

Could You be in a Pruning Season?

A weeping, flowering cherry tree is one of the most beautiful of all of the ornamental trees. We bought my mother-in-law one for Mother's Day many years ago. She was so excited. Being a certified nurseryman, I planted the tree exactly the way it should be done. The next year it bloomed nicely—and even better the next year.

However, after about four or five years, my mother-in-law called me right after the tree had bloomed. She expressed concern because the tree barely bloomed at all that spring. In fact, she said it was pitiful. The next time we went for a visit, I took my pruning clippers and small pruning saw. While she watched, I got the ladder and went to work. Several times I heard her say, “O my,” and “O dear.”

Correct, effective pruning is different than just “shearing” the tree to look like a lollipop. There are two basic types of branches that need to be removed. The first is a branch that is growing the wrong direction. These branches rub the other branches and can cause disease. They also block out the sunlight that is needed for flower buds to form.

The other type of branch to prune is a “sucker” branch that shoots out beneath the graft. These branches are incredibly dangerous to the life of the tree. They will draw all of the strength and energy from the tree into themselves, and the tree will often die—but only above the graft, which is where the blooms grow.

When I completed pruning, there were enough trimmings to fill a pickup truck. My mother-in-law had gone inside and explained to the rest of the family that she was very sure I had killed her tree. I told her to trust me, but it was pretty obvious

that I had lost “favorite son-in-law” status.

Then, nine long months later, I received a phone call from her. She was so excited. Her tree had bloomed—and not just bloomed. It was covered in so many blooms that it looked like a huge pink snowball. And my “status” was instantly reinstated (whew).

John 15 says that we are the vine, and that our heavenly Father is the Vinedresser. Verse 2 says that “every branch that bears fruit (blooms), He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit (bloom even more)” (NASB, emphasis added).

Hebrews 12 tells us that the Father disciplines the children He loves. We picture that as the proverbial “spanking,” or punishment. In reality, the word discipline has the same root as the word disciple. Our Father loves us so much that He wants to disciple us—and sometimes He uses pruning to do just that.

He prunes the “branches” of our lives that are growing the wrong way. He prunes the branches that are growing from beneath the “graft,” sprouting out of our flesh. This pruning is not done to hurt us or punish us. We are not being sent into the corner, grounded until we decide to “be good.” No! That’s not it at all. He is simply pruning us to make us more like His Son. He lovingly disciplines us to look and act like Jesus. How deeply He loves us! He loves us enough to prune branches that have some blooms—in order that we can have many blooms.

This week in your Christ walk journey, understand that the “testing and trial” time that you are going through may in fact be a time of pruning. Try to understand that this is a sure sign that your Father loves you—that He desires for you to “bloom.” Not just a few small simple blooms, but tons of blooms with lots of fruit.

Perhaps some of your branches have begun to grow in the wrong

direction. Or maybe your flesh has “sprouted” a branch that, if left un-pruned, would drain the strength out of your spirit and your spiritual life. It’s an unholy branch that would eventually destroy your effectiveness, causing you to have no beautiful blooms and no fruit. Blooms display a healthy, vibrant, intimate walk.

Relax! Your Father is lovingly pruning you. When the “springtime” of your journey comes around again (and it will), you will bloom more beautifully than ever. I promise.

Prayer Power for the Week of August 3, 2015

This week thank God that He prunes the “branches” of your life that are growing the wrong way, and that He knows what He is doing to get the most beautiful results. Determine to stay connected to the vine (Jesus) so that you can produce the abundance of fruit He desires for you.

Continue to pray for an outpouring of His Holy Spirit around the world, and especially in our own country. Pray that the body of Christ would unite in prayer and purpose to see God’s will done on earth as in heaven. Continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, the persecuted church and those in authority over us. John 15; Heb. 12; I Tim. 2:1-4