

2 Ways God Prunes You to Produce Better Fruit

If you are a gardener or have a green thumb and grow plants in your home, you know that one of the best ways to get good fruit or full blossoms from your favorite bush is to prune or even cut it back completely during the right season. In John 15:2 Jesus compares us to branches.

He says that if a branch does not produce fruit at all, it is to be cut off. And the branches that do produce fruit, He prunes and cuts back. You don't have to be doing something wrong to be pruned. It's actually when you are doing things right that pruning takes place. So look, you are pruned if you do and pruned if you don't. You might as well deal with it and let God produce His fruit in you. But there is one sure thing: It's better to be cut back than to be cut off.

So how does God prune us? Well, He does it in two major ways. First we know that His Word prunes us.

"You are cleansed and pruned already, because of the word which I have given you [the teachings I have discussed with you]" (John 15:3, AMPC).

As we read His Word, our true condition is revealed and our hearts are exposed. Hebrews 4:12 (MEV) says that the Word of God is "alive, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Through His Word, God shows us where we have missed it so that we can begin to live in a way that truly pleases Him. Also as we read and think on His Word, His Word contains a cleansing power that works in us, causing us to be the person He has destined us to be. His Word lights our paths and gives us the

right direction for all aspects of our lives. His Word gives us the power to live a life that produces fruit.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

God's Word puts before us the image of Christ, who perfectly lived out the fruit of the Spirit and walked in the power of God. By beholding His Word, we are pruned, groomed, corrected and encouraged to be like Him.

Our relationships with others are also used to prune us. That's right. God puts all those "fruit testers" around us to make sure we are producing the right fruit. He creates all these people, each with different personalities. Some He creates strong-willed. Others He creates meek and mild. God creates all these different types of people and throws them all together. It's one big fruit salad! But it's really as these people interact with each other that true fruit is produced or the lack of it is exposed.

You know, there are two spiritual beings trying to kill you. "What?" you may ask. "Kill me?" Yes, kill you. God and Satan. Satan comes as a thief to steal, kill, and destroy for your harm. Satan comes to try to destroy God's plan and purpose for your life. God comes to kill our carnal and fleshly ways so we can experience His resurrection power! That kind of death is for our good. He allows every area of our life to become crucified with Christ so we can experience His power in those areas. Paul said, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"* (Gal. 2:20).

Before we can receive resurrection power, we have to first experience His death. As we die to self, His power is released in us, enabling us to be who He has called us to be. And what

better way to die than by all the interactions we have with people around us on a daily basis? Every time one of our buttons gets pushed and we choose to respond with love and grace, we die.

When we are by ourselves, we are all little angels. There we are in prayer enjoying the presence of God. We are floating on a cloud. Everything is peaceful and perfect! Then the wife, the husband or the kids come home. Shoes are left everywhere, clothes are thrown on the floor, or dishes are left in the sink. Suddenly the halo disappears, and the horns come out. Where did the little angel go? Buttons of the flesh start to get pushed, and the internal fruit starts to be seen on the outside. This kind of reveal can only happen through our interactions with people. It's those closest to us who will really see what kind of fruit we have.

Picture this scenario with me: There you are at home having a "discussion" with your husband or wife or kids. It's a bit heated. Voices are raised; emotions are flared. Then the phone rings. "Hello," you say with a perfectly calm, relaxed voice. It's the pastor. "Well, hello, Pastor, so good to hear from you. Oh, yes, I am so excited about the bake sale on Saturday. For sure, I will be there with my cookies. Amen. God bless. Praise the Lord. I'm saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost! Talk to you later, Pastor." Once the phone hangs up, the yelling picks up right where it left off.

It seems that we can have full control over what fruit we display and produce depending on who is around. Our family tends to see the worst in us. Why? We feel the most comfortable with them, and also because family is family. They can't leave you. Your parents are your parents, your kids are your kids, and your mate is your mate. Once you get married, it's until death do you part. God will use your closest relationships to produce your greatest fruit.

So rather than trying to constantly change them, you may be

better off just accepting them for who they are. You will probably enjoy your journey a lot more if you pray for God to change you rather than the people around you. If you are able to produce fruit under trying circumstances, then eventually what bothered you about that person will no longer irritate you. As you die to yourself, you will get victory over those irritating emotions and will be much happier as a result. Always remember, when you are praying for someone else to change, God is looking for you to change. You might as well as die and get it over with.

We can't run from community; we have to embrace it. It's what God uses to perfect us. Doesn't that just make you happy? Well, it should. So, get happy and enjoy the journey. When you think someone is a "fruit tester" for you, remember you may be the "fruit tester" for someone else.

Excerpted from Matt Sorger's book, Power for Life (Charisma House, 2011). {eoa}

Matt Sorger, author, prophetic messenger, revivalist, healing evangelist, teacher, television host and philanthropist has served in full-time ministry for over 23 years spanning over 200 nations of the Earth through travel and media ministry. He hosts a weekly teaching program titled *Power for Life*. Matt moves in a unique anointing that fills entire rooms with the tangible glory of God with many healed, set free and empowered. He teaches believers how to live a life saturated with the glory of God and brings a great balance between authentic, supernatural encounter and solid biblical truth. He reaches cities and regions by partnering with and impacting local churches to see a great breakthrough of the Holy Spirit.