

Response shapes the heart.

Proverbs 28:14

*Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.*

“The remarkable thing about God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.” – Oswald Chambers

Q: What is a hard heart?

A: An attitude or disposition turned against or away from God.

Q: What does a hard heart do?

A: Creates an unwillingness to hear or learn...closes the mind to the truth.<sup>1</sup>

### Pathway to a hardened heart

- Absorbing all the credit – Daniel 5:20 *But when his [King Nebuchadnezzar] heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.*
- Pursuing stuff and sexual sin – Ephesians 4:18-20 *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. <sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ!—*
- Prosecuting God in the face of evidence for God – Psalm 95:7-9 *For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his*

*voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.*

The distinction between seeking Truth (heart desiring to learn) or adopting the role of a prosecutor against God (hard heart): Deciding in your heart that you don't like the idea of God. Or God's commands in Scripture are downright annoying or opposed to what you really want to do. The internal calculation becomes: God is the enemy to the lifestyle I truly love and want to be about. Therefore, I'm going to actively look for ways to prosecute God by explaining why He doesn't exist or is irrelevant to my life.

Massah: Testing + Meribah: Quarrelling = Testing and quarreling with God in the face of evidence.

Exodus 17:7

*And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"*

Deuteronomy 6:16

*You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah.*

Matthew 4:7

*Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

Hebrews 3:7-8

*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness."*

2 Chronicles 30:8

*King Hezekiah...Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord.*

## Pathway to a changed heart: How to fear the Lord always

- Give God the credit for your “Wins.”
- Prioritize and pursue what matters most – Matthew 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
- If you sense your heart growing cold, put yourself near the fire.
  - Maximize your weekend by prioritizing Sunday morning worship with your church family.
  - Daily intake of God’s Word.
  - Read or listen to stories of great men and women of God throughout Christian history:
    - Read *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*.
    - Athanasius: Early Church Father from North Africa who was repeatedly exiled for preaching the Truth.
    - John Chrysostom: Church Father whose preaching led to the common practice of infanticide being largely abandoned.
    - Amy Carmichael: Helping helpless young girls.
    - William Wilberforce: led the movement to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire.
    - Susannah Spurgeon: “The Book Fund” revolutionized access to training materials for impoverished pastors.
    - Charles Spurgeon: “Let the God who answers by orphanages be God.”
    - George Liele: Former slave and America’s first international baptized missionary.<sup>2</sup> His ministry transformed Jamaica leading to thousands of people becoming followers of Jesus in the early 1800s.

---

<sup>1</sup> J.P. Louw, & E.A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 332.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.imb.org/2018/06/26/missionaries-you-should-know-george-liele/>.