

THE TAKE AWAY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Sunday, January 9, 2022

Message Summary:

This week, Pastor John Carter taught that it is only deeply rooted faith that will produce fruit in our lives. But if the condition of our heart (the soil condition) is not right, it will hinder the seed of the Word from producing good fruit, and ultimately our faith from taking ground. When you plant the Word in your heart, it requires faith to plant and faith to watch over it until it produces fruit. That's why you have take care of the soil of your heart. But like it tells us in Mark 4, we can struggle with other kinds of soil in our heart that makes it hard for the seed of the Word to grow: (1) hard (wayside) soil that makes it easy for the Word to be snatched away because it never takes root, (2) stony soil that only allows for shallow roots to grow which means that when things get hard, there are no deep roots planted to sustain them, and (3) thorny soil that chokes the progress of the Word with the deceitfulness of riches, the cares of this world and the desire for other things. If you struggle with thorny soil, it doesn't mean you don't have good soil, but you have other things that rob you from experiencing the fruit of of your faith. It is the distraction and the desire for other things that pull your focus away and cause the Word to become unfruitful. The take up the space that belongs to the Word! To deal with thorns, you have to cut them back. It means sacrifice, giving something up, refocusing, maybe even bleeding a little to let go. But if you want the Word to produce fruit, you have to make room for it to grow. You have to refocus your faith!

Key Scriptures:

- Read Mark 4:1-20 which is the parable of the Seed and the Sower

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you have to take care of the "soil" of your heart?
2. What are the thorns mentioned in Mark 4?
3. How do you deal with the thorns that choke your faith?

Life Application:

This week as you study the key scriptures, consider what Pastor John said, "Often times when we are not experiencing those things we are believing for, it is not because you don't have faith, or you don't know the Word, or you're don't have endurance to stand and believe. It isn't even the devil stealing from you. It is because you have thorns choking the Word, something else that has entered in alongside the Word and it is choking out the fruit of the Word." This week, examine your life. What are those things that have entered into your life that are distracting you and choking the power of the Word in your life? Is it the deceitfulness of riches, the fear of being without? Is it the cares of this world, the constant negative noise of news, social media or peers that is causing fear and distraction? Is it the desire for others things, the infatuation with the surface things of your life that produce longing or the fear of missing out? Whatever it is, be honest and **name it**. To deal with thorns, you will have to cut them back. Not just pull them, but cut them out so they don't harm you any longer. It's time to cut out those thorns, those distractions, those things that are choking the Word from producing fruit in your life. You have to limit the access those thorns (those distractions) have to the Word in your heart. So...what do you need to cut out in this season and what is your plan to do just that?