heavenly father – the ultimate good gardener knows exactly what we need to get the best results in us... and we're very different from each other...

What I'll need versus what you need... and precisely cuts away what He knows will bring about our optimal fruitfulness...

POINT 5 – WHAT CAN PRUNING LOOK LIKE?

The dead and dying branches can refer to

- ⦿ false beliefs and attitudes that don't line up with God's heart
- ⦿ Character traits that no longer line up with our identity in Christ
- ⦿ He could cut off a relationship or a career path here, to redirect you to something far better over here...
- ⦿ He takes away opportunities or certain options so that you can bear even more fruit later...

Every cut is taken with great care and great precision...

He knows what He is doing and does it out of love for you so that your latter days will definitely be greater than your former.

CLOSE – HONOUR THE GOOD GARDENER (5 mins)

He is such a good gardener guys – good in skill and precision but also good in intention and love for you...

When you decided to follow Jesus, He cut you off from a dead and dying tree... it was only a matter time before it was too late for you... but he cleaned you up and grafter you into the vine of life... He's tended to you, given you sunshine and water... he's grafted you into a vine with one another so you will find family and belonging... He's given you every good thing you've ever needed so you could grow and flourish!

But it's still a choice... it's a choice whether we remain in him... remain in the vine... allow Him to prune and cultivate our lives... our character... our hearts...

Unfortunately there are too many Christians who are not as fruitful as The Lord would want for them, and have stunted their growth because they have don't allow God to cultivate their lives...

Yes, sometimes the pruning can hurt... It might not make sense at times... but having the right perspective in the pruning... the right perspective about the purpose of the pruning... and intentions of the God who is pruning us... can just help... Amen?

I know it has helped me!...