A tree’s purpose in life is to make viable seed for the next generation, to get that seed dispersed into the environment, and to store enough nutrients to survive the winter and then manage some vigorous regrowth in the spring. The purpose of the home gardener or orchardist is more about growing high-quality fruits in reasonable quantities and growing healthy trees that are easy to harvest. Pruning is one of several practices necessary to achieve these goals.

A tree left to itself, unpruned, will grow quickly as a juvenile in the first few years, producing few or no fruit, but as age increases the tree will usually “settle down” and begin bearing fruit, at which time vegetative growth slows. The tree will get larger over time (perhaps to 30 or more feet in some species) and upper leafy branches will shade the lower parts of the tree. Shade will inhibit formation of fruiting wood (that is, flower production), and therefore fruit production. Pruning will lower the tree’s height and allow sunlight to penetrate down into the tree’s lower branches, promoting lower-height fruit production. Sunlight penetration can also be necessary for proper fruit color development in some species. An unpruned tree also has dense shoot growth, which limits air circulation, possibly leading to disease. Hence the need to prune.

In our Gospel reading Jesus informs us that as Christians the relationship that we have with Him and the Father is one like a branch to the vine who is Jesus and the vine grower who is the Father in heaven. That is why I think it is important for us to learn about pruning because when we are plugged into the vine the vine grower is going to want us to blossom and produce the most and best fruit possible. So, let’s talk about the similarities between pruning and growing as a Christian. Because ultimately pruning if what is best for us.

A successful home garden requires a regular care routine, including pruning. Young trees in particular need pruning for proper growth, but even older fruit trees also need regular branch removal to thrive. So it doesn’t matter how few years or how many years we have lived, God is always going to prune us.

Part of proper pruning techniques is knowing when, exactly, is the proper time to cut back your tree. Pruning during the wrong time of the season can result in damage or weakening of the existing branches.

What this tells us is that God knows exactly when to prune just as any good vine grower would. So, whenever we go into the pruning process and God begins working on us, we can rest assured that what is happening is happening for our good. That God is pruning and molding and shaping us into the mold of Christ. Pruning is a process that God uses to help shear off what can distract is from God and build up our dependency on God.

Let’s look at the positives of pruning. Pruning stimulates growth. Properly pruned and trimmed trees provide a strong network of healthy growth for fruit bearing branches. This is important since it is only branches that are at a 45 degree or greater angles upwards that should be retained to support growing fruit, and more growth equals more branches to choose from to allow this.

You see God knows that life is not easy. It is told to us throughout the Bible and even Jesus tells us that we are sheep amongst the wolves. And if God does not prune us to take away the weak and build up the strong, life would be a lot harder. I believe that God works in us to strengthen what needs to be strengthened that God knows we will need when the storms of life come raging on. God prunes us so we can withstand the storms of life.

The next thing pruning does is help train the size of the tree and direct the growth where you want it to begin for early fruit production and optimum fruit quality conditions. Fruit trees benefit from early pruning starting at planting time to help balance out new root formation. Once good rooting has taken place, new lateral branches will be more in abundance to choose from to begin training healthy, strong branches in the overall shape you would like your tree to be in.

I think one of the hardest things that we have to learn to get control of the way pruning does and crucify daily is our ego. And pruning is how God helps us toward that endeavor. This is because it is so very easy for us to begin to think that we do not need God and can do everything on our own. Our ego can slowly but surely get out of control if it is not tended to and get us in trouble and through pruning God has the ability to squash our ego and put us into positions where we could only depend on God for what we need.

Pruning done in the early years of a fruit tree's growth is focused on shaping the tree to a functional, strong structure. The pruning process allows you to choose the best branches to form a balanced tree shape. Branches growing closely or crossing one another are removed. The early pruning also keeps the tree to a manageable size -- both in height and span of the tree branches. Shaping up a young tree keeps it from becoming overgrown and out of control.

When it comes to our spiritual lives, God is working in us not only to become more like Christ. God has raised us to life for a relationship with Him and then in turn asks us to be vessels that will invite others into the fold, to join in something incredible. And what is more incredible than leading people to Jesus Christ. And I believe that part of the fruit that we grow as Christians is other Christians. That pruning also helps us to become greater witnesses of the love of Christ which will help us partner with the Holy Spirit in producing more baby Christians, leading people to life.

Even with proper care, fruit trees are susceptible to pest infestation and disease caused by fungus or bacteria. When left unchecked, the entire tree becomes damaged and may die from the pest damage or disease. For example, fire blight affects pear and apple trees, turning the leaves and stems black and leaving oozing cankers on the branches. Removal of the affected areas at the first sign of a problem may prevent the damage from spreading to the rest of the tree.

When it comes it our spiritual life we need to be thankful to God that God prunes us because we do not know where things would be in our lives if God did not prune us. Especially when sin arises that can take hold of us and lead us down a dangerous place. Yes we all sin, but we all have some things that we are more susceptible to. And if it is not for Gods pruning that stuff would take over like a pest infestation and disease on a tree which can destroy them and sin will destroy us from within. I believe Gods pruning gets us strong enough to defend ourselves and fend off those things that can destroy us like greed and gluttony and envy.

When it comes to pruning, It seems counterproductive to remove branches when you want a better fruit crop, but that's exactly what fruit trees need for quality production. Too many branches and buds on the tree mean all that fruit has to compete for space and energy from the tree to grow. The fruit is often lower quality if the tree is loaded with too much fruit and it may not grow to full size. Trees that are regularly pruned produce fruit with a higher sugar content and consistent ripening. Pruning also lets you get rid of the branches that no longer produce well.

In terms of our Christian life, as you can see pruning is important for us to fully grow into our best selves. It is not like if we are not pruned God doesn’t love us, It is the fact that God loves us so much that God prunes us for our benefit. To help us live life to the fullest. Pruning does this by getting rid of what holds us back.

Pruning does have drawbacks: it is time-consuming and requires some education and experience. But to God, nothing is to time consuming to take care of you because you are worth it.

Regular pruning keeps a fruit tree healthy overall. Removing branches strategically prevents overcrowding of the tree. By removing the weaker branches, you give the strong, healthy branches more room to grow. The lower and inner branches receive more sunlight with the removal of some of the top branches. This even distribution of sunlight means your fruit tree is able to grow more vigorously. A strong, vigorous tree is less susceptible to damage from environmental factors, disease or pests. If the tree does receive damage, removing dead, damaged and diseased branches from the tree prevents the spread so the remaining portions of the tree stay healthy and continue growing. And in the same way spiritual pruning keeps us healthy and allows us to flourish and grow. So, thanks be to God that Jesus is the vine and the Father is the vine grower who keeps us in check helping us to be the best we can be.