

4.4.C(27).Instructing Hard Hearts. Mark 7:1-13

Read Mark 7:1-13.

And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, “‘This people honors me with their **lips**, but their **heart is far** from me; ⁷in vain do they **worship** me, teaching as doctrines the **commandments of men.**’ ⁸You leave the **commandment** of God and hold to the **tradition** of men.” ⁹And he said to them, “You have a fine way of rejecting the **commandment** of

God in order to establish your **tradition!** 7:6-9.

Background:

When Jesus Mashiach, the Chief Shepherd, sends you to gather and care for his flock as his *shepherding- disciples*, he sends you out to shepherd under his authority. You represent him, are responsible for all that is his, and you shepherd on his behalf.

One of your primary responsibilities is to *feed* his sheep with “knowledge and understanding” that they might grow spiritually in their faith (Jeremiah 3:15).

Realizing from the parable of the Sower that there are a number of obstacles which conspire to

stop, derail, or paralyze their faith, you must be able to help them overcome these obstacles.

So, if their souls are captivated by Satan's evil devices, help to free them. If their minds are misguided, we will soon consider how to "instruct" those who are misguided.

As a shepherd, one of the hardest areas to shepherd is the heart, the deepest part of human nature that is hidden but which is most vulnerable to the hardening effects of sin and unbelief. And, once compromised, the hard heart will stop and quickly reverse any spiritual progress and quench the Spirit's work.

Over the next three units, we will learn how Jesus taught his disciples how to minister to the heart—to instruct it, to rebuke its defilement, and to correct it to restore the disciple to the righteous path of growth.

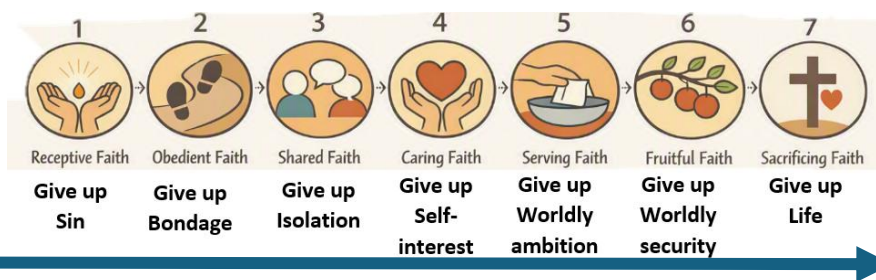
The progress of faith:

Before we learn about the place of the heart in our human nature and how the Gospel addresses problems of the heart, let's consider how faith is meant to develop to help the disciple mature spiritually to take his or her place in God's Kingdom Family. Let's hear Paul's view of our maturation in Jesus Mashiach:

⁶Therefore, as you **received** Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk** in him, ⁷**rooted** and **built up** in him and **established** in the **faith**, just as you **were taught**, **abounding** in thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

Clearly, Paul envisioned the growth path of the disciple of Jesus Mashiach very closely with the path laid out by the apostle Mark, which we have been studying.

In both pathways of discipleship, notice the progression from personal bonding with Jesus Mashiach (1 & 2), into the interpersonal growth in the family (3) and then sent into the world to plant the Kingdom (4) and then learn to live in the Kingdom reality (5) as was being established in Israel (6) and through the Gospel throughout the world (7).



At each stage of growth, the *growing faith* of the disciple requires him or her to *sacrifice* aspects of the old life in order to receive new life and growth, eventually being willing like Jesus to lay down one's life to give life to the family.

These increasingly difficult challenges to the flesh until its total surrender to serve one's family members in the Household and bring the lost into the Kingdom—these increasingly costly sacrifices at each stage terrify the “flesh” and offer the disciple the easy path—to open one's heart to *unbelief* to stifle the growing threat of discipleship to the flesh. So, the disciple moving into stage 3 and the inter-dependence of being “rooted” with the other family members will worry the *flesh*, so that one will latch on to falsehood to stall the encroaching growth of the Spirit. So, instead of

endeavoring to grow in a local church community, the disciple may find an online teacher or an area of theological study that will replace real relationships in the body.

So, shepherd, familiarize yourself with the seven stages of discipleship so that you can see where a disciple may be stunted or stalled.

Case Study: addressing heart obstacles.

When A. first turned to the Lord Jesus Mashiah for salvation, she saw a very early outpouring of grace. For, A. had turned to the Lord in a rehab hospital and was confined to a wheelchair due to a broken spine and legs. She asked, "Please, Lord, I would like to walk again." She was only 27. After she was healed, she struggled with a substance addiction until the Lord's discipline took everything away again. Then, for the next year, her faith grew as she abandoned her besetting sins, especially fleshly control, and as

she gave up her enslaving addictions. But, as she found refuge in the family of God, she oddly started to get irrational fears of being in public. Her flesh wanted to drag her back into isolation. So, when she was assisting me with a work project, we had a chance in the privacy of the car to pray together. We asked the Lord to reveal to her if there was a deep-seated trauma or injury that the enemy was using to break her heart. Soon, a childhood memory came to mind, and she sacrificed this to the Lord to be dealt with in his way. After a few weeks, she wasn't feeling anxious about being in public.

So, as a shepherd, be on the lookout when your proteges stop maturing as they should. Come before the Lord and see what he may uncover.

Knowing the Heart:

The **Spirit of the Lord God** is upon me, because the Lord has **anointed** me to bring **good news to the poor**; he has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted** to proclaim **liberty** to the **captives**, and the **opening** of the prison to those who are **bound**; ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to **comfort** all who **mourn**; ³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the **oil of gladness** instead of **mourning**, the garment of **praise** instead of a **faint spirit**; that they may be called oaks of

righteousness, the planting of the Lord,
that he may be glorified. Isaiah 61:1-3

When you read the Mashiach disclose the work that he has been anointed to accomplish, do you notice that he touches on all aspects of our human nature that can be broken so that our flesh might prevent faith from growing up? The parables talk about the soul bondage like a trampled path, heart hardness like a rocky road, a misguided mind like choking weeds. Isaiah describes something similar. Notably, see how deep and inaccessible are the *broken areas of our hearts*.

Poor in
Spirit



Word of God:
Gospel

Mournful
Body



Give
Comfort

Slaved
Mind



Open
Bondages

Captive
Soul



Proclaim
Freedom

Broken
Heart

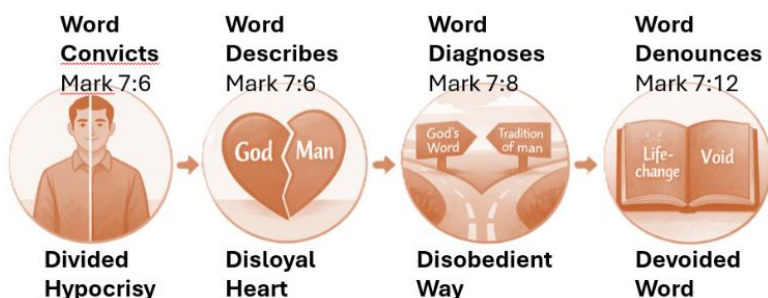


Bind up and
Heal

Let's discover how the Lord ministered to the heart to release the growing faith of his disciples!

Shepherding the Heart to clear obstacles of unbelief:

When Jesus instructs the Pharisees on their heart-hardness, uses the Word of God in several key ways to uncover the *hypocritical hearts* of these critics.



Instructing Hard Hearts

When the Pharisees attack the disciples of Jesus for not following the customs to *wash their hands* before eating, Jesus uses the Word of God to instruct them on the real problem, the state of their own hearts.

Notice the overall strategy of Jesus to instruct these religious authorities whose hearts are broken by hypocrisy. When they approach Jesus to criticize his disciples, they assume that they are completely right. Their broken hearts delude them to think that their *Self-Righteousness* was faultless.

In this way, when someone's heart is broken by a hardened unbelief, causing them to reject any new inroad of the Word of God, then this brokenness will also delude them into thinking they are not broken but whole, complete, and faultless. So, Jesus uses the Word of God to show

them their brokenness—that there are contradictions, disjunctions, or inconsistencies in their lives. And, he does this using the Word of God.

1. **Convicting Hypocrisy:** Lips and Hearts (7:6).

First, Jesus uses the prophecy from Isaiah to apply directly to their behavior. Isaiah prophesies that a people will honor him with their “lips,” but their hearts will be “far” from him, attached to something else. If these Pharisees are honest with themselves, they will feel this disjunction and be convicted by the Word.

2. **Describing Hypocrisy:** Disloyalty. Once Jesus uncovers their inconsistent hearts, he goes on to describe this hypocrisy. Their worship is worthless because they are disloyal, teaching what they truly value, the “commandments of men” (6). Again, this explanation forces them to consider their

reality, and agree with Jesus that they love the “commandments of men.”

3. **Diagnoses Source:** Leave way of God’s Word, uphold and support way of Tradition. In his instruction, Jesus then gets to the very source of the Pharisees hypocrisy. Deep in their hearts, at the very cherished place of the heart, these men cherish human “tradition” more than even God’s truth.

4. **Denounce Outcome:** Void the Word of God by your path. Brilliantly, Jesus starts with the Word of God and the Torah’s command to “honor father and mother.” He then traces out how their human commands and teachings work out in real life, resulting that the Word of God is actually voided.

Jesus instructs these Pharisees using the Word of God to show them the complete error and

inconsistency of their ways: the Word convicts them of their hypocrisy, explains their error, reveals the ultimate reason for this error, and denounces the final outcome of their fleshly approach and teaching. Rather than blameless and Self-Righteous, they are shown to be inconsistent, disloyal, and engaged in the condemned action of “voiding the Word of God.” (11).

Focus:

1. Convicts the Pharisees of Hypocritical Hearts: disjointing words and hearts. 7:1-6.
2. Explains this hypocrisy and diagnoses its deep cause. 7-8.

3. Denounces the outcome of their teachings by comparing their words to the straight path of the Word of God. (9-13).

Consider:

As a shepherd, you will likely encounter people in your flock whose hearts are being hardened by unbelief. What was once whole and focused on the receiving the Word of God fully now starts to rationalize, deny, minimize, or block it. Perhaps the hardening has already occurred, and you are starting to see signs of unbelief keeping the Word from bearing fruit. You may see fleshly bruit. Or Hypocrisy. Or judgment, legalism, or fleshly religion. As a shepherd, prepare to instruct these dear ones with the Word of God. Let's discover how Jesus did it.

1. Convicts the Pharisees of Hypocritical Hearts:
disjunctive words and hearts. 7:1-6.

Likely from the very start, Jesus knew that this delegation of Pharisees and scribes who surrounded him, having traveled all the way from Jerusalem (1), were suspect. For, out of the “heart” the mouth speaks, and the first recorded words of this group was pure judgment: Why did the disciples not follow the traditions of the elders but eat with unwashed hands? (5). Something was going on at the heart level so that it was not faith which spoke but unbelief, as these men clung to a Self-Righteousness rather than the faith of Abraham, who “believed God and was credited as righteous” (Genesis 15:6).

So, to respond to these accusers, Jesus finds Isaiah’s prophecy of Isaiah 29:13 to describe the state of their hearts—a hypocrisy, claiming with

their lips to be Godly but denying God by their actions. Their “lips” honored God but their “hearts” were far from wanting to honor him.

Now, when we apply the Word of God to show people the state of their hearts, what will ensure that they will hear and be convicted of their sin? Remember that life-change or repentance does not often happen instantly. As the Lord says, “it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance.” So, Jesus is merely laying out the basis of instruction here. He will then *lead them* through steps that will *lead* them to reconsider. We don’t see any indication that these men addressed here repented at the words of Jesus. However, we *do* know that of the number of the first disciples, many came from the *Pharisees and scribes*.

Here is the reality of how the *flesh operates*. When people are so thoroughly blinded by the

flesh, and when this blindness is simply reinforced by all the other blinded friends and voices in their lives, they are thoroughly convinced and hardened.

But, when Jesus or you hold up the Scriptures like a mirror, there is always a splinter of *conscience* that the Lord has built in to us—a capacity for *self-reflection* and *self-judgment*. When Jesus brings up the *touchpoints* or *keywords* of the Scriptures—here, “lips honor” but “heart is far,” these are the seeds that penetrate and await growth. For, they will think about what their lips are saying, but hopefully, they will also consider the state of their *hearts*.



When sharing the Word, identify the *touchpoints*—key words that will stick in the minds of your hearers and be the basis of self-reflection.

2. Explains this hypocrisy and diagnoses its deep cause. 7-8.

When the Word points out the hypocrisy of these men, that there is a disconnect between what their lips say and what their hearts value, this charge will stick until it is either dismissed or refuted. Before this can happen, Jesus continues, *explaining further* what this disconnect looks like. He continues quoting Isaiah 29:11, claiming that their “worship” is emptied because what they truly honor and teach are the mere “**commandments** of men” (7). Now, we identify the force that is *distancing* their hearts from God. Their fleshly relationships, which produce their own commandments and *religious authority*, is in direct competition with God.

Here, it seems as if Jesus is paraphrasing the original text of Isaiah 29:13, using the general

word “worship” for the more specific language of “fear of God” and even “drawing near.”

Again, using the *touchpoint* “worship” makes it easier for his listeners to Self-assess their own lives.

Now, after having applied and explained what Scripture says about the condition of their heart, the *Physician* offers his diagnosis. This is the root problem, the “hardness” that has taken root in their hearts that has caused this *shift* from God to Man.

These Pharisees, for whatever reason, have “left the **commandment** of God” in order to “hold to the **tradition** of men.’ (8). For men who ostensibly uphold the Torah, the commandments of God, to hear that they have “left the commandment of God” is a hammer blow to the very foundation of their lives. But, Jesus names

the root cause of their hardness as subtle as “tradition” uncovers this *area of hardness and unbelief* so that it can be dislodged and the heart cleansed.

Holding to the “tradition of men” generates an alternate *authority* that is more immediate and reinforcing than the heavenly Word, and Israel’s history has shown from the start that the fleshly *community’s consensus* has always competed with God’s authority for its religious identity—seeking to rename Elohim as “our gods” (Exodus 32:1).

As a shepherd using the Word of God to diagnose the hardening of the heart by unbelief, know that there are a myriad of forms that the disease of unbelief takes, but it is more useful to recognize the *flesh* and its consistent tendency to *replace God’s place of Lordship* to install human control. Of course, the *flesh* seeks to unseat the

Lordship of God-Elohim and to take that power to itself. So, when given the choice of simply submitting to the Commandments and Rule of the Lord God, the *flesh* seeks an alternate. The flesh will take the commandment and start to alter, add, delineate so that it is now a *tool to enforce human traditions*. The *flesh can never co-exist with* faith, for faith requires surrender, and the flesh exists to rule not surrender. Even Job abandoned his *fear of God* (surrendered service) to insist on the possibility of be *righteous* apart from God, a Self-Righteousness, a “rightness” based on human consensus, human understanding, and tradition. That is what Eve sought originally when she hoped the fruit would “make one wise” (apart from God). So, recognize that tradition is simply a tool of the flesh. This *fleshly decision* to hoist “Tradition” alongside the

“Commandments of God” will centuries later be codified in an entirely *fleshly Jewish creation*, produced by its accumulated tradition as the “Oral Torah.”

Flesh=Control

Walking by Faith with Jesus
Mashiach in Kingdom

- | | | |
|--------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Self-Understanding | → | Receiving truth of Word |
| Self-Authorized | → | Subject to the Lord's Will |
| Alone | → | Walking with Lord by Faith |
| Self-important | → | Humbly Depend on Lord |
| Self-isolated | → | Connected to Branches |
| Selfish-fruitless | → | Spiritually Fruitful |
| Self-honor | → | Worship God |
| Self-Led/Lawless | → | Led by Word & Spirit |
| Self-Indulgent | → | Resembling holy Lord |
| Self-Righteous | → | Relying on Lord's Redemption |



Living Fearfully Alone
in Worldly Darkness



Faith= Surrender

3. Denounces the outcome of their teachings by comparing their words to the straight path of the Word of God. (9-13).

Finally, Jesus uses Scriptures to illustrate how the outcome of this *fleshly preference* of “tradition” over the “commandments” of God leads to a sinful outcome which they cannot deny. “Establishing tradition” and “rejecting the commandment” means that they are guilty of “voiding the Word of God” by “tradition” (13).

For some of these men, hearing that they have “voided the Word of God” might awaken them from their stupor. Notice how the instruction of Jesus took a *fleshly behavior* rooted in the heart and systematically uncovered it by his teaching:

Hidden Heart	Convicted Heart	Diseased Heart	Condemned Heart
"Following the Traditions is good"	You are a hypocrite. Your lips honor God but your heart is distant.	You have rejected command of God for tradition of man	Your fleshly choice to man over God leads to the voiding of the Word of God

Question:

Further Discovery:

