

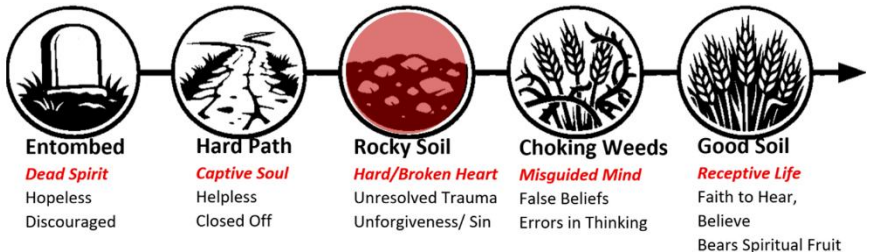
3.9.C(22).Rocky Soil: Hardened
Unbelief/Fleshly View of Jesus. Mark
6:1-6.

Read Mark 6:1-6.

² And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, “**Where did this man** get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? ³ Is not this the **carpenter**, ^[a] the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at

him. ⁴ And Jesus said to them, “**A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.**” Mark 6:2-4.

Background:



We have seen that when the Word of God is sown, it grows fruitfully when it is freely received by Faith. That is, in the lives of those who are “good soil” for the Word, they receive both the Word, the works, and Jesus Himself as Lord.

But, sometimes, the Word encounters what Jesus calls “Rocky Soil”—lives which hard and unyielding areas resistant to the Word. Later in the gospel, we will see that this *hardness* and the site impenetrable obstructions take root is in the *heart*, the area of our lives which *clings to* what is most important to us, whether good or bad. For this reason, Jesus comes as Mashiach to “bind up the broken-hearted” (Isaiah 61:1-3).

Here are a few things which people tend to lock up in their hearts, whether good or bad, obstructions which often develop as first-hand experiences and are clung to in the heart; or, things of earth which are too precious treasured can become idolatrous, breaking the heart.

- **Formative experiences:** these experiences become *fixed* assumptions about how the world works, and these might resist anything

the Word says to us: “You can’t trust anyone” or “Everyone will let you down” or “you have to fight for what is yours.”

- **Bad experiences (trauma):** These often form and develop into *common sense assumptions about the world*, about one’s Self and identity, that are just assumed to be true. Or, unresolved hurts lead to a bitterness or hopelessness impervious to the promise of Scripture or resistant to the commands of Jesus to “repent.”
- **Unforgiveness:**
- **Ingrained Sin/ Stronghold:**
- **Good experiences, desires, dreams.**
- **Treasured things/ people. (idols)**

Clearing the Ground:

As Jesus described it, hardened *obstructions* in the heart constitute areas of “unbelief” that prevent faith from taking root. So, as the Word is read, certain hardened areas of the heart *resist* its call of New Life to sacrifice what is old to receive the New.

Without the “roots” of faith changing and taking root in one’s life, the growth one feels can always be overturned and uprooted.

Case Study: Obstructing Unbelief.

Sometimes, disciples are willing to break up the hardened areas of unbelief in their hearts so that their faith in Jesus has a chance to truly take root. At other times, the obstructions have become too *naturalized*—taken for the common sense assumptions that define one’s world and the way it should be, or which define one’s

self—so that this way of thinking “has to be true because that is who I am.”

One recent convert was convinced that his “understanding” and “mind” was the arbiter of reality. Somewhere in his past experience, he became convinced that he had the infinite capacity to understand everything, and that if he didn’t understand something, it wasn’t true. At first, he was urged to accept the Word by faith, and its promise thrilled him. But, soon it was clear that in D.’s heart, there was a hard place of his personal “understanding” and what “made sense” to him. Actually, this place of “making sense” is a legacy of the original tree of “knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:). Our first parents wanted to take God’s place of deciding what was “good” and “evil” based on their own understanding. Tragically, this place of “making sense” differs for each person, depending on

their personal or religious history. So, for Nicodemus, the possibility of a “spiritual birth” did not “make sense” to him (John 3), for it flew in the face of his Jewish experiences. For D, it was not enough to be “told” something, as the “revealed truth” God tells us. It needs to square—“make sense” with his own experiences. In the end, D. simply abandoned the faith, deciding that his own personal experiences *disqualified and negated* everything that Jesus and his apostles claimed to be true.

So, there is not much to be done until the person is willing to honestly confront the hardness of heart and to agree with God that the heart is not a neutral, all-knowing computer. Rather, it is corrupted, biased, evil, and deceitful—choosing to *not understand* what poses an unacceptable demand on the heart. So, unless the heart

surrenders and is willing to sacrifice the “stolen authority to know all things and to determine reality” and give this right back to God, it will be hardened and blinded by its own “sense” of the world.

As you grow as a disciple, you will learn how to confront the Self-deluded heart. Suffice to say, there are limits to human knowledge, and people have lived in the created order and are subject to its *laws* whether they are known or not to the human mind. Humans have been *breathing oxygen* for millennia before its chemical nature and bio-availability was understood. And, even for those denying the existence of oxygen, they still breathe and face consequences if they refuse to take part in something they do not understand.

Focus:

1. Hardened Views: Limited View leads to Offense. 6:1-3
2. Hinders Faith: Dishonor Jesus/ unreceptive to Word. 6:4-5.
3. Hard Hearts: ruined by Unbelief. 6:6.

Consider:

Here is a statement about our human nature. Babies are so convinced of the rightness and power of their perspectives, that they are convinced that the world disappears and the people and objects in it stop existing when they can't see them. But, eventually, they outgrow this fantasy and realize that what they see and understand is a small fraction of the big world.

But, for the people of Jesus's hometown, they never outgrow the fantasy that they and their vast human understanding are the final arbiters of reality, having the "right" to define and dictate the truth of Jesus, having seen his family. Their experiences shaped their "view" of Jesus, and this view was resistant to what the Word of God said, what others testified about the world-changing power they had witnessed, and the words Jesus spoke with the "authority" which was recognized by many.

To hold on to the hard places in your heart that form into *dead zones* of unbelief put you in the same class as the infant who intuits: "I don't see it so it doesn't exist."

1. Hardened Views: Limited View leads to Offense. 6:1-3

From the very beginning of our human family, we have claimed as our inalienable *right* the place to **define** our own **reality**. We gather experiences, and these harden into an unshakeable view of how the world works. To claim that we are always “right” and see and define “reality” and truth in the only way that “makes sense” can be shaken. So, in this story, the people of Jesus’s town were “**astonished**” because he did not fit their simple understanding of the world. These people were shaken by:

- **Supernatural displays of power** (2)
- **Wisdom beyond** his human training:
- He did **not fit** what was expected from **his occupation**: (3)

That is, these people had direct experiences with Jesus as he grew up in a household with brothers and sisters (3) and as he worked as a “carpenter.”

Their experiences gave them the “right” to define Jesus and to know his humbled place in their society. When he did not live according to their expectations, they were ‘offended’ (3).

Now, as a disciple proclaiming Jesus as Mashiach, you will also meet with similar resistance from people whose hearts are hardened by unbelief. Similarly, they will be “offended” when you claim that God anointed Jesus as Mashiach, a claim that flies in the face of their “common sense” of how the world works.

- **Heart assumptions:** Help them identify the sources of **hardness**, such as the experiences of these townspeople with Jesus as a carpenter.
- **God’s Word:** If they are refusing to accept what God’s Word says based on their experience, which view is right?

- **Discrepancies:** Do their **assumptions** create mismatches they cannot explain? For example, if they know Jesus is not a prophet but he does “mighty works” that prove his legitimacy, who is right?

2. Hinders Faith: Dishonor Jesus/ unreceptive to Word. 6:4-5.

Jesus admits that he will not be honored in his hometown, which is blinded by its unbelief.

Suffice to say at this point, that Jesus does not force these townspeople to abandon their heart hardness. Importantly, Jesus does not do “mighty works” to persuade them (9). That is, such deep-rooted unbelief will dismiss any sign, miracle, or mighty work.

3. Hard Hearts: ruined by Unbelief but correct through teaching. 6:6.

Rather, the only thing Jesus Mashiach did was to continue teaching, hoping that the truth of God's Word would correct, instruct, and lead these hardened people to repentance.

Question:

Further Discovery:

Hardened Unbelief:

The tree of knowing "good" and "evil" might be thought of as the *root* of all unbelief. For, the tree uncovers the *secret desire* rooted in every human heart, the desire to be "right." So, the tree offered our first parents the opportunity to usurp the Lord God's place as the one authority to command "good" and "evil." Because man was made in the "image" and "likeness" of God-Elohim

himself, he had the capacity to aspire to “be like God,” to usurp God’s place to determine for himself what was “good” and “evil”—to stand apart from God and to determine “good” and “evil” (Genesis 3:5). By displacing God and standing apart from God as the arbiter of “right,” man’s first sin was to presume to be “right” by rejecting God’s Word and believing it was “right” to sin—for eating the “fruit” would be “good” 1) for nourishment in this world; 2) for experiencing pleasure; and 3) to acquire a “wisdom” apart from God’s Word and command (Gen. 3:6). The first human sin was not just that Adam and Eve “broke” God’s command and sinned, but that they considered it “right” to ignore God’s Word and listen to Satan, and that it was “good” to sin.

Thus, people will *harden* their hearts when they put themselves, their experiences, and their understanding, above God's Word, determining a Self-Righteousness apart from God.



How Heart-Unbelief shapes our View of Jesus:
Luke 5:1-10.

1. **Teacher to Student Unbelief.** The highest level of unbelief is to put yourself in the place of the

Self-Righteous. You take the place of God, determining for yourself based on your experience or understanding what is “Right”—based on your experience, your feelings, or your own understanding. As the one who determines your “righteousness,” you are “Self-Righteous.”

Because your Self-understanding is pre-eminent, you come to Jesus simply as “Teacher.” You still hold the power to decide what you accept from his teachings, so you allow him no real authority over you.

2. Master to Master Unbelief:

When Simon Peter called Jesus “Master,” he recognized that Jesus had a religious authority to “teach.” However, Simon still was the “Master” of all things relating to his own life—he was the master fisherman, trusting in his own experiences and what they taught him of the world and its

reality. So, Simon still retains control and authority over his life, selectively choosing what words of Jesus he can accept, that align with his “experiences” and what he knows to be “true” from his own understanding..

3. Lord to Servant: Submissive Faith.

Only when Jesus Mashiach displays the fullness of His power as Lord in the place Simon assumed was his area of expertise, opened his eyes to the “Lordship” of Jesus Mashiach and the need for him to sacrifice all of his “rights” and assumptions of what he knew of the world to humbly bow before the Lordship of Jesus Mashiach! He surrenders the hardened unbelief of “Self-Righteousness,” “Self-Understanding,” and “Self-Rule” to *subject himself* before Jesus as a poor “sinner.”

