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**Session 4 | *Real Change*, ch. 3: THORNS**

**I. HOW THE THREE TREES DIAGRAM HELPS US LISTEN**

**Here are things to listen for from someone who is sharing about their circumstances.**

- A. How do they describe their circumstances? What are the circumstances of their story? Listen for details, history, current situation
- B. How are they responding to the circumstances? What is their response to those circumstances? Feelings, thoughts, words, actions
- C. What do they emphasize? (This helps *you* to determine what to emphasize—e.g., car repair > no transportation > lose job > homeless!)
- D. Where is God in their story?
  - How do they interpret God's heart and character?
  - What of this becomes the priority in my counseling?

- What is clarifying and crystallizing?
- E. What is primary and what is secondary?
- F. Resist the temptation to respond to every detail, except where clarification is needed.
- G. Listen for what they want to change, as we help them to find hope in the unchanging God, not in ever-changing circumstances. Their vision is often for personal happiness. God's vision is higher—for personal holiness. A desire may be understandable, but again, we want them to find hope in the unchanging God, not in ever-changing circumstances.
- H. Listen for circumstances or situations that raise immediate concerns or require immediate attention. Is someone suicidal? Is this person experiencing abuse? Is this person making drugs and/or alcohol a refuge? Consistently? We as your pastors are always a phone call away if you have concerns that require immediate attention.
- I. Having listened, what one step can they take...a particular action to pursue, a specific verse to memorize, a specific prayer to pray, a specific practice to develop. This will inform, at least the beginning of the next session.

## II. THE THORNS

**The Main Idea: Sinful desires and motives**, which exist and grow in our hearts, **find expression in our responses**

- A. I produce thorns (Colossians 3:1-17)

- Our identity and orientation is Christ-centered.

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (3:1-4)*

- Therefore, what is old must be put to death.

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (3:5-11)*

- What is new must be cultivated.

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all*

*wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (3:12-17)*

## B. My Thorns Come from My Heart

- Mark 7:20-23
- Luke 6:43-45
- James 4:1-3

1. Desire
2. Disagreement, Disappointment, or Denial begins to reveal our heart
3. Deserve
4. Dependency
5. Demand
6. Deifies - Passion exposes worship...me or the thing I crave
7. Destruction: This reaping can happen in seconds; it can take years.

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COUNSEL THE WORD: PURSUING JOY AND SKILL IN PERSONAL MINISTRY

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III. Q&A

**\*\*For Next Week:** Read chapter 4 of *Real Change*: Cross