

ICEBREAKER

What is something that you would like to be able to “prune” from your life to either help you in daily living or help others?

SCRIPTURE READING

Galatians 5:22-23 — *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• **Read:** John 15:1-7

Pruning signifies the providence of God. It reminds us of God’s divine intervention. It tells us that God has a plan and that He cares about our lives.

Why does God prune our lives? Have you experienced God’s pruning in your life? How has God intervened in your life to produce more Christ-like fruit in the area of your character or attitude?

Have you ever experienced God telling you to exercise love to someone you had a hard time loving? **Share a) how God spoke to you about it, b) how you were obedient, and c) what was the result.**

• **Read:** Proverbs 1:30-31

Pruning increases the productivity of God’s people. Christ desires fruitful productivity for us even more than we do! He prunes a branch “that it may bring forth more fruit.” There is a purpose to the pain. “Everyone must choose one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret.” Allowing God to prune us now so that we may be fruitful and productive is far better than the pain of regret knowing we have been cut off and separated from God.

What is the danger of not letting God prune us?

• **Read:** Matthew 7:13-14

If we ignore God, where does that take us?

• **Read:** Romans 8:1-14

Pruning facilitates the purification of God’s people. God’s Word is the pruning tool He uses to mold us into the image of Christ. The next verse following our text today has Jesus saying, “You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.”

Purging rids the branch of the unneeded and unfruitful shoots that saps its productivity. Likewise, God uses seasons of pain in our lives and the corresponding truths in His Word to cleanse us from that which hinders our fruitfulness.

How do we allow God to prune our character and attitudes?

What steps do we need to take between abiding with/listening to God, and putting what He says into practice?

• **Read:** Proverbs 3:11-12
Hebrews 12:5-11

Sometimes, God’s pruning hurts. **How have you benefitted from being pruned?**

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Psalm 100:4 says “*Enter His Gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!*”

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you something He wants you to be grateful for and why. **Write** it down what you hear from the Lord. **Write** out a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.

Then **meditate** on this scripture: Hebrews 12:1 and **ask** the Lord, “What weight am I carrying that slows me down?” and/or “What sin is easily tripping me up?”

Listen. Write down what you hear from the Lord. Respond to the thoughts you receive, addressing them to the Lord.

Listen. Write down further thoughts that come to you.

THIS WEEK’S CHALLENGE

We all have areas that we need to grow when it comes to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Ask God to reveal to you a fruit that you could use more of in your life and pray for opportunities to be pruned and to grow further in this fruit.

MEMORY VERSE

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. — **Hebrews 12:1**

PRAISE REPORTS / PRAYER REQUESTS