



Today, we will discuss "The Danger of a Hardened Heart." We're going to learn about how God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and over the next few weeks, we're going to see how sometimes God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and at other times, Pharaoh hardened his own heart towards God. A hardened heart is never good, and we can get there quickly. We can have a hardened heart towards others and the Lord. Why do we get to this place? It's usually related to some kind of pain or disappointment. Someone in your life treated you wrong, caused pain, disappointed you, or because you expected God to act in a certain way, and He acted the opposite. You may not even realize that you have a hard heart - it's not something we set out to have towards God or others. But there's a real danger when you close yourself off. So, let's lean in together, and if the shoe fits today, it's time to wear it and deal with the Lord.

Key Passage: Exodus 7:1-13

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think God sometimes hardens Pharaoh's heart, and at other times, Pharaoh hardens his own heart? What might be the purpose behind these actions?

Sometimes, it's God hardening Pharaoh's heart; other times, Pharaoh hardens his own heart. Paul addressed this in Romans 9:17-18 when he said, for the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. So, then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills." In other words, God did all of this with Pharaoh, including the hardening that the glory and name of God would be lifted up. Paul closes that out with an expression of God's ultimate authority and ability to do whatever He wants – He will have mercy on whomever he wants, and He can harden whomever He wants. God is not like you and me – He reigns above and reigns supreme in the whole universe.

2. It's dangerous to have a hardened heart towards God or others. Can you think of real-life examples where this danger played out in your life or those around you?

When your heart is hardened, you cannot fully listen to God. This was the clear result of Pharaoh's life; he would not listen to God's servants Moses and Aaron. There is something that plugs your ears to the voice of God. As we've pointed out, sometimes we get hardened hearts because of the pain that other people have inflicted upon us. If we're not careful, we begin to see everything and everyone through the lens of the wrong done to us – that's a slippery slope.

3. In today's passage, we see God's miraculous power displayed through Moses and Aaron. What role do miracles have in softening or hardening hearts?
4. Throughout this series, we've noted Moses' and Aaron's ages as they embarked on their mission. How does age affect our willingness or confidence to serve God through different stages of life?

If you've ever felt too old to serve God...pay attention. This is an important side note as we read this passage today: We often let age get in the way of serving God. Moses and Aaron could've easily said to God, "Lord, we're no spring chickens anymore. Why don't you find someone a little younger and with a little more energy for the journey than us?"

5. How can our church benefit from the energy, passion, and zeal of younger generations and the wisdom and spiritual maturity of older generations?

When it comes to age, it can often become a judgment we carry out on others. For example, some of us may someday feel like time has passed "us" by, and we're "too old" to make a difference in the church; others feel like they're "too" young to serve God, that it's not "their time" in the church yet. Cross Church is a multi-generational church family, and as a family, we benefit significantly from the 70-year-old serving and worshipping alongside younger adults and college students. We are better together – sometimes, it takes maturity to see the gift that God has given to the church through the ages.

6. Satan can perform counterfeit signs and wonders. How should we approach the idea of spiritual warfare in our lives?

In our passage today, we see Satan's ability to do counterfeit signs and wonders because he still does have power in this world – don't open the doors of your mind to evil things. Now, to be clear, the power of God reigns supreme above the power of Satan. This is even evidenced in this passage – the sorcerers throw down their staffs, they become serpents, and Aaron's serpent swallows the others. The glory of God is on display again in this moment – even with snakes! The power of God rules over the power of Satan – don't ever forget it – bank your life on it. We do not live in fear; we live in victory. Don't read this passage and be afraid of the power of Satan; read this passage and be amazed at the glory and power of God!

7. Reflecting on the warnings about a hardened heart, can you identify moments in your life when you may have missed experiencing the power of God due to a hardened heart?
8. It's vital to soften our hearts before the Lord. How can you practically soften your heart and listen to God in life's challenges?

Ask God to help you, submit yourself to God, and let Him work in your heart. Some of us may have a hard heart against God, and today is the day to drop the wall we've built up and put our trust in Jesus. For others, we may need to forgive someone who hurt us and yield that situation to Jesus.