

# QTC565. The Parable of the Bramley Apple Tree. 03

## April 2025

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"The Parable of the Bramley Apple Tree" | Malcolm Cox | Quiet Time Coaching Episode 565

As I'm sitting here on this bench at the bottom of our garden in the early April 2025 sunshine, I'm looking at our Bramley apple tree. When we first moved into this property over a decade ago, the garden was rather neglected, but this tree was a real find. **I felt very lucky to have inherited this Bramley apple tree**, as Bramley apples are, in my opinion, the best for cooking. We've positioned this bench so it gets the sun in the second half of the day, putting us underneath the shade of the Bramley then.

This particular Bramley is quite interesting. It's all bent over to one side. You see, at some point, a Leylandii hedge was planted, and because it wasn't looked after, it grew too much and pushed against the Bramley. As a result, **my Bramley has grown outwards, leaning across the path, and some of its branches are very low**. Being quite tall, I even have to stoop to get to this bench or when I go back into the house. The branches are a bit twisted and gnarled in places.

It's not a young tree, and every year **we have to prune it**. We do this partly to stop it from just growing upwards at the end of the branches, which would waste its energy on growth that wouldn't be fruitful. And partly, we prune it to compensate for its leaning shape, ensuring the branches don't get too long and eventually topple the whole tree over.

So, when I look at it now, before the leaves have come in – I can see the buds and the new life starting – **it looks quite bare, leaning, and rather gnarled with strangely positioned branches**. You might wonder why we'd keep such a tree. Why not replace it with something more conventionally attractive and better suited to the space?

We keep this tree for several reasons. Firstly, it provides **shade over this bench**. Secondly, **we rather like it**. And importantly, **it still produces fruit**. Despite its stooped and odd shape, its less-than-ideal position, and its generally wrong appearance, **it is still fruitful**. It continues to draw nutrients from the soil. As long as we keep pruning it, which we do regularly, it will continue to give us wonderful Bramley apples for a good while yet.

As I sit here in the early April sunshine, contemplating our old, bent Bramley apple tree, it strikes me that there are some rather profound spiritual lessons to be gleaned from its peculiar existence. It's a bit like our own lives as Christians, I suppose.

Just as our Bramley was **shaped and somewhat deformed by external pressures**, the encroaching Leylandii hedge, so too can we be affected by the challenges and difficulties we face in life. We might feel **bent out of shape** or not quite in the ideal position we'd envisioned for ourselves. Like the tree leaning awkwardly across the path with its gnarled branches, we might feel that we don't look impressive or that we are in the "wrong position".

Despite its less-than-perfect form, and the need for regular pruning to keep it healthy and fruitful, our Bramley continues to produce wonderful apples year after year. This reminds me that **even when we feel stooped over or bent out of shape in our Christian lives, we can still be useful and fruitful for God**. Perhaps we can still offer shade or bear some kind of spiritual fruit, no matter what we've been through.

It's comforting to think that **God is like the gardener**. He sees our potential even when we might not see it ourselves. He cares for us, pruning us when necessary so that we can continue to be fruitful. Just as we value our Bramley for its shade, its familiarity, and its apples, **God has good purposes in mind for us**, even if we feel flawed or out of place. So, even if we feel a bit bare and our branches seem to be in strange positions, we can take heart in the fact that as long as we are drawing our nutrients from the earth – connected to God – and allowing the Gardener to tend to us, we can still bear good fruit for quite some time to come.

Take care, and God bless, Malcolm

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Share your thoughts, insights, or questions with me and the other listeners. And if you haven't yet, grab a free copy of my eBook on spiritual disciplines, "*How God Grows His People*," at [www.malcolmcox.org](http://www.malcolmcox.org) by signing up for my newsletter.

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