

God Prunes Us

Week #2 (21st Jan 2023):

The Big Point: God Prunes Us

God's Word: Adam and Eve Sin (Genesis 3, John 15:1-2)

Memory Verse: "He cuts off every branch joined to me that does not bear fruit. He trims every branch that does bear fruit. Then it will bear even more fruit." John 15:2 (NIRV)

Application: I can trust God's correction.

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Focus Aim: To teach kids that He is a good God who loves us and takes care of us. He longs for us to grow and we can trust Him.

TEACHER'S WORD STUDY

♥ CENTRE YOUR HEART!

Why we do what we do

In this series, we learn more about God being like a good gardener who loves and takes care of the plants that he has carefully planted. Just like how a gardener will nurture, take care and even prune away at his beloved plants, God too, nurtures, takes care and sometimes cuts away unpleasant parts of ourselves that do not help us to learn and grow. Let's learn more about the nature of God, the good gardener, and find out why we can trust in His plans, His corrections and His truth.

Series Aim: To teach kids that He is a good God who loves us and takes care of us. He longs for us to grow and we can trust Him.

♥ Prayer Points

Keep the Kids and the Kingdom in our hearts!

Let's pray for the following (and feel free to add on your own!) :

- Pray for the kids to discover more about their understanding of Jesus and in their journey to come to know Jesus (more).
- Pray for the kids to learn how God is creator and a good gardener.
- Pray for the kids to know that a good gardener will also have to prune and cut away parts that are not helpful to his plants.
- Pray for the kids to know the importance of connecting and remaining in Jesus.
- Pray for kids to grow in their friendships with Jesus.
- Pray that as the kids remain in Jesus, they will grow to bear fruits that will please

Him - good character / fruit of the spirit, a willingness to share of the gospel with others

♥ Memory Verse Write Up

“He cuts off every branch joined to me that does not bear fruit. He trims every branch that does bear fruit. Then it will bear even more fruit.” John 15:2 (NIRV)

Throughout 2024, we will have “Remain” as the focus. This series continues to share more of the heart to encourage kids to remain in God, who is like a Good Gardener who takes care and provides for the plants He has planted.

The Old Testament frequently uses the vineyard or vine as a symbol for Israel, God’s covenant people which we see in Isaiah ([Isaiah 5:1–7](#), [27:2–6](#), [Psalm 80:8–9](#)). God is therefore portrayed as the vinedresser / vine grower / gardener who grows and takes care of the vines. The most basic point of the imagery is the obvious dependence of branches on the vine for their continued life.

God is the creator of all the world and takes care of everything in creation. When we believe in how Jesus saved all people from sin by dying on the cross and coming back to life, we are connected to the true vine, Jesus, who connects us to God, the Gardener. We become part of God’s Garden and are now in His good care. God, in his love, will prune away and trim away parts to help us to grow and bear more fruit.

♥ GROW DEEP ROOTS! focus

Understand the Big Point's

Through this series, we will learn more about God being like a good gardener who loves and takes care of the plants that he has carefully planted. God is the creator of all things in the world and He created the world out of love. This is why we can trust that God cares for and loves what He has created. In His love, God will also correct us to help us become people who will be more like Jesus.

Last week we established that **God is the Good Gardener** - He is the Creator who created everything in the world in His power despite not needing anything from or in creation. He simply chose to create because of His overwhelming love which He longs to share with creation. Because of His love, God is also God with us, choosing to be near us, to let us

know Him and His love. He is also the one who provides for all of creation. Today, we continue to learn the heart of God being the good Gardener, who will not let the plants He loves to wither in fruitlessness. Instead, God longs for all of His people to become more like Jesus and bear fruit that will please Him. Which is why **God Prunes Us**.

Truth: The Nature of Sin

The need for God to prune us is due to the entry of sin into the human heart. While sin does encompass “bad things” like lying and cheating, sin is simply placing other things to be more important than God and thus missing the mark of God’s level of righteousness. God is the one who created humans and all the living things on earth. God made us to love Him above all things - above family, friends, the things we like to do and the things we have or want to have. He also set rules and laws for all people, and these rules are all about loving God and people.

When we choose to do what we want to do instead of following God’s rules, we are going our own way instead of God’s way and thus, we miss the mark of God’s rules as we are not loving God or others in the way we were made to do. In essence, sin is the bad choice we make that puts other things above God. It is choosing other things above God. Sin starts within our hearts - with what we want more than God.

And that little bit of sin, as small as it seems, ruins everything just like how the smallest black stain ruins a perfectly white dress. Sin also never stays small. When left alone, it will spread and grow, contaminating everything. Imagine that you’re outside for a picnic on a hot sunny day and about to reach out your hand for a glass of ice cold, pure crystal clear water. Just then, a bird’s dropping splashed into the glass of water. No matter what, you will not drink the water. That little bit of bird’s droppings have contaminated and ruined everything within the glass. And sin is just like that, even a tiny little bit spoils everything.

And because God is perfectly pure and holy, he cannot leave sin to continue being there or worse, to grow on its own. He needs to correct sin and prune away parts of the garden that remain in sin.

Read: Genesis 3:1-24 - The First Sin

Note: The following is for your reference and learning as you prepare your lesson/sermon. :)

V1 Satan disguised as a serpent and tempts Adam and Eve

The serpent is introduced to be the most clever, or crafty of all the wild animals God created. Yet, the Hebrew term ‘*arum*’, describing the serpent, does not carry the negative moral connotations of the English words “crafty” and “cunning.” The text does not indicate when or how the serpent became evil, but it becomes clear that more than a simple snake is at work here; an evil power is using the snake, and this is none other than

Satan. Satan had been a glorious angel who rebelled against God as he wanted to be like or greater than God and was cast out of heaven.

We never know why Satan wanted to tempt Mankind, but likely that it is Satan's invitation for people to give in to his kind of life (you are your own god) and give up on God's kind of life and God's will, which is for us to have perfect fellowship with Him.

Satan's question, "*Did God really say, 'you must not eat from any tree from the garden?'*" uses the negative, which made Adam and Eve focus on what God did not allow and forget the many things that God has provided within the Garden, which is all the other trees.

V2-3 Eve's response

Eve's response largely echoes the divine instruction given in Genesis 2:16–17 regarding the tree of knowledge. But at this moment, Eve had no idea what sin, evil or bad things were. All she knew was that "evil" was part of the name of the forbidden tree. Satan knew that as long as she and Adam obeyed God's command, they would never know evil. But Satan also knew that with just one bite of the fruit of the forbidden tree, all would change. Adam and Eve would not just know evil, but *become* evil, and an enemy of God.

V4-5 The Serpent's twisted truths

Satan continued to twist God's words, belittling and getting Adam and Eve to forget the consequences of sin, thus making sin look acceptable. Satan also tried to sow a seed of doubt in Eve's heart about the goodness of God. That perhaps, sin is not that bad, and God is not that good, that God was selfish, not wanting Adam and Eve to be like Him.

V4 You will not surely die In this case, Satan is not wrong, for Adam and Eve were not going to "die" right away. Adam lived to be 930 years old (Genesis 5:5). Further, their eyes are opened (Genesis 3:7) and God acknowledges in Genesis 3:22 that "the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil." Yet Satan speaks half-truths. Their eyes are indeed opened, and they come to know something: that they are naked. They know good and evil by experience, but their sense of guilt makes them afraid to meet God; they have become slaves to evil and are themselves evil.

V5 For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." - this was the final enticement and it hooked on the human heart, the thought of being like God. This was also the exact same sin that caused Satan to first rebel, as he wanted to be equal with God. Adam and Eve also seemed to have overlooked the fact that they were already made in the Image of God, and thus already like God. They were also meant to rule the other beasts. To listen to one of the creatures isn't just disobeying God's commands but is also an act of treachery against God.

V6 Adam and Eve's direct sin and disobedience

Verse 6 saw how Eve surrendered to Satan's temptation as described in 1 John 2:16:

The lust of the flesh (*saw that it was good for food*), the lust of the eyes (*pleasant to the eyes*), and eventually to the pride of life (*desirable to make one wise*), and she took some and ate it. It was an action by her own accord and no one made her do it.

Adam, who was with her the whole time, did nothing to stop her, nor did he stop himself from doing the same thing. He knowingly ate what God had forbidden, which indicates that Adam's sin was both an act of conscious rebellion against God and a failure to carry out his divinely ordained responsibility to guard or "keep" (Genesis 2:15) both the garden and the woman that God had created as "a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18, 20). Both Adam and Eve ate on their own accord and thus they sinned against God by their own actions.

V7-9 The Effects of Sin

Adam was the first man, and stood for all who would come after. If Adam rebelled against God, his obedience would change the world forever. The peace, perfection and happiness of the garden would be destroyed. His disobedience to God and the trouble that resulted would pass on to every generation to follow. All humans would be sinful from birth, which is why no one needed to teach a child to disobey or go on our own way. Ever since Adam sinned, sin became a part of who we are. As mentioned by Romans 5:12, "Sin entered the world because one man sinned. And death came because of sin. Everyone sinned, so death came to all people."

Adam and Eve used to walk together in the Garden and talked about the wonderful things God had made. But because of sin and choosing their own way and choosing what they think is good instead of following God's way, they were now filled with shame and fear. Before eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve had always been happy when God came to be with them. But now, they were afraid and they hid. Eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil had given them the knowledge they never had before - the feeling of fear, guilt and shame. They are now also aware of their sin, propensity to sin, and exposed in front of all creation.

Thus, instead of feeling joy when they heard God coming, they felt like children who had been caught by their parents doing something wrong. Instead of greeting God with joy, they hid among the trees. We see the first signs of how sin created a wedge between God and his beloved children. Sin and its effects like fear, guilt and shame created a distance between them and God.

V10-13 Adam and Eve's response to God

When Adam answered, he explained that they were naked and afraid. When God asked if he had disobeyed and eaten the forbidden fruit, here is when we see how sin also separates us from each other. Adam blamed Eve, his wife. This has never happened before. Eve in turn, blamed the serpent. This shows the broken fellowship that now exists, not just between humans and God, but also between fellow humans as well as humans and creation.

V14-24: The Consequences and Punishment of Sin

God is a Holy God who cannot go back on his Word, He cannot simply write off Adam and Eve's sin. God did not want Adam and Eve to stay in a fallen state for eternity, or be separated for eternity, thus He had to banish Adam and Eve from Eden. (V23-24)

The Serpent's Punishment - The first judgement from this first sin committed by Adam and Eve was given to the serpent that had tempted them. God sentenced him to crawl on his belly. V15 has also been traditionally understood as pointing forward to the defeat of the serpent by a future descendant of the woman. This defeat is implied by the serpent's being bruised in the head, which is more serious than the offspring of Eve being bruised in the heel.

Eve's Punishment - God's judgement then came on Eve, which would be pain (Hb. *'itstsabon*) whenever she gives birth to a baby. This strikes at the very heart of the woman's distinctiveness, for she is the "mother of all living". Eve's judgement is also to have the love and closeness she had with Adam to be broken and they will have a hard time getting along.

Adam's Punishment - When God spoke to Adam, God corrected Adam for eating the forbidden fruit that Eve gave him. Adam's judgement was that thorns and thistles would choke Adam's fields, making his work hard. This punishment of the man involves his relationship with the very ground from which he was formed. Because he has eaten that which was not allowed to him, he will have to struggle to eat in the future. The punishment is not work itself but rather the hardship and frustration (i.e., "pain," *itstsabon*; as in Genesis 3:16) that will accompany the man's labour.

God's original warning to Adam and Eve was that eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil will certainly cause them to die (Genesis 2:17). As per what God first warned, Adam and Eve's sin of choosing their own way instead of what God told them would result in the judgement of death. Adam and Eve were first made to live forever with God. But with sin, they would one day die and return to the dust (Genesis 3:19) from which God had first formed humans. That was the first time when death entered the world and humankind.

On top of that, Adam and Eve was eventually banished out of the Garden of Eden, and kept away from the Garden of Eden which was guarded by angels carrying flaming swords.

Read John 15:1-2

Please note that John 15 was shared two weeks ago as an overview for this year's Focus: Remain.

The most basic point of the imagery in John 15 is the obvious dependence of branches on the vine for their continued life. God is the gardener who takes care of the vines, and the true vine is Jesus – the branches refer to the disciples as well as us, people who believe in Jesus and profess as Christians or God's people. We need to be connected to the vine (Jesus) to stay alive in the garden and be taken care of by God, the Gardener. As the disciples depend on Christ, God the gardener will cause them to bear fruit.

However, as the Good Gardener, God also makes sure to protect the health of the whole garden or of all the vines. He does two things to ensure that the vine remains healthy and is able to produce the highest amount of fruit:

1. He removes unfruitful branches
2. He prunes all the other branches which can bear fruit - meaning that he will cut away parts of us that are unhealthy / unpleasant in order for branches to be strengthened.

Link to Big Point

In God's great love and righteousness, He cannot allow sin to be unpunished. God also had to banish Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. While this seems harsh, it was God's way of protecting, correcting and pruning Adam and Eve, who now had sin in their hearts. He did not want Adam and Eve to have any access to the Garden or Eden nor the tree of life. God did not want Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of life and live forever with sin in their hearts. Instead, God promised them a way for them to be redeemed and stay in His love.

Link to the Gospel

This promise God gives is how one of Adam and Eve's descendants will one day overthrow and be victorious over Satan forever (Genesis 3:15). This descendant is none other than Jesus Christ, God's son, whose act of love by dying on the cross, saved us from sin and gave us the gift of salvation - to be with God again! When we believe in Jesus and His act on the cross, our sins are erased and we are made right with God. Even when we physically die, we will come back to life and be with God forever in heaven.

Romans 5:15b - But it was even more sure that God's grace would also come through one man. That man is Jesus Christ. God's gift of grace was more than enough for the whole

world.

Romans 5:18 - So one man's sin brought guilt to all people. In the same way, one right act made people right with God. That one right act gave life to all people.

Even though sin entered into all mankind due to Adam and Eve's one sin, all of mankind's sins are taken away through the one act of love by Jesus. His death on the cross and resurrection made us right with God and the gift of salvation where we can be with God again.

Linking the Gospel to God the Good, Gardener

Linking back to John 15, if we believe in Jesus, the true vine, we will then be connected to God and become a branch in the vine of God's people. We will be a part of His garden and we can remain a part of His garden and be in His good care as long as we remain and believe in Jesus, trusting in His ways and obeying everything He has taught and commanded us. We also can learn to trust that God will prune us and correct us in His love, so that we will not remain in sin, but will grow to bear fruit and be more like Jesus.