

40 Days of Real Change

Week 3 – Thorns Ephesians 4:17-5:20

I. Developing a lifestyle of joyful discontent

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over (desires) to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds;²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:17-23

The old way (Thorn bush): rooted in wrong thinking (v17), & wrong desires (v19) and results in wrong responses to life, ie...“every kind of impurity” (19), lying (25), destructive anger (26), stealing (28), unwholesome communication (29), fighting, slander, and an unforgiving spirit (31-32)

The new way: In Jesus, New thinking (20-22) New set of desires (22-24) that result in new responses:
Speaking the truth (25) Being angry without sinning (26-27) Lifestyle of giving (29)
Kind, Compassionate & forgiving relationships (30-31)

1. Consider, what are my thorns? Complaining, laziness, anger, envy, lust, bitterness, avoidance, pride, indifference, hard words, blame judgmental spirit, greed, lack of self-control, etc

2. Acknowledge my responsibility for the Thorns in my life
“...put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;...and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Eph 4:22 & 24

6 classic thorn bush responses

- Deny, avoid, escape
- Magnify, expand and obsess about a painful moment from the past
- Get prickly or hypersensitive
- Get even
- Get bogged down or paralysed
- Make excuses or shift the blame

II. Getting to the root of the problem

1. Why do we sin? Common excuses

- Other people –
- Family background –
- I had a bad day
- My body made me do it

“A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ⁴⁴ A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thorn bushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. ⁴⁵ A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.” Luke 6:43-45

“The Bible says that my real problem is not psychological (low self-esteem or unmet needs), social (bad relationships and influences), historical (my past) or physiological (my body). They are significant influences, but my real problem is spiritual (my straying heart and my need for Christ). I have replaced Christ with something else, and as a consequence, my heart is hopeless and powerless. Its responses reflect its bondage to whatever it is serving instead of Christ. Ultimately, my real problem is a worship disorder.”
Tim Lane & Paul Tripp

2. Recognise that I have a straying heart

“²³ And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles...²⁵ They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.” Romans 1:21-25

3. Examine my heart to see what I have allowed to become more attractive to me than the Lord.

4. Come in repentance and name my God replacements (idols) before the Lord

Write 300-400 words about what you are learning about your heart.