



The Journey
Week of 07.25.10

Pruned

By Sarah Leimer

“You may kiss your bride” were the words my heart had believed for decades would mark the beginning of my happily ever after. While I was seasoned enough to understand that marriage was not all butterflies and rainbows, I truly believed that the fruitful part of my life was truly beginning when I heard those words spoken over us on that altar. When I look back on that moment in time, I can still see how I arrived at that conclusion, however, to call these past seventeen months “fruitful” feels like a bit of a stretch for my heart right now.

Entering happily into this season expecting a lot of blooming, blossoming and growing, I quickly discovered that God, the Master Gardener, had something else in mind for us entirely. Although the hands of the Gardener are always careful not to kill or break off, the life being pruned often has a different perspective. In the past seventeen months, God, with his pruning shears has cut away the breadwinning job in our household -twice. Has pruned away the joy of pregnancy. He called our sweet newborn son into his arms in heaven shortly after birth. He has welcomed a beloved grandmother home to heaven, and has allowed for personal challenges inherent with a new marriage on top of many other personal ones. It is a season that has at times felt un-recoverable - almost as if His pruning shears went too far and accidentally severed us from His vine. But in our hearts we know that is impossible, He knows exactly what he is doing and what is best. It simply does not feel that way for us in the thick of this season in our lives.

So we have held onto that vine with all of our strength. With every whispered prayer and every cry of our hearts we have held tight as we have also been held. As is often the case, lest the pruned become discouraged and wither, God being the ultimate Master Gardener has also plied us with fertilizer in order to strengthen and prepare us to grow and produce fruit when the season and timing are right. During this difficult time, He gave us each other to cling to during these impossible days. He provided community around us to sustain, encourage and to help us stay connected to His vine when we were weakest. He sheltered us in our cozy home, provided a secondary income to help make ends meet and whispered directly to our hearts of the hope of future fruit and harvest inherent in pruning. Being pruned is all about practicing a faith and belief that there is more hope and beauty ahead than what our eyes can see in the moment. Pruning is not just a lesson in gardening, it is a lesson in faith: believing in and hoping for what cannot be seen in this season.

“For, before the harvest, when the blossom is gone and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he will cut off the shoots with pruning knives, and cut down and take away the spreading branches.”

~ Isaiah 18:5

(You are encouraged to use the SOAP – Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer Method for a guide. Click [here](#) for an example SOAP journal entry. Page numbers refer to "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)

monday, 07.26

Read: [James 1:2-8](#) (pg. 830)

tuesday, 07.27

Read: [Luke 15:1-7](#) (pg. 716)

wednesday, 07.28

Read: [Psalm 100](#) (pg. 411)

thursday, 07.29

Read: [John 10:1-21](#) (pg. 735)

friday-sunday, 07.30-08.01

Read: [Psalm 103](#) (pg. 412)

If you don't already receive weekly email notification about The Journey, click [here](#) to sign up.

grow (resources to help you in your study)

- **Sunday's Sermon:** Click [here](#) for podcast, or here for [video](#)
- **Books:** Facing Your Giants by Max Lucado
Life With God by Richard Foster

go (action steps)

- **prayer?** Please send us an email by clicking [here](#)
- **care?** Do you need to talk with someone? Please call us at 913.341.5820 ext. 330
- **go**—Sign up to serve: email Lisa Zulke by clicking [here](#)
- **grow**—Join a small group, a 1:1 spiritual mentorship, or find about the many other [ways to grow](#)
- **give**—click [here](#) to make an online gift to Heartland and learn how you can set up recurring gifts

Small Group/ 1:1 Question Samplers:

1. Observation: What personal challenges in life and/or faith are you currently facing?
2. Reflection: In what ways might those challenges be the pruning work of God?
3. Discuss: How do you discern and identify the pruning work of God in the midst of life's natural stresses and difficulties?
4. Act: How will you respond and cooperate with God's pruning work? What are you being invited to notice, define and engage with through the pruning process?