

## **Weekly Devotions: THE REFINING FIRE OF TRIALS 4**

### **The Health & Fruit of the Tree Depend on its Pruning**

A few conditions are necessary for a tree to grow well and be fruitful. First it must have access to water and it also needs to be pruned. Trees need to be pruned regularly for three purposes: aesthetics, safety & health. Pruning a tree helps to maintain its shape and appearance. Before pruning, the gardener knows what shape he wants the tree to be and how much of it needs to be cut off for the tree.

The tree also needs to be trimmed of dead or broken branches as they are serious safety hazard when they drop off. Some of these branches can obstruct the road signs or grow too close to utility lines causing danger to people.

Parts of the tree can also be infected and to prevent the infection from spreading to the whole tree, the diseased parts or branches should be cut away. Thinning the crown of a tree also permits new growth and better air circulation which contribute to the overall health of the tree.

Trials are the pruning shears God uses to trim us to keep us healthy and in shape. Painful as they are, we need to trust that God needs to prune us so that we can reflect His holiness, be spiritually healthy and to remove that sin in our lives that will cause us to fall away or stumble others. His pruning needs to be repeated as transformation is a life-long process.

### **Read Psalm 1 & Matt 7: 17-20**

#### *Questions to Ponder*

1. What is considered by the Psalmist as a good and healthy tree (3)? What do you need to do to be like a healthy tree (1-2)?
2. What type of fruit does a diseased tree produce and what is its end (Matt 7: 17, 19)? What did the Psalmist say is the end of the wicked (Psalm 1: 4-6)?
3. Pruning is necessary for a tree to be healthy. What are the 'dead branches' or 'diseased parts' in your life that need to be cut off? Do you have 'broken or overgrown branches' that may cause harm to yourself or others?
4. Give examples of 'good' and 'bad' fruits that come out of our lives. Do you see yourself as a healthy tree producing good fruit or a diseased tree producing bad fruit?