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He pre-designed for you to be here, you are not an accident. Maybe your mother rejected you, maybe your father wouldn't hold you, maybe they didn't stand by you, maybe somebody left you in a dumpster, maybe you were in a trash can, maybe you were put up for adoption. I don't care how your mother felt about you, you are not an accident to God. God predestined, predetermined, and preordained for you to be in the earth. You are not an accident. My father is the husbandman, means you have been planted. All right? And now we begin to talk about, this is interesting, let's go a little bit further 'cause I think this is gonna be good. Then Jesus gets to his disciples, he says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away".

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. Every branch in me. First of all, Jesus has said, in order for you and me to hang out you can't just be around me, you have to be in me, you have to be engrafted, you have to be connected. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit. He, being the Father, cuts it away, all

right? He cuts it away. So you don't have to worry about it, the Father will cut it away. All those people in your life that are not really real, all those people in the church that's not really real, all those people in the church that are not really connected, you don't have no business cutting people away, you don't know what you're doing. You can cut away somebody that God wants. You can cut away somebody that's up under attack, they've got blight, they've got worms, they got disease, but that doesn't mean that they're not real.

So many times when you feel like you've been deputized to cut people out, you've made a mistake. That's the Father's job to handle that, he knows who to cut out, he knows who to let in. And Jesus said every branch in me that beareth not fruit he cutteth it away. What does he do? He cuts it away. And every branch in me that beareth fruit he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit. So the second category, it says, even if you are fruitful you go through cuttings.

Now that's important for you to understand that, because a lot of times, you remember when

the disciples came to Jesus and said, who sinned, this boy's father or his mother, that he should be born blind? And Jesus said neither, but for the glory of God. We're always lookin' for somebody to blame, and whenever there's a cutting in our life, there's a cutting back in our life, somebody dies in our life, somebody leaves in our life, somebody divorces in our life, somebody hurts us in our life, we always need somebody to blame because we are always tryin' to intellectualize divine providence. Providence cannot be intellectualized. It just is what it is. And Jesus said, every branch in me that beareth fruit he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now I wanna stop here for a moment and I want to deal with something that is pervasive amongst people that hang out together, groups, clubs, families, churches, committees, sororities, offices. And that is a thing called jealousy. Jealousy is born when one person feels like they go through things that other people don't go through and they feel like life is unfair to them. But this text is quite clear, everybody gets cut. Some people get cut

completely off, some people get cut back, but nobody in this story goes without being cut. Everybody goes through cuttings in life, all right? So every branch in me that beareth fruit he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now both of 'em got cut, but one of 'em got cut to kill and the other one got cut to increase, all right? So if you're going to grow, you're going to grow through the cutting to increase, you're gonna grow because you've been purged, you're going to grow because there have been times in your life that you've been cut back. I hate to tell you this, dancing don't make you grow, shouting doesn't make you grow, rejoicing in the Lord doesn't make you grow. I know everybody's been teaching this Word, praising God does not make you grow. What merely causes you to grow is when you endure chastisement, when you endure being cut back, when you endure being purged, that's what causes you to grow. It is not the good times that make you grow, it's the bad times that make you grow, the hard times, the painful times, the lonely times, the frustrating times, the tearful times, those are the times that really cause you to grow.

And God says, if you are growing and you're doin' pretty good, the reward is I'm going to cut you back. Yeah, yeah, that's how I reward you. I'm not going to let you stay at the level you're at. I cut you that you might bring forth more fruit. Now, listen at the love that's in there. At first I don't feel no love in there. My mother used to tell me, I'm whipping you because I love you. I had a hard time with that because I thought if you really love me you will put that switch down, okay?

But God is basically saying the same thing, he said, I'm cutting you because I love you. What do you mean by that? I'm cutting you because I love you too much for you to be satisfied with producing on this level when I created you to produce on that level, and so I have to cut you back on the level that you're producing on so that you can discover that you can do more than where you are. That's good, isn't it? I think if I sat down right now I've said a whole lot, I think if I stop right there I've already said something to you that caused you to grow. Because we have a tendency to become satisfied with average. But Jesus said every branch in me

that beareth fruit I purge it that it might bring forth more fruit. So if you're fruitful and you want to bring forth more fruit, you have to be willing to go through cuttings in order to get to the place that you become more fruitful.

Let's talk about fruit. My children, I have five children, they are the fruit of our marriage. They're the fruit of our marriage. They're not just the fruit of me, they're the fruit of the marriage, the fruit of the union between my wife and I. The offspring is fruit. Anytime you know there has been fruit, there has been relationship. Unless you are the Virgin Mary, if you are pregnant, there's been relationship. Even in nature, if there's gonna be peach trees, and there's gonna be peaches on them, the bees are going to cross-pollinate between one blossom to the other because fruitfulness is the result of relationship. You cannot be fruitful and not be relational, okay?

So if you're going to be fruitful as a child of God, you have to have a relationship with God. Not with church, not with your pastor, not with the bishop, but a relationship with God, where

you are in communion with him. And the offspring of that communion is fruit. I can look at my children and I can hear them talking and I can hear my wife talking and I can hear me talking. Sometimes they sound just like their mother, sometimes they sound just like me. You know why? We didn't do it by ourselves. So there's a little bit of her in them and there's a little bit of me in them. And so it is with relationship. As God's Spirit gets together with your spirit the fruit that is born in your life is gonna have a little bit of both in it in order for it to be effective.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency may be of God and not of us. Are you hearing what I'm saying? So you need not to think that it's gonna be all God and none of you, or all you are none of God. The fruitfulness that occurs in your life requires a collaborative effort between the two things. You cannot sit back and do absolutely nothing and pray and say if it's the Lord's will, I'm going to have it. No, this is fruit, you have to be involved. Wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up. You have to be involved, you have to be connected. God is not gonna do it arbitrarily

without you, he's going to do it with you. These children are gonna be born through the union between you and God. They are fruit.

Now, if you don't understand that, you might as well close your Bible. Everything else is gone. And a lot of Christians don't understand that, they spend all their life praying, O God, keep praying to God, asking God to do things and they don't know that they're not waiting on God, God is waiting on them. Because God is requiring something of you in order for you to be fruitful. Every branch in me that beareth fruit I purge it. He purges it, meaning the Father, that it might bring forth more fruit. Somebody say, more fruit. If you want more fruit, and there's nothing wrong with wanting more, stop allowing people to make you feel bad because you want more. If you suspect that your potentials exceed your position, right now, if you think that you have more potential to go to the next level than where you are right now, shout, more fruit.

When you shout, more fruit, you're saying to yourself, I want my capacity to grow to the level of my vision. I don't want to believe on



one level and live on another level. I want more fruit, not because I'm greedy, not because I'm arrogant, not because I'm self-consumed, not because I'm a self-enthroned egoist, not because I'm a narcissistic maniac. I want more fruit because I would hate to live and die and never reach the potential I was created to reach. That's where we are right now. So Jesus says, just because you're connected to me doesn't mean I won't cut ya. I will cut you back, you will suffer loss. Not just loss of ticks and boils and lice and things that you didn't want to lose. When you purge something you cut back even some of the fruit.

Some of you have lost some things you know God gave you and you cannot for the life of you figure out how in the world could God take away something like that when I knew it was of God and he gave it to me. You're right. You're right. He did give it to you, but he taketh it away that it might bring forth more fruit. There's more coming. I know you're grieving, I know you're hurting, I know your heart is broken, I know your emotions are confused, you may even be angry at God, I get that, I understand that. But God wouldn't be cutting

you back if he did not have more for you. Are you gettin' somethin' out of this Word?

To those of you who are just joining us, we're in the gospel of St. John, chapter 15, verse 1-10. In these ten verses, we are discussing the union between stability and fruitfulness. Right now we're just talkin' about fruitfulness, we're talkin' about what it takes to be fruitful, we're talkin' about the submission that we have to have to the cutting process. Everybody has submission to the success part. To the conquering part we all say yes. To the cutting part we say oh no, I don't want that part. God says you cannot be a conqueror if you cannot endure the cutting.

In my book I call it the crushing. There are crushing moments in life. Right now America is going through a crushing, Italy is going through a crushing, China is going through a crushing, Los Angeles is going through a crushing, New York is going through a crushing, individuals in that city are goin' through a crushing. Nobody enjoys going through a crushing, but at the end of the crushing we ought to come out better than we were before,

not equal to where we were before. We wanna go from fruit to more fruit, ultimately to much fruit. Are you with me so far?

Oh, it's getting to the good stuff now. Then he says, "Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me". I want you to underline every time you see the word abide. Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. Abide, abide, abide. We keep hearing it all over again. Abide, to be stable, to be steadfast, to be unmovable, to get to one place and stay there.

I can't tell you how many people I see who are not successful today because they try everything and end up with nothing. All you gotta do is go on people's Instagram page and read their bio. I'm a photographer, a biologist, a chemist, an artist, a preacher, and a motivator. How are you going to be all of that at 21? When we read, they have more titles than they have years. You can't be everything, you have to narrow it down to something. You

can't be everything. Why do you keep jumping from biology to photography? Now you're taking psychology, now you're gonna do motivational singing, now you're going to do opera.

Hold it a minute. I'm not sayin' you can't be multi-talented, but I'm saying, jumping from thing to thing looking for immediate success will always lead to failure. You have to stick to one thing long enough to be fruitful. Just because you started something and it doesn't immediately respond to you the way you imagine for it to doesn't mean it won't bless you if you don't invest in it. Invest time, energy, money, training, preparing yourself to be as excellent as you think you are. There's often a gulf between how good you think you are and how good you really are. Back in West Virginia we used to say, I wish I could buy you for what you're worth and sell you for what you think you're worth, I can live off the profit the rest of my life.

A lot of times people deceive themselves into thinking that they're better at something than they really are. That's why you need some people in your life who can tell you the truth.

That was not that good, you need to work on that, you can be better at that. That might sound harsh, but in the end it's a favor. I would rather you hurt my feelings in private than for me to go out there and get embarrassed in public, okay? So Jesus is saying this, and it's something I think we need to pay attention to. Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

Notice that Jesus doesn't talk about stability and abiding in him until he's brought up cutting. He knows you're going to stay as long as you're blossoming. He knows you're gonna stay as long as all your bills are paid and everything's falling into place. He said, but I need you to be stable when you're confused and disappointed and hurt and you don't see the benefit and you feel like all your other classmates are passing you up. And everybody else gets to lead a song in the choir but you.

And everybody else gets called on to preach but you. God knows I was in a church, and I only preached twice in seven years. Twice in seven years. You know what I did most of the time? Cleaned it up on Saturday night. Cleaned out the baptism pool, shampoo the rugs, Bishop Jakes shampooed the rugs? Yes, I shampooed the rugs for seven years.

You have to endure those times in your life when your gifts are not celebrated. Honestly they hadn't even been fully developed yet. I had to prove that I wasn't serving God for the stage. I had to endure the fact that I wasn't in the spotlight. You aren't in a really good preacher 'til you can listen at another preacher. I always watch how other preachers receive other preachers, because until you can say amen to somebody else I don't wanna say amen to you. Part of your ability requires that you need to be able to appreciate somebody else being on the stage.

And I'm amazed at the people who get on the stage and struggle and then when they're not on the stage they want to help the person who is on the stage. It's amazing to me how judgmental you can be when you're sitting out there and then how unhelpful you can be and then get up here and want the whole church to explode and go with you. You have to learn how to be stable and to be steadfast. And God is saying, I need you to be the most stable when life is the most painful, that's what I need you to be, the most stable. Through the divorce, I want you to be stable. Through the layoff, I need you to be stable. Through the downsizing of your home, I want you to be stable. When your heart is broken, I want you to be stable. When you're not being paid what you're worth, I want you to be stable.

The challenge sometimes is to be so committed and so focused to what God call you to do that you're stable. And this is something that isn't taught often and that's why we have people who

are 23 years old and been married three times, 'cause the moment something goes wrong we're out of there. Oh, I'd have been gone years ago, my wife would have been gone years ago, it'd been a race to see who could get out the door first if we left every time something went wrong. You stay, you abide, you hold on, you endure, you fight back, because you cannot be fruitful if you're not stable.

Again, we're talkin' about the union between stability and fruitfulness. You cannot be fruitful if you're flighty. That's what I'm saying to you. That's what I'm saying. Are you gettin' what I'm saying? I don't mean to get on you, but I mean to get on you. So I'm gonna get on ya. All right? Then Jesus says, I am the vine and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. Now whether you noticed or not we went from fruit, more fruit, to much fruit. In just a few verses we kept graduating exponentially from fruit to more fruit to much fruit. And we can only get from fruit to more fruit to much fruit if we were stable.



You will never see what you could be if you quit. You will never see what you could have if you quit. You will never lose weight if you quit. You will never own a house if you quit. You will never have good credit if you quit. You will never get your degree if you quit. You will never finish anything if you quit. You have to stay with it when you feel like I'm a failure, I'm not good enough, I'm not smart enough, I'm too old, I'm too late, I'm too whatever the devil says you're too much of. You will never get to what you're tryin' to get to if you quit. I'm gonna go a little bit deeper with this. Are you ready for me?

Okay, we want to go deeper, because I want you to get something here that I think is really important. And I want to come down here so I can look you right in the face and you can get what I'm teaching to you today. I am the vine, ye are the branches, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing. Now this is

the part he wants you to understand. You didn't get there by yourself. You can't do this by yourself. You can't run it by yourself, you can't raise those kids by yourself, you can't hold that marriage together by yourself, you can't manage that department by yourself, you can't build that house by yourself. He says without me, you can't do it.

Oh, I heard you, I heard you, oh, I did it without the Lord, I'm not even saved. I did it. I went to school and I got my degree and I wasn't saved and I did it. I bought the house and I wasn't saved, I did it. You still didn't do it by yourself. You might not have acknowledged him, but he helped you get where you're going. And isn't it a shame that he helped you get there and you gave all your strength to somebody who didn't? Isn't that pitiful that he guided you to where you are in life and you acknowledge people who left you, cheated on you, lied on you, betrayed you, destroyed you, and the one who's been closer than a brother, you pay him no attention at all. He says without me you can do nothing. This is why whatever you give, whatever you sow, whatever you plant, whoever you help,

however you love them, you're only giving out of the abundance of what was given to you. Because without him you would not be able to be a giver. Without him you can do no...

You wouldn't have anything to give, you wouldn't. I don't just mean money, honey. I don't just mean money, I mean talent, I mean wisdom, I mean concept, I mean influence, I mean ideas, I mean creativity. Without him you can do nothing. So he says the important thing for you to maintain is not to become more attached to the gifts than you are the giver. Not to become more attached to the healing than you are the healer. Not to become more attached to the blessing than you are the blessing. Not to become more attached to the things I gave you than the one who gave it to you, because without me you can do what? Nothing at all. That admission of humility is worship. That is worship right there, that is a prayer life. That's a good way to start your morning.

Lord, without you I can do nothing. I need you to give me wisdom, I'm goin' to a meeting today. I want you to nudge me when I've said too much. I want you to put a fence around my

tongue. I want you to guide me to the most important things to say. And I promise you, Lord, if I give the victory in this meeting, I will give you the praise, for without you I can do nothing. This is Prayer 101 for people who do not know how to pray, is admitting your own limitations, humbling yourself before God, opening up your heart before him and saying, God, I'm ready to hear from you.

Now this is Jesus, remember now, remember, don't forget this, don't forget this. This is Jesus's summary to his disciples. He's gettin' ready to leave them physically and he says without me you can do nothing. In the same breath he said I'm going away. So what does that mean? I'm to do nothing? No, I'm gonna be with you in the spirit. I won't be with you in the way that I was with you, but I will be with you. And what your job is, you are not supposed to make yourself grow, you don't have to do that. You don't have to make yourself be fruitful, you don't have to do that. You don't have to make yourself be taller, you don't have to do that. You don't have to make yourself be richer, you don't have to do that. He says all

you have to do is abide in me and my Word abide in you, and I got the rest of it covered.