

SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK

John 15: 1-11 The Vine and the Branches

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[Ⓜ] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain 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. ⁶If 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. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete

VINE MAINTENANCE

The Gardener: The Father

The Vine: Jesus

The Branches: His Kids (us)

Fruit: Power and Fruit of the Holy Spirit

Pruning: God taking us through a refining process

Purpose: Greater fruitfulness and abundance of fruit

Our Responsibility: Remain in the Vine (Jesus) during the pruning

OVERVIEW

For the first 3 years vines were allowed to grow as a stocky tree but not allowed to bear fruit. At the end of each blossoming season they would be cut back, then after three years they would be allowed to bear fruit. This is an interesting parallel with the life of Jesus, fruit came after his first 3 years. After the fruit had been picked the branches were pruned back to 3 millimeters. Literally, in the slow growing months of autumn it would abide in the vine, the vine would grow around it. Then in spring time green tendrils would emerge and be supported by crutches, and because they were supported they were able to support the fruit. It was also fruit that would last; the grapes would happily stay on the vine for several months before being picked. However, the moment the fruit was taken the branch would be cut back.

What is Jesus saying? – Well, my Father is the gardener who supports and cuts back the branches. Why? He has called you to bear much fruit and unless you learn to abide in Him you cannot bear fruit.

Fruit in this sense is the multiplication of the DNA of the fruit. I love you; you love one another, keep on loving. Love is being multiplied among them. Jesus has multiplied his life into his disciples and he is calling his disciples to do the same. We are called to bear fruit but we can only do this if we learn to understand this rhythmic cycle. Between abiding and bearing fruit we grow. However, when we have borne fruit we are

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pruned so that more fruit can be born in the future.

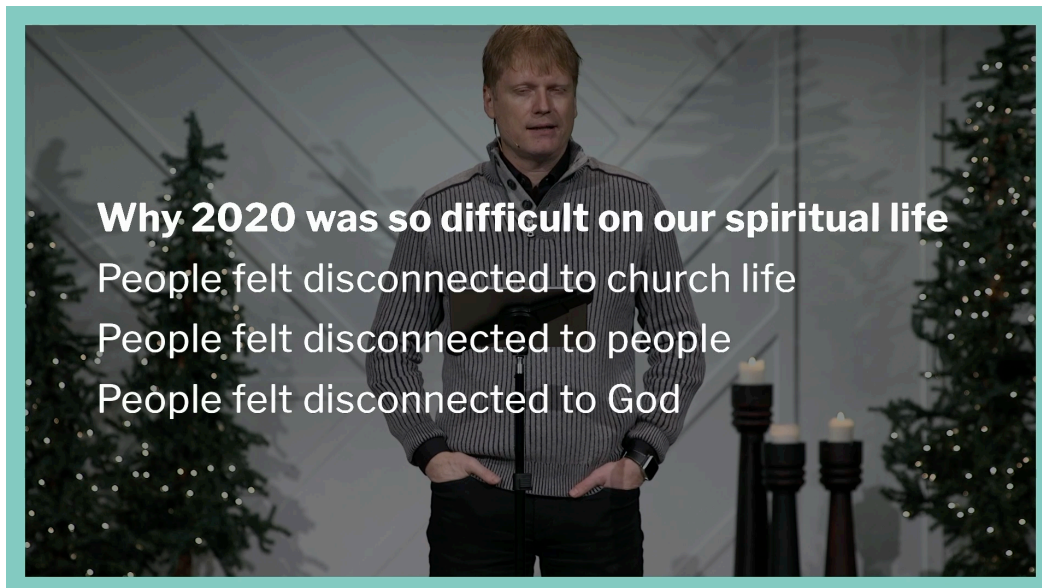
For many of us, 2020 has been a year of pruning. In fact, the whole world seems to be in a time of pruning! Yet Jesus says that every branch that bears fruit will be pruned.

I have often heard people say – “Is God against us? – No matter what we do we don’t seem to be bearing fruit?” Jesus could not have made it clearer, “Your Father is the gardener and he will cut your branches off the moment you bear fruit. He’s not doing it to be mean but because he wants you to bear more fruit in the future!”

God is totally for us! There is a rhythm to individual and corporate life!

QUESTIONS THIS WEEK

Chris Norman shared on Sunday that 2020 seemed to be a year of lots of disconnect. There were three areas he mentioned that challenge us.



1. What got your attention when reading through John 15: 1-11 together?
2. Where are you allowing God to prune you?
3. Fruitfulness is conditional- We must stay in the Vine. What practices (spiritual disciplines) do you have in place for the year 2021?