SERMON DISCUSSION STARTERS

How has the Word of God transformed you recently? Has it rescued you from bondage? Has it provided peace or joy in the midst of a trial or some measure of suffering? Has it fundamentally changed who you are – from a person of doubt to a person of faith, from a person of guilt to a person of forgiveness? (Romans 10:17) says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." Take time to praise God for the transforming power of his Word. Think through some of the recent effects the Scripture has had on your life.

When God supernaturally transforms people, it brings him great glory. The disappearance of thorn-like characteristics and brier-like flaws mark the end of the old era and the beginning of a new.

- The New Testament talks about how God's grace brings about spiritual transformation that is as miraculous as thorns becoming cypress tress and briers becoming myrtle trees. Look up (2Cor. 5:17) what are believers called there _____?
- The Scriptures record blasphemers and persecutors becoming preachers of the Gospel. Whose conversion is spoken of in (1Tim. 1:13-14) _____? Look up (1Cor. 6:9-11) and write down the types of people that God is interested in re-creating. Take time to praise God for his curse-reversing, supernaturally transforming grace!

The suffering Servant (Jesus) of Isaiah 53 leads people out of bondage and into joy and peace. There is joy because of the inner transformation wrought by God, and there is peace because of a new relationship established with God.

- Does your life depict the joyful and peaceful fruits of God's transforming grace? Would people characterize you as a joyful person? Would they label you as someone who is at peace?
- Perhaps you need to reflect on the work of Christ in your life and allow those spiritual realities to provide joy and peace today. What practical steps can you take to be a more joy-filled and peace-filled person?

God's Word is a gift from heaven. It is our life. Moses put it this way in (Deut. 8:3), "Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." If God's Word is food to live by, how nourished have you been lately? Unfortunately, some Christians starve themselves. They are spiritually emaciated because they neglect the Word. Do you spend focused time reading the Scriptures to feed your soul?

A violin teacher posted a sign on the studio door stating, "Only practice on days you eat." Perhaps for Christians, we should post a sign that says, "Only read the Scriptures on days you eat, or on days you check your e-mail, or on days you Facebook, or on days you look in the mirror." If we would only read our Bible on those days, maybe our spiritual intake would increase.

TODAY'S NOTES