

Pruning

Message 1 of 5 in the series: "Fruitful"

A. Jesus wants us to live abundant, fruitful lives.

"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it **more abundantly**." John 10:10b (NKJV)

"This is to my Father's glory, that you **bear much fruit**, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

John 15:8 (NIV)

Note: The fruit God wants to produce abundantly in our lives is the development of Godly character, the desire and the power to bring others to Jesus, holiness, and obedience.

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

"The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; **ask him to send more workers into his fields**." Luke 10:2b (NLT)

"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, **the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life**." Romans 6:22 (ESV)

Life Application: Branches don't eat the fruit they produce. Their fruit is for others to enjoy.

"You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even **the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others** and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:42b-45 (NLT)

B. God prunes us so we will yield more fruit.

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. **He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more**. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. **Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing**." John 15:1-5 (NLT)

1. God will remove people who do not want to remain/abide in Christ and whose lives bear no spiritual fruit.

"Beware of false prophets who come **disguised** as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. Yes, **just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions**." Matthew 7:15-20 (NLT)

"Then Jesus told this story: 'A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed. Finally, he said to his gardener, "I've waited three years, and there hasn't been a single fig! Cut it down. It's just taking up space in the garden.'" The gardener answered, "Sir, **give it one more chance**. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.'"

Luke 13:6-9 (NLT)

2. God prunes the lives of those who bear fruit so we can bear even more fruit.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be **mature and complete**, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4 (NIV)

- a. God will prune away bad things (time-wasters, wrong thinking, sinful habits, etc.) that trip us up and keep us from living spiritually fruitful lives.

"And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, 'My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. For the Lord

disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.' As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way."

Hebrews 12:5-11 (NLT) (see also *Proverbs 3:11-12*)

- b. God will prune away good things so that we will focus our energy, time, and resources on better things that will yield even more fruit.

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.'"

Genesis 12:1-3 (NLT)

C. The best New Year's resolution we can make is to surrender every part of our lives to the Lord every day so that He can prune our lives however He sees fit.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

"...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." Hebrews 12:1b-2a (NIV)

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Quotations to Consider:

"God promised to bless Abram and make him famous, but God had one condition: Abram had to do what God wanted him to do. This meant leaving his home and friends and traveling to a new land where God promised to build a great nation from Abram's family. Abram obeyed, walking away from his home for God's promise of even greater blessings in the future. God may be trying to lead you to a place of greater service and usefulness for him. Don't let the comfort and security of your present position make you miss God's plan for you."

Life Application Study Bible note on Genesis 12:2

"The serious Christian prays to be pruned." John R.W. Stott

"Give me all of you!!! I don't want so much of your time, so much of your talents and money, and so much of your work. I want YOU!!! ALL OF YOU!!! I have not come to torment or frustrate the natural man or woman, but to KILL IT! No half measures will do. I don't want to only prune a branch here and a branch there; rather I want the whole tree out! Hand it over to me, the whole outfit, all of your desires, all of your wants and wishes and dreams. Turn them ALL over to me, give yourself to me and I will make of you a new self---in my image. Give me yourself and in exchange I will give you Myself. My will, shall become your will. My heart, shall become your heart." C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*

"Grateful people learn to celebrate even amid life's hard and harrowing memories because they know that pruning is no mere punishment, but preparation." Henri J.M. Nouwen

"Pruning is strategic. It is directional and forward-looking. It is intentional toward a vision, desires, and objectives that have been clearly defined and are measurable." Henry Cloud

A Prayer of Surrender:

"Jesus you are Lord of my whole life. I believe in you. You are my Lord and my Savior. I hold nothing back. I surrender everything to you: My health, family, money and possessions, occupation, skills, relationships, time management, successes and failures, my understanding of how things ought to be, my choices and my will, my weaknesses and strengths, my emotions, my fears, my insecurities, my sexuality, I surrender my entire life to you, the past, the present and the future. In sickness and in health, in life and in death, I belong to you."

Linda Schubert in *Miracle Hour: A Method of Prayer That Will Change Your Life*