



SOUL CARE: PART 7: SOUL GROWTH

February 16, 2020

Pastor Alex Lessler

BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

MAIN TEXT(S):

John 15, 1-17; Genesis 2:10-15, 3:8-10 & 21; John 10:10; Matthew 28:20

SUMMARY

As is the case with every other healthy organism, a healthy soul should be a growing soul. How do we help our souls to grow? The answer can be found in John 15:1-17. In this passage, Jesus uses an example from gardening and vine dressing to teach his disciples an important lesson. If we want our souls to grow and bear good fruit, we need to “remain” or “abide” with Him. We need to constantly be aware of his presence with us and our reliance on him. Finally, Jesus casts that reliance in light of His friendship with us.

That isn’t always easy though. Sometimes it can be difficult and painful. Pruning is a practice that allows greater growth to come from a plant, but it requires parts of the plants be cut back. God often does that in our lives as well. However, we can take comfort knowing that God doesn’t prune us to punish us, but to help us grow and produce even greater fruit. We can trust that no matter what happens in our lives, if we are abiding with God, he will use our circumstances for the good of our souls.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker’s message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word “remain”?
2. Do you have a green thumb or do you kill every plant you touch? If you have a green thumb, what do you most love about caring for plants? If you have a brown thumb, what is your biggest struggle in trying to keep plants alive?
3. What is the most helpful thing you have learned in this Soul Care series?
4. Last time we met, we talked about [whatever you talked about]. Has anyone had a chance to put that lesson into practice? Has it has an impact on your life in any way?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what’s been read. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. What repeated words and phrases do you notice in John 15:1-17?
Why do you think is the significance of these words/phrases?
2. What is the purpose of pruning, according to this passage?
3. What does the text say happens to those who don’t remain in Christ?
4. What do you learn about obedience and its motivation from this text?
4. What relational term does Jesus use in this passage? Why is that significant?

cont.

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Who do you know or know of that produces a lot of good fruit in their lives?
What sorts of life circumstances have enabled them to do this?
2. How have you seen changes (big or small, wanted or unwanted) enable people to grow?
3. How have you seen God prune people that you know?
What has been the result of this pruning?
4. What do you think "abiding" or "remaining" in Christ looks like in today's world?
Who do you know that is a good example of this?
5. What does it look like to be a good friend in today's world? How have you seen people struggle with friendships? How do you think good friendships, and friendship that struggle, impact our ability to see Jesus as our friend?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. How have changes in your life enabled you to grow?
2. How has God pruned you in your life? What has been the result of that pruning?
3. How would you rate yourself on your ability to "abide" or "remain" with Christ in your current season compared to past ones? What kinds of things have impacted your ability to abide, for good or for bad?
4. If you're a follower of Jesus, how does it feel to you that He describes you as His "friend" in John 15? Is this easy for you or difficult, and why?
5. In Sunday's sermon, Pastor Alex mentioned 5 practices that you help you to grow in your soul: prayer, worship, devotion, community, and solitude. Which practices do you most enjoy/engage in most often? Which one(s) is harder for you?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. If you are currently in a season of pruning, how can your group pray for and/or encourage you this week?
2. What can you do this week to help you see Jesus as your ever-constant friend who wants to help you grow?
3. Which of the 5 practices Pastor Alex mentioned in his sermon do you most want to incorporate into your life more? What will it look like to do that in the coming week?

Thanks to Ashleigh Rich and the ADT team this week for notes and questions.