SERMON DISCUSSION STARTERS

Have you ever felt barren, broken, or besieged in life? Take a few moments to write out a personalized spiritual description that correlates with the imagery used in Isaiah 54. *(Example: Barren woman – Just as a barren woman would have felt shame, and inadequacy so in my own spiritual life this past week I have felt like that before God because of sinful choices. I've felt a weight of self-reproach and deficiency before a holy God).*

- Barren Woman -
- Broken Marriage -
- Besieged City -

Now spend a few moments reflecting on the fact that God's love isn't based on your loveliness, but rather his grace. If you forsake your wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts and return to the Lord, he is willing to forgive you (Is 55:7). He is willing to replace your spiritual poverty with wealth, your turbulence with security, and your despair with comfort. You don't deserve his faithful love, but God wants you to enjoy it. Take some time to praise him for his great grace.

God's love in Isaiah 54 provides a wonderful example for us. In (v. 8) two descriptions of this love are provided. The first is everlasting L_____ and the second is C_____. Devotion or everlasting love is centered in the will. It is God's steadfast determination and commitment to love you. Compassion on the other hand is centered in the emotions. It is God's heart of love toward you. Fickle and flighty people like us could learn a lot about love from our faithful God.

- When it comes to disappointing people and frustrating relationships, how can God's stance toward you strengthen your devotion? How can his everlasting love for you bolster your determination to love others? Who is it in your life that is hard to love? _____ Will you take some time right now and ask God to help you love this person with determined devotion? Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and so you'll need his help to love difficult people.

- When it comes to deficient and broken people, God wants you to display compassion like him. I think God's compassion flows from his ability to see past people as they are, and see them for who they can become. If your spouse or your child, your neighbor or co-worker is hard to love because of some deficiency or measure of brokenness, ask God to help you see them for who they can become instead of who they presently are. Ask God to give you a compassionate heart. Look up the following verses on compassion and mercy and write down some reflections or lessons learned in the space below (Matt. 5:7; 9:36; Ps 86:15)

God wants to restore your relationship with Him. No matter how estranged you've become or how alienated you feel, he is able to bring you back to himself (Is. 54:6-8). There is no one who has sinned too much or strayed to far to be beyond the reach of God's love. Have you ever been so entrapped in sin, or so ashamed by failure that you think your life is beyond restoration? Have you ever viewed your life like a totaled car beyond repair? God can take the worst of sinners and make them the best of saints. Read about Paul in (1Tim. 1:15). How does he describe himself in that verse? _____ How should God's power to restore affect our view of self and our view of others? Write your thoughts in the space below.

God wants to rebuild your life. No matter how ruined things seem to be, or how much rubble appears to be piled up, your life is not a total loss. God can take the ruined city of your life and rebuild it infinitely better. He can take what is broken and fix it (v. 11a). He can beautify what is marred (v. 11b) and clean what is dirty. That is what he has promised to the people of God. One day the rebellious broken Jerusalem described as a _____ in (Is. 1:21) will be beautified and described as a heavenly city (Rev. 21). What parts of your life are broken down? What could be described as rubble and ruin? Is it your speech, your moral purity, your honesty, your entertainment, your service to others, etc. Take time right now to repent of your sin and plead with God to rebuild your life. Look up (1John 1:9) and claim God's promise. He will cleanse, repair, and rebuild you.