

A New Direction – Pruning

Step 6 – We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Step 7 – We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

Every year brings a season of trimming our shrubs, trees, bushes, flowers, and so on in preparation for the new growing season. To ignore this and just leave it to itself the beauty of the plant, tree, fruit, crop or whatever, would slowly just fade away, falling short of its true beauty, potential, or fruitfulness.

Pruning happens in our lives as follower of Jesus. – We don't like to talk about it, and whether we admit it or not we somehow think we are exempt.

The Setting:

Jesus washed their feet. 13:5-6
Released Judas to leave 13:27

Issued a new command to love one another by His example. 13:34

Comforted them. 14:1
Promised the Holy Spirit. 14:16

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away [raises or lifts up]; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes [cleans, cleanses] it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **John 15:8-1-3 NASB***

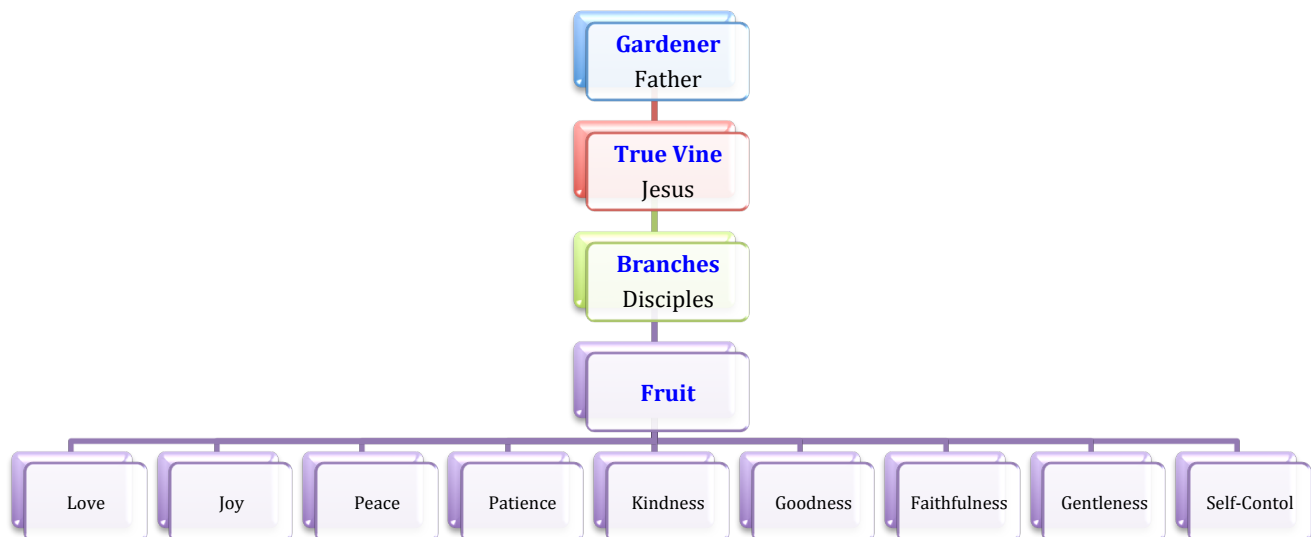
*Peter said to Him, Never shall You wash my feet! Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me. 9 Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head. 10 Jesus said to him, He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you. 11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, Not all of you are clean. **John 13:8-11 NASB***

*4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **John 15:4-6 NASB***

- **Note the person is the one not abiding, Jesus did not detach them and throw them away.**

*7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. **John 15:7-11 NASB***

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **Galatians 5:22-23 NASB***



A New Direction – Pruning

We're all in this together. If we would see this out in the world we would recognize it as one complete unit: different parts but one unit all joined together. From time to time there will be parts that have to go.

Jesus is the true vine, and His Father is the vinedresser. Every Disciple that does not produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and, self-control, He cleans up; and every disciple that does produce this fruit, He prunes them so they will produce more fruit. When our life overflows with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, it proves we are Jesus' disciples, and glorifies His Father. [Paraphrased from John 15:1-11]

What happens if we push back like Israel in the desert? A settled for life that looks religious yet is far short of what God has for us?

What is the point of a fruit tree that never bears fruit?

Is a fruit tree that never bears fruit of it's kind properly representing what it is?

Timing?

¹The best time to prune a tree or shrub depends on how fast it is growing and when it flowers. How much to prune depends on how fast the tree is growing and how crowded the branches are. This can only be learned by experience. Start by noticing which branches have the most flowers and which branches produce the best fruit; then prune to encourage the types of branches that are most productive.

A family tree is a picture. Apart from our parents we would have no life and would literally do nothing because we would not be here. Likewise our new life in Jesus we cannot experience a genuine new life apart from Him.

Jesus cleaned up the life of the disciples; They didn't clean up their own selves; They became clean as they walked with him three years and learned from him. Their lives were forever changed, all but Judas, who chose to not be connected.

Pruning (getting cleaned up) assumes:

1. We all need cleaned up.
2. As Jesus followers we are attached to life and it should be a natural thing to bear fruit.
3. We are ultimately in the hands and control of the gardener / vinedresser, this should bring us comfort.
4. Every person that is a part of Jesus is pruned (v2).
5. We are in the hands of the potter. Isaiah 29:16
6. We understand pruning is necessary.
7. Tension in our life may be a hint to some area God is working, not to be confused with temptation.

Freedom Points

- If we are Christ followers we are not exempt from pruning. We can resist it, which only prolongs it.
- Pruning is necessary
- Pruning is not discipline or punishment
- Pruning makes way for more growth
- Lack of pruning will cause us to be out of balance, unfruitful.
- God does not leave us during our time of pruning; the branch is always attached to the vine.
- The disciples survived the pruning process, so will we **John 13:8-11 NASB**

Walking It Out

- We typically view pruning as a bad thing. A gardener or vinedresser never views pruning as bad. They have a very high interest in the object being pruned and are doing it being able to see what the potential and beauty will ultimately be. They only have the best in mind for the process. Is this something we can embrace?
- The real question is not so much the pruning as if we are in Him. The pruning is a given if we're in.
- How do you view or accept the idea of pruning?
- Do we recognize pruning in our life, current or past? Talk about it.

¹ <http://rodsgarden.50megs.com/seasonalprune.htm>