

"Growing in Grace"

John 15: 1-11

5/8/22

Discussion Guide

If you are in an area with trees, go outside and inspect them. Observe which branches are alive and which ones are not? Which ones look dead but are actually alive and which ones look alive but are actually dead. How do you know which ones to cut off and which ones to prune?

Now, have someone read the sermon text while the rest "consider the trees of the ground."

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 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.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Reactions to reading the passage while observing the trees.

1. Ever year at the college I attended, the missions department put on a Mission Fair. One year the theme was: "It Must Be a Struggle." I've often reflected on that theme. It's been my experience in walking with the Lord, it is a struggle. Why is that? Is it because we are weaklings? Is it because the world is too distracting and adverse to faith? Is it because the Word is not as tasty as the Psalmist claims it is? Share your thoughts.
2. Read 2 Peter 1: 2-4, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and John 14:17. Reflect on ways being "in Christ" has helped you grow as a person.
3. Personal growth is hard to measure. So how do you know if you are growing spiritually, and personal?
4. Have you ever been discourage over your lack of progress in Christ? How did you find comfort during "winter" times?
5. Identify the most dramatic ways God has shaped your character over the years. What fruit of the Spirit has God planted in your life and what weeds has he pulled out? Share a few with the group.

John 15: 1-11

6. Pastor Richard shared three practical things we can do to promote growth in our lives: 1) Ask God for a particular fruit. 2) Let God’s Word dwell in you. And 3) Remain in God’s love. Of the three, which one has been the most effective in producing growth in your life?
7. Is it hard to let Christ’s Word remain in you? Are there times when it is easier and times when it is harder? Does the world make it easy to let Christ’s Word dwell in us richly?
8. Is it hard to let Christ’s love remain in you? Are there times when it is easier and times when it is harder? Does the world make it easy to remain in Christ’s love?
9. Philippians 4:6-7 and Matthew 6:25-26 are great passages to recall when we are anxious about life. Share a passage of scripture that you memorized or recall when you are struggling with anxiety, fear, or sadness.
10. We do live in a downward escalator type of world where everything falls into decay simply by doing nothing. Everything, if we want them to grow, develop, or improve, takes work, persistence, and discipline. Which for you is easier: the maintenance/improvement of your home, car, health, yard, relationships, character, or spiritual health?
11. Most places in the world experience four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. Winter is a time when everything seems to die. Trees with leaves or fruit look dead but they aren’t actually. It’s just winter. The life of the Spirit also goes through seasons. It too has a winter season. Share a winter moment in your life, a time when you felt spiritually dead, where you saw no progress in your walk with God. What was it like? How did you survive it? What did you do during that time to prepare yourself for Spring?

What season of the Spirit are you in now?

12. Have you ever written a person off and then were surprised when they became a Christian or changed in the area of their life that you thought would never change? If so, tell the story.
13. Reflect on the last story Pastor Richard shared: the story of the acorn and the cement slab. What slab has God cracked in your life?

Do you think most Christians realize the potential we have in Christ? God has placed his Spirit in us. We are tapped into the Godhead. Heaven is being poured into us. All the juices of God flow into us. Imagine what God can do in our lives if we remain tapped into that flow.

Play the song: “*Same Power*” by Jeremy Camp and reflect what we have in Christ.