
PREPARED FOR THE FAILURE

WEEK 5





Week 6 - Prepared for Failure

Research

There is a term, this week, that I would like for us to take a deep dive into. The term is “hardness of heart.” Welcome to Week 6. I am glad you have made it this far.

We instinctively know that hardness of heart is a dangerous state, but why?

Let’s dive into some research.



The first time, this concept comes into focus is in the book of Exodus with Pharaoh. For each of the plagues here is a synopsis.

1. Blood: Pharaoh’s heart “became hard” (7:22)
2. Frogs: Pharaoh “hardened his own heart” (8:15)
3. Gnats: Pharaoh’s heart “was hard” (8:19)
4. Flies: “Pharaoh hardened his own heart” (8:32)
5. Livestock die: Pharaoh’s heart “was hard” (9:7)
6. Boils: “The Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (9:12)
7. Hail: Pharaoh “hardened his own heart” (9:34)
8. Locusts: God announces that he has “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (10:1,10:20)
9. Darkness: God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (10:27)
10. Death of the firstborn: God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (11:10)

The question arises often to whether Pharaoh hardened his heart or whether God hardened his heart. Here are a couple thoughts to remember before the popular “How could God harden Pharaoh’s heart” dilemma takes root.





Point #1 – Pharaoh’s heart was already hard towards God before Moses proclaimed (in a Charlton Heston voice) “Let my people go!” Let’s not forget that Pharaoh had enslaved the Israelites despite Joseph 400 years earlier saving all of Egypt from famine. Pharaoh also thinks he is a god which is direct rejection of Yahweh as the One True God! What are your thoughts about that? Was Pharaoh’s heart already hard?

Point #2 – God knows people’s hearts better than we do. Remember, *Psalm 139 O LORD, you have searched me and known me! [2] You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.* Do you agree with this statement?

Let’s not forget that after Pharaoh relented allowing Moses along with the nation of Israel to leave, we read these verses. *Exodus 14:5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?”* This ended in the destruction of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea.

Thoughts:

Do we trust God with our hearts and our future? Why is it difficult to trust God?

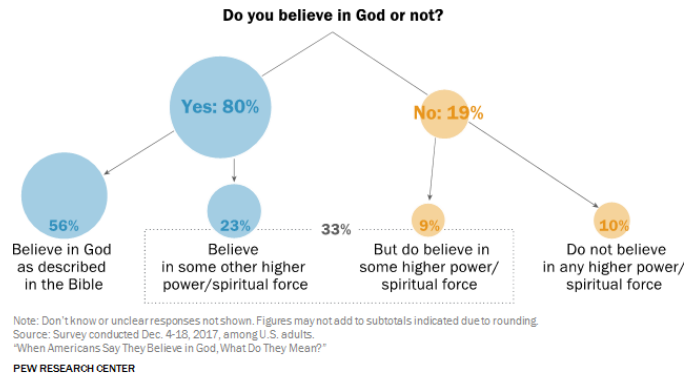




Point #3 – You are not Pharaoh, but people still harden their hearts towards Jesus and the things of God.

Look at this survey from the Pew Research Center. What are your thoughts?

One-third of U.S. adults believe in a higher power of some kind, but not in God as described in Bible



But the good news of the Gospel is grace upon grace. We are not stuck in our state of hardening. We can find our relationship with God once again.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Thoughts:

Have you ever experienced hardness of heart in your life?

As we move into the book of Mark, we will discuss a method to avoid the hardness of heart we see in these verses. Let's keep it going.





Making a Plan

In view of our research, what are your impressions of Mark 3:1–6.

Mark 3:1–6

[1] Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. [2] And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. [3] And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” [4] And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. [5] And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. [6] The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Who is the audience?

Jesus was a master of asking questions that revealed people’s hearts. We will see this over and over again in the book of Mark. What question did Jesus ask the Pharisees?

How would you answer that question?





One of the qualities of God that is central through the Gospel is: God is about life.

- **Genesis 2:7** then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.
- **John 1:1–5** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4] In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

When you hear that God is about life, what are your thoughts?

In this situation in Mark 3, we know, because of God’s character, that Jesus will bring forth life because the law of God is meant to help us live in full and abundant life. What does abundant life in Jesus look like? Here are some ideas.

Jesus is the only basis of life.

1 John 5:11–13 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Thoughts:

Satan plans destruction. Jesus plans life.

John 10:10, Jesus said, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”





God has more planned for us than we can even imagine.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—

Abundant life is a spiritual abundance not a physical promise.

God does provide for our needs *Philippians 4:19* And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. But the key to our view of the physical needs is contentment. *Philippians 4:11–12* Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. Does it comfort you to know that God’s blessings are spiritual or do you wish it was physical first?

The Pharisees missed this abundant life because their way of living, status quo, is at risk. That fear causes them to lash out at Jesus. Notice their response:

[6] The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Have you ever been upset even though something great has happened? Explain.





Let's read Mark 3:1-2 again. I don't know why but in the back of my mind I wonder ... **Mark 3:1-2** *Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. [2] And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him* ... was the man with a withered hand planted in the synagogue by the Pharisees? What do you think?

We don't know either way but I remember back in Week 2 in **Matthew 4:7** *Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test."* The Pharisees are going to continually try to trap Jesus in their interpretation of the Old Testament law.

Do you feel like this was a test? Does it matter if it was or wasn't?

It does not matter because Jesus was perfect in His knowledge and application of the law. **Psalm 1:1-2** *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

Also lest we forget, Jesus wrote the law!

Praise God for his wisdom and knowledge.

Isaiah 55:8-9 *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. [9] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

How does this encourage you?





Checking the List

Don't harden your heart

How can we live soft and responsive to the Spirit?

- **Ezekiel 36:26** *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

What is the difference between a heart of stone and a heart of flesh?

Choose life

What does it mean for God to choose life?

- **Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Live the abundant life God has for you.

Which statement about abundant life was most impactful for you?

- Jesus is the only basis of life.*
- Satan plans destruction Jesus plans life.*
- God has more planned for us than we can even imagine.*
- Abundant life is a spiritual abundance not a physical promise.*



Abundant life can be found in Jesus!

How do the following verses encourage you today?

- **John 6:35** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

- **Isaiah 40:31** But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

- **Psalms 73:26** My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.





- **Galatians 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

- **John 11:25-26** *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”*

If you were to define abundant life, how would you explain it?

Take some time to ask God, “Am I living the abundant life?”

Do you want to live God’s version of abundant life or your version of abundant life?





What do we need to pack into our bags for the adventure that lies before us?

ABUNDANT LIFE

LIGHT OF THE WORD

NEW HEART

GOOD NEWS

VALUE

FREEDOM

If you could only pick 2 of these phrases above to put into your heart and mind, which would you choose and why?

Choice 1: _____

Why?

Choice 2: _____

Why?

Finish your time together with a time of prayer. Pray for God to help us live the abundant life He has prepared of us in Christ Jesus.



