

## God in the Garden

I was watching a video on growing healthy tomato plants and the host recommended pruning your plants to better direct its energy for tasty fruit. Never thought of that before. So this morning, as I went out to water my garden, I took my pruning shears also. I pruned the lower branches which made the plant more prone to soil based disease and took care of suckers that were growing between the real branches and the main stem. That neatened them up. So we'll watch and see.



One of my regular morning blogs talked about one of the key components of a healthy spiritual life: letting go. It was one of my favorite blogs by Fr. Richard Rohr. He quoted a late 13th century German mystic, Meister Elkhart, who said that true spiritual practice “was more about subtraction than addition.” That struck me. My ability to let go of unhealthy stuff in my life seems crucial to my experience of freedom and well being. In fact, my ability to handle the *good* stuff in my life *with a loose grip*, has the same result. If I try to hold on to stuff too tightly (relationships, possessions, ideas,...), it either escapes my grip or I fall into its grip, becoming its prisoner. “Learn to behold life with an open hand,” advised the famous anthropologist, Joseph Campbell. And then there’s Jesus: “If you love your life, you’ll lose it but if you loose your life for my sake and the good news, you’ll have an overflowing, abundant, outrageously good life” (my translation).

Okay, so this who letting go thing is important to happiness. So what does that have to do with my tomato plants?

Well, God says he wants to help with our letting go process. In fact, he says that he will do it with both an accuracy and loving care that will allow us to get it right. When we try to prune ourselves, we often miss the mark. For one thing, we just aren’t objective. For another, we just aren’t that smart - I mean, smart enough to handle the complexity involved in making significant personal change happen. It’s a little bit like a doctor trying to do surgery on herself... not the best idea. Jesus addresses the pruning process in the fifteenth chapter of John’s Gospel. It’s a process that results in healthy, spiritual “fruit” in our lives (check out Galatians 5: 22-23 in the Bible). God knows just which areas of us need to be pruned, oftentimes hidden attitudes of bitterness or anger or self-loathing, or possessiveness. Sometimes it’s an area where we are simply holding on to a *good* thing in our lives *a little too tightly*. God knows when we cross the line from “beholding” life to “holding” on to life too firmly. We can too if we listen.

Every day I’m running into opportunities to be pruned, to trust God as the gardener of my heart. God uses my spouse, family, friends, strangers, enemies, circumstances, and even nature to awaken me to some pruning that needs to be done. I don’t always comply willingly (to say the least). Sometimes, it’s me kicking and screaming. But deep down inside, I know that I really do want God to win the wrestling match. Really. That’s the commitment I made way back in 1973 and I’ve never abandoned it. Because, to me, it’s not just a matter of producing a “fruitful” life but of living or dying. I chose life.

Yours,  
Scott

P.S. We at Lighthouse Church continue our Facebook broadcasts each Sunday morning at 10:30, even though we are also gathering in person. Feel free to join us either way and discover that a lasting friendship with God can be a vital part of your own happiness and fulfillment.