

John 15:1-5, 8

Luke 9:23—Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.

- ✓ “take up” or “lift up” –
- ✓ He cleanses us -- Sin is like dirt on us
- ✓ He lifts us up: worldly way of living has us down on the ground.
- ✓ **He intervenes in our lives to discipline us.**

1. If necessary, God will use painful measures to bring you and me to repentance, to a place of fruitfulness.

- ✓ Another title for this sermon could be “The Good News You Didn’t Want to Hear.”
 - ✓ Good News: that God will not settle for anything but an abundant life for you.
 - ✓ Don’t Want to Hear: you’ll only let go of some sin and worldliness with a **measure of pain.**
 - ✓ Everybody sins from time to time; God’s discipline comes when sin is in habit form, un-dealt with behavior or attitude that is blighting your life.
 - ✓ God disciplines us like a father does his child. **Hebrews 12:5-6**
 - 1) God is the source of discipline.
 - 2) God disciplines all believers.
 - 3) God always acts in love.
 - ✓ God takes loving measures to correct the direction we are growing.
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2. Why would a loving God want to bring us pain even in a small dose?

- ✓ Answer: To get a highly desirable result from our lives -- desirable for us and Him: **Hebrews 12:11; Hebrews 12:10**
- ✓ God nudges us, lovingly, wisely, persistently toward the life and character we desire but can’t reach without help, without discipline.

3. Once we understand that God responds to us a Vinedresser, an incredible truth can dawn:

- ✓ The discipline doesn’t have to continue.
 - ✓ God wants us to get out of discipline more than we want to.
 - ✓ **It is only when God doesn’t discipline us that we should doubt His favor. Hebrews 12:8.**
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4. Is your branch sick?

- ✓ Have you failed to connect troubling circumstances with God’s purposeful intervention because of sin?
 - ✓ When a child doesn’t heed correction, a good parent raises the stakes.
 - ✓ Face the fact that the longer you stay in sin, the more you are asking God to raise the stakes.
 - ✓ Turn away from the sin that has kept you out of an abundant life.
 - ✓ **Make an unforgettable, hope-filled change of direction called repentance.**
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5. But what about those of us who are bearing fruit? What happens to us? Does He pass us by/leave us alone?

✓ **John 15:1-2**

✓ Understand something: God despises a mediocre crop almost as much as no crop

Revelation 3:16.

3 reasons for this:

1) It's not what we were created for in Christ Jesus. **Verse 5**

2) It does not bring God glory. **Verse 8**

3) A mediocre crop is easily counterfeited.

✓ How is the world going to distinguish you from the others? How are they going to know we are Jesus' disciples (Verse 8)? **Much fruit!!!**

6. How does God bring us to the place of much fruit?

✓ **He prunes us**

✓ That is wonderful, God is taking the things out of my life that I don't need—are you ready for that?

✓ Here's the rub: some of the things that you don't need are things that you very much want.

✓ **Understand:** to get more grapes from a grapevine you have to go against its natural tendency.

✓ Left to its own, a grapevine will always favor new growth over more grapes.

✓ The result? From a distance = impressive growth but up close, an underwhelming harvest.

✓ This is why a vinedresser cuts away unnecessary shoot and runners no matter how vigorous because a **branch's only purpose is to grow grapes.**

✓ Our only purpose is to bear fruit for God.

✓ This brings up a revealing question about our hearts: What do we really want?

1) Want to live mediocre lives in which we pursue our own interest and priorities bringing in an underwhelming harvest.

2) Want to live a life of abundance for His kingdom, a life that matters for eternity.

If that is your heart and your prayer to God, then you are asking for the shears.

✓ In a vineyard, a vinedresser applies the shears for 4 specific reasons:

1) to remove what is dead or dying,

2) to make sure sunlight can get to all branches,

3) to increase size and quality of the fruit,

4) to encourage new fruit to develop.

✓ Our Father the ultimate Vinedresser is guided by similar principles: To make room for the kind of abundance He created us for, He will cut away parts of our lives that drain precious time and energy from what's truly important
