PRUNE ME

I looked around me at the brown stuff hanging from branches and the dead crawling up out of winter soil. Maybe another month or two, once the seasons and the sun ambled further into the year, the dying and the brown would grow vibrant and green once again. But today it is stiff and crackly, lifeless and buried.

Just last week, I made my way through the house plants. They seem to grow dormant in the wintertime too. They lack luster and look glum, kind of like us humans as we gravitate out of hibernation, toward Spring. I thought about the new growth lying buried just beneath the surface perhaps; maybe just maybe waiting for a summons, a beckoning, a hopeful suggestion to flourish and come forth. Thirty minutes and a pair of dull scissors, and I trimmed at the sprigs and picked at the dead leaves and rustled the undergrowth. Already! Already, the house plants look better, happier, and a brilliant green is being nurtured to thrive. There's even a blossom here and a sprout there, poking through, and while the pruning took a little bit of time and effort—I even wondered if the plants might find the snipping painful—the result is powerful as new life begins to flourish.

Reminds me of me. Over the past five years, the Lord has been pruning me, pruning us. When I finally got serious about Jesus, He wasted no time in grabbing His shears and setting to work. He snipped all of the dead and the dying, the lifeless, the harmful and poisonous relationships—all that was sucking His purpose and the life out of me—He cut it all away. It was the most painful thing I have ever been through (and I have survived some agonizing stuff in my years). I even learned how unhealthy I was to some relationships in my life, and the Lord removed those relationships from me, I believe, to protect them from the rotting degeneration I had become in their lives.

But what I didn't know is how I would come back, thriving, flourishing, striving toward life and obedience and faithfulness. The bigness of His blessing and favor that pokes through fertile soil is unimaginable and beautiful and complete, its new growth fascinating and lush and fruitful.

Then He did it again! He pruned us this past year, cutting back everything that was holding us back, shearing off all that was dead and dying, exposing the footholds, thinning away the reliance we have had on ourselves instead of Him, uprooting any bitterness and self-sufficiency. He then began replacing all He snipped away with humility, with His grace and this ridiculous kindness and sustaining faithfulness.

It has been extremely painful, the unknown excruciatingly frustrating, the vulnerability raw and naked, being stripped of people you once hoped you knew and could count on, all of it, in a relatively short amount of time, shaved, cut back, gone. Again, He left something precious and so worthwhile. He left more of Himself, filled every hollow, completed each void, and in the end, the realization that all we really need is Jesus and His purpose, His blessing and guidance.

The growth that is blossoming, and what the Lord is doing with all He trimmed away and especially with all that remains, is exotic and exciting and intoxicating, finding ourselves in the center of His grace is like the best fertilizer I've ever known.

Lord, use me; grow me; take me to the place where all that remains is You.

John 15:4-5, '"So you must remain in life-union with me, for I remain in life-union with you. For as a branch severed from the vine will not bear fruit, so your life will be fruitless unless you live your life intimately joined to mine. I am the sprouting vine and you're my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from me you are powerless."' (TPT)