

Joyce Meyer: Growing Pains That Produce Amazing Results

Have you ever hired a professional to prune a tree in your yard? Dave and I have someone to do that for us, and there are times when he's cut the branches back so far that I've said to him, "There is nothing left. You have totally destroyed our tree!" But he told me, "You just watch and see." And sure enough, before long the tree was much better looking than it was before.

Just like trees need pruning from time to time to remove dead branches or areas where there is overgrowth, you and I need to be pruned or reshaped at different times in different areas of our lives. We may not enjoy the pruning process, but when it's over, we're much better off than we were before.

You see, God wants us to be at our very best—spiritually, emotionally and physically.

John 15:2 (AMP) says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that continues to bear fruit, He [repeatedly] prunes, so that it will bear more fruit [even richer and finer fruit]."

It's good for us to stop and evaluate our lives sometimes and ask God to show us if there are things that need to be cut off because they are hindering our growth in our relationship with Him. Ask yourself: Am I dragging around "dead branches" in my life? Maybe it's a bad relationship, an old wound from your past or a negative attitude that keeps you from enjoying life to the fullest.

It would be nice if we could see what God sees and say, "Yes, God. Let's get rid of that dead branch." But many times we're too afraid to give up what we know for something new that we just can't see or understand.

The truth is you can be miserable dragging those dead things around, or you can go through the pain of letting God “prune” them away. Even though it’s uncomfortable, the best thing you can do is let God prune you, because after the hard part is over, you will see some amazing results!

God doesn’t want you to struggle all the time. He loves you so much that He will never give up on you. As we allow Him to speak into our lives, He teaches and trains us to be kind and gentle, peaceful and patient, loving and forgiving like Him. But we cannot develop that “fruit” on our own.

John 15:4 says, “Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself without remaining in the vine, neither can you [bear fruit, producing evidence of your faith] unless you remain in Me.”

In other words, we need to spend time with God.

Our relationship with God is about much more than going to church on Sunday and reading the Word as a religious duty. He wants a personal relationship with each of us.

When we stay connected to God through meaningful Bible study and prayer, we’re remaining in Jesus. God wants us to be so rooted and grounded in His love that nothing can shake us—so we’re able to bear good fruit in even the hardest, most difficult seasons of life.

God has a good plan for your life. He wants to take you to the next level in your relationship with Him, but there are some things that He wants you to leave behind—past hurts, insecurities or anything you look to for a sense of security other than God Himself.

Don’t ever be afraid to surrender to God, so He can prune the things that are hurting and hindering you from moving forward in your relationship with Him.

The apostle Paul said, “One thing I do: forgetting what lies

behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [heavenly] prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

Make a determined decision to let go of the past and press on to experience a fuller, richer, more abundant life in Christ.

Pray today: *"God, I'm tired of dragging this heavy load around with me. I'm ready to let it go, so I can get on with my life and experience a closer relationship with You. Help me to know that You love me and that You will work everything out for my good."*

If we will totally give ourselves to God, He will give us His best for us. It may not be what we thought we wanted, but it will be exactly what we need. And it will be greater than anything we could have asked for. {eoa}

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