Island Groups

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Week of August 4, 2024

THE BOOK OF MARK – WEEK 6

HARD HEARTS

(MARK 3:1-12)

Welcome to our study guide for this week's sermon on Mark 3:1-12. Let's begin our time together in prayer, asking God to soften our hearts and open our minds to His Word.

DISCUSSION

Begin your group time with these opening questions:

- ***Can you think of a time when you witnessed someone prioritizing rules over helping someone in need? How did that make you feel?***
- ***What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "hardness of heart"?***

Now, let's dive into our passage. Ask one group member to read **Mark 3:1-3**, then have another read **Mark 3:4-6**.

What details in this passage stand out to you? How do you imagine the atmosphere in the synagogue felt as this scene unfolded?

The Pharisees were watching Jesus closely to see if He would heal on the Sabbath (**Mark 3:2**). Why do you think they were so intent on finding fault with Jesus? How can we guard against a critical spirit in our own lives?

Jesus challenges the Pharisees' hardness of heart with a pointed question: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" (**Mark 3:4**). How does this question expose the misplaced priorities of the religious leaders? In what ways might we prioritize religious rules over compassion and restoration?

ISLAND CHURCH

Pastor Paul emphasized that Jesus was angry and deeply distressed at the Pharisees' stubborn hearts (**Mark 3:5**). What does this reveal about God's heart towards hardness and hypocrisy? How should Jesus' example shape our response to self-righteousness, whether in ourselves or others?

Despite opposition, Jesus healed the man's shriveled hand (**Mark 3:5**). What does this miracle demonstrate about Jesus' authority and mission? How have you experienced God's restorative power in your own life, even in the face of resistance?

The Pharisees' response to this miracle was not celebration but rather murderous plotting (**Mark 3:6**). Why is a hard heart so dangerous? What steps can we take to keep our hearts soft and responsive to Jesus?

Have someone read **Mark 3:7-9** and have someone else read **Mark 3:10-12**. Contrast the Pharisees' response to Jesus with that of the crowds and even the demons. What can we learn from each groups' reaction to Jesus' identity and authority?

Pastor Paul noted that people came to Jesus from all over the region, desperate for His healing touch (**Mark 3:7-10**). Where in your life do you need to press in to Jesus with that same urgency? How can we cultivate a deeper hunger for more of Jesus' presence and power?

Jesus' command for the demons not to reveal His identity (**Mark 3:12**) demonstrates His control over the spiritual realm and His sovereign timing. How does Jesus' authority over evil encourage you in your own battles? In what areas do you need to trust God's timing rather than rushing ahead?

Ask someone to read **Ezekiel 36:26-27**. How does this prophecy relate to the problem of hard hearts? What hope does it offer?

APPLICATION

Examine your heart for any areas of hardness, judgment, or hypocrisy. Confess these to God and ask Him for a tender, responsive heart.

Identify a situation where you may be prioritizing "rules" over compassion. Ask God to show you how to respond with Jesus' heart of love and restoration.

Reflect on your desperation for Jesus. In what areas have you grown complacent or self-sufficient? Commit to pressing into Jesus with renewed hunger this week.

Memorize Mark 3:4 as a reminder to choose the good, life-giving way of Jesus over the destructive path of hardness. Ask God for discernment in daily decisions.

PRAYER

Take a few moments to share prayer needs related to hardness of heart, both personally and in our church/community. Pray for one another, asking God to:

- Soften any hardness or self-righteousness in our hearts
- Fill us with Jesus' compassion for the hurting and broken
- Increase our hunger for more of Jesus' presence and power
- Give us discernment to choose the good and resist evil
- Strengthen our trust in Jesus' authority and timing

Close by thanking Jesus for His tender heart towards us and His power to restore what is broken. Ask Him to make us more like Himself as we follow Him.