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Are You Pushed Toward God?



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Do troubles and trials push you toward God - or away?

OUR FATHER HAS A 3-PART PLAN

Our Father the Vinedresser – He chastens us as needed; He prunes us as needed; He invites us as needed – all so we will be more fruitful. This morning our Father the Vinedresser is here. He is looking at us.

- If we are cast down in the mud of sin **He chastens us** and spiritually lifts us back up into the sunlight of fellowship. Chastening is something you feel as emotional anxiety, frustration, or distress. **What used to bring you joy now doesn't.** Many Christians bump along in this level of discipline, yet fail to read the signs. They feel unfulfilled at church, critical of their Christian friends, and "on the outs" with God. When they pick up their Bible, it feels like a lead weight instead of a welcome relief.
- If we are flourishing with external growth but not producing much fruit (by giving, sowing and reaping, spirit walking, flesh denying and so on...as we saw last time) **He prunes us** by cutting away at our rambling growth until we bear more fruit. The pruning ^[1] knife is always painful, but it's always worth it. And what exactly is our Father's pruning knife? Is it pain, troubles, trials, loss, suffering, sadness, or frustrations? No, because of Christ's words in [John 15:3](#) which explains that the pruning knife is the Word of God. Jesus says: "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." The key to abiding is abiding in His Word. There are no substitutes, no gimmicks, no shortcuts. God's pruning knife is His Word, and as pointed out above, He seems to use it often during trouble, distress, or setbacks. Charles Spurgeon, master preacher of the nineteenth century, said: "It is the Word that prunes the Christian. It is the truth that purges him." Have you ever noticed how much more sensitive you are to the Word of God when trouble comes? Have you ever noticed that, when you have a particular need or problem, certain verses will leap off the page? That's the Spirit of God applying them to your heart.
- And finally if we are fruitful and bearing more fruit, at special times **He invites us** to allow Him to even more prune in our lives until we bear MUCH FRUIT! In his Secrets of the Vine Wilkerson suggests another truth ^[2] : *If your life bears a lot of fruit, God will invite you to abide more deeply with Him.* His purpose is not that you will do more for Him but that you will choose to be more with Him. Only by abiding can you enjoy the most rewarding friendship with God and experience the greatest abundance for His glory. Abiding is all about the most important friendship of your life. Abiding doesn't measure how much you know about your faith or your Bible. In abiding, you seek, long for, thirst for, wait for, see, know, love, hear, and respond to ...a person. More abiding means more of God in your life, more of Him in your activities, thoughts, and desires.

A CLOSEUP ON GOD'S PRUNING: In Pruning -- Troubles push us toward God

UNDERSTANDING THE WAY GOD DISCIPLINES HIS CHILDREN BY CHASTENING AND PRUNING

QUESTION	CHASTENING	PRUNING
^[3]		
What does chastening and pruning mean?	"Chastening" is derived from the Greek ^[4] word meaning "instruct, train," which in turn has its roots in the Greek word for "child." Nine times in Hebrews 12:5-11 words	Pruning is God our Vinedresser pinching away parts of our lives that are presently or in the future will be unproductive. The Greek

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 Part: 3 Jesus: I am the LIGHT in the Wildersness
 Part: 2 Jesus: I AM the Light to follow
 Part: 1 Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust

	referring to fathers and children appear. Here God is speaking to His own children, and as God's children we are subject to Him and to His training. Part of that training may seem unpleasant, but God uses even the most undesirable experiences (that is, undesirable in our minds) to instruct and train us for His glory.	[5] word means, literally, "cleans." To clean of excess foliage is to prune, but the context also calls to mind [6] cleansing from sin. Our Father's work with us is the careful trimming away of sins, hindrances, and evil habits so that we gain the maximum fruit-bearing capacity. Among the most effective ways our Father prunes us is with trouble, even pain and suffering.
How do you know that chastening and pruning are happening?	We have troubles and problems in our lives. In chastening we have a growing frustration with our problems and we find our selves going away from the Lord because of it.	We have troubles and problems in our lives. In pruning we have a growing peace through struggles and we find ourselves drawn closer to the Lord by them.
What is it like?	Chastening hurts	Pruning hurts
Why does it happen?	We are chastened because we are doing something wrong.	We are pruned because we are doing something right.
What happens when we are chastened and pruned?	During chastening joylessness to fill our heart, mind and life. If uncorrected soon our relationship with the Lord seems distant, blighted by sadness, and lethargic. Then the Word of God seems unimportant, boring, and dull – and our heart becomes cold.	During pruning even though it hurts -- we remain joyful, we read God's Word with hunger, and we talk to Him often in prayer. We soon sense the nearness of our Heavenly Father pruning us, and we respond to God's challenge for increased growth.
What is our fruitfulness?	When chastening begins it signals a no fruit time in our walk.	When pruning starts we are already bearing spiritual fruit.
What does God desire?	For us to turn from sin and return to fruitfulness.	For us to bear even more fruit .
What needs to go?	We need to see and turn from our sin	We need to even more turn from our self and flesh.
How should you feel?	Chastened, guilty, sad, anxious for restoration.	Relieved, trusting, and expectant of God's even greater blessing.
What is the right response?	Repentance (stop your sinning). The Bible word for this unforgettable, hope-filled change of direction is <i>repentance</i> . It is a lifestyle, an ongoing commitment to keep putting aside our rebellion and receive God's forgiveness.	Further surrender. If you're still wondering whether you are in a season of discipline, ask yourself this question: Can I look back over my walk with God and see very clearly that a sinful behavior I used to be caught up in is no longer an issue? Are there thoughts, attitudes, or habits that used to dominate my life but don't anymore? If you can answer yes, you're moving forward and upward with God. If you can't, you are undoubtedly being disciplined.
When does It stop?	When we stop sinning. Repentance is a turning away from the sin that ails you to the bounty God promises you. Neither is repentance a one-time act. Some sins leave us in such bondage that we need ongoing help and accountability. No one knows this truth better than those who have overcome serious addictions and brokenness in their pasts.	When God is finished

25 REASONS CHRISTIANS [7] are chastened and pruned

PUSHED TOWARD GOD

1. CHASTENING & PRUNING GROWS THE FRUIT OF PATIENCE: **Romans 5:3** And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; **James 1:3-4** knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. **Hebrews 10:36** For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.
2. CHASTENING & PRUNING HARVESTS THE FRUIT OF JOY: **Psalms 30:5** For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning; **Psalms 126:5-6** Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. 6 He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.
3. CHASTENING & PRUNING GAINS US THE FRUIT OF MATURITY: **Ecclesiastes 7:3** Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better; **1 Peter 5:10** But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

4. CHASTENING & PRUNING DEVELOPES THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: [Hebrews 12:11](#) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

5. CHASTENING & PRUNING SILENCES THE DEVIL: [Job 1:9-10](#), 20-22 So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land; 20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

6. CHASTENING & PRUNING TRAINS US IN GOD'S WAY: [Psalm 119:67](#) Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word; [Psalm 119:71](#) It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

7. CHASTENING & PRUNING MAKES OUR LIVES PURE: [Job 23:10](#) But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold; [Psalm 66:10-12](#) For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined. 11 You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. 12 You have caused men to ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to rich fulfillment; [Isaiah 1:25](#) I will turn My hand against you, And thoroughly purge away your dross, And take away all your alloy; [Isaiah 48:10](#) Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction; [Proverbs 17:3](#) The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the Lord tests the hearts; [1 Peter 1:7](#) that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

8. CHASTENING & PRUNING CULTIVATES CHRISTLIKENESS: [Hebrews 12:9-10](#) Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ; [1 Peter 4:12-13](#) Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ; [Philippians 3:10](#) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; [2 Corinthians 4:7-10](#) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

9. CHASTENING & PRUNING MAGNIFIES GOD: [Psalm 50:15](#) Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."; [John 9:1-3](#) Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him; [John 11:4](#) When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."; [John 21:18-19](#) Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."; [Philippians 1:19-20](#) For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

10. CHASTENING & PRUNING PROMOTES VICTORY: [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#) And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

11. CHASTENING & PRUNING MAKES US AGREE WITH GOD WHEN WE DO SIN: [Judges 10:6-7](#) Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord ...and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. [Judges 10:15](#) And the children of Israel said to the Lord, "We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray." [Psalm 32:3-5](#) When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin; [Hosea 5:15](#) I will return again to My place Till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face, In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."; [Hosea 6:1](#) Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up; [2 Chronicles 15:3-4](#) For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; 4 but when in their trouble they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them.

12. CHASTENING & PRUNING REMINDS US OF HOW GOD HATES SIN: [1 Peter 4:17](#) For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? (If the branch is heading away from God the pruning stops that downward spiral)

[1] John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Get the Most from God's Word*, (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing) 1997.

[2] Bruce Wilkinson, *Secrets of The Vine*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p. 50-59.

[3] Bruce Wilkinson, *Secrets of The Vine*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p. 96-103.

[4] From the paragraph entitled "Instruction and Training" in **Chastening**, a booklet by James H. McConkey

[5] *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications) 1996.

[6] Adapted from John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Get the Most from God's Word*, (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing) 1997.

[7] Drawn from and adapted out of H. L. Willmington, *Willmington's Book of Bible Lists*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1987.

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