

## Lean Back... It will be ok

Jesus **Lover of My Soul**: John 15:1-17

### PREPARE

Lent is a season of pruning. As John 15 so beautifully describes, God is the Master Vine keeper who understands the necessity of pruning in due season. Pruning does not detract from a fruit tree's beauty; it enhances it. It cuts away the dead, dying, or diseased branches and leaves in order to manage tree health and direction of growth. The cutting back may lead to a bare-looking branch that's not especially beautiful to look at in the moment, but it will lead to bringing forth more beautiful blossoms and increased fruit. Pruning is not a punishment for a Christian; it is an intentional act of love. God is the vinedresser who prunes the life of everyone who abides in Christ and bears the fruit of Christ.

### Read Psalm 102:1-11 in The Passion Translation

*A prayer for those who are overwhelmed and for all the discouraged who come to pour out their hearts before the Lord*<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lord, listen to my prayer! Listen to my cry for help!

<sup>2</sup> You can't hide your face from me in the day of my distress.

Stoop down to hear my prayer and answer me quickly, Lord!

<sup>3-4</sup> For my days of happiness have gone up in smoke.

My body is raging with fever, my heart is sick,

and I'm consumed by this illness—

withered like a dead leaf. I can't even eat.

<sup>5</sup> I'm nothing but skin and bones.

Nothing's left of me but whispered groans.

<sup>6</sup> I'm depressed, lonely, forgotten, and abandoned.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I'm sleepless, shivering in the cold, forlorn and friendless,  
like a lonely bird on the rooftop.

<sup>8</sup> My every enemy mocks and insults me incessantly.

They even use my name as a curse to speak over others!

<sup>9-10</sup> Because of your great and furious anger against me

all I do is suffer with sorrow,

with nothing to eat but a meal of mourning.<sup>[c]</sup>

My crying fills my cup with salty tears!

In your wrath you have rejected me,

sweeping me away like dirt on the floor.

<sup>11</sup> My days are marked by the lengthening shadows of death.

I'm withering away and there's nothing left of me.

- **Perhaps you feel the weight of these times of isolation and discouragement. Spend several minutes in silence and solitude. Bring the burdens you are presently feeling to the Lord.**

### REFLECT

In your core group, briefly share your response to one of these three questions.

1. How have you experienced the blessing of God in these past few weeks?
2. What burdens, worries, or anxieties have you been carrying and would appreciate prayer for?

3. What's a next step looking forward that you are excited about, fearful about, or uncertain about and want to step out in faith and need prayer support for?

## STUDY

**Read John 15:1-8. God is the Gardener and Jesus is the Vine.**

*The vine is symbolic of Israel in need of pruning in order to produce good fruit. (See Isaiah 5:1-7). It symbolizes intimacy as well as fruitfulness. When Jesus used this image, He declared Himself the true grapevine, and that a relationship with God requires attachment to Him. Some think that He may have been thinking of the life-giving grape in the wine He just served to the disciples. (John 13) Every discourse the disciples (and now we) hear from Jesus, every rebuke they received for their arrogance or faithlessness has been in the nature of a pruning.*

- Who are the branches and for what two purposes are the branches cut?
- What do you think is the parable's main purpose?
- How does the image of the vine and the branches describe your relationship with Jesus? In what areas are you experiencing pruning right now?

**Read vv. 9-17. Once again Jesus speaks about the relationship between love and obedience. (Reread John 14:15-24) How do believers "remain in His love"? Give specific examples.**

- What is the joy He is speaking about and how do you experience that joy?
- Jesus invites us into a space of obedient abiding. What is the fruit He describes in that space?

## RESPONSE

- After studying and reflecting on this passage, how is God coming to you? What might He want to prune from your life in order to shape you into a more beautiful reflection of Himself?
- Commit to prayer with an open hand as you receive what He may want to do in your life in these upcoming weeks of Lent. He loves you and wants to do a work in you. Make some space and time to allow for that.

Close in prayer: List prayer requests here.