

# 7 Powerful Warning Signs of a Hardened Heart

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Do you recognize the warning signs of a hardened heart? Some of us—believers and nonbelievers alike—miss those warnings. And that's a problem. We live day-to-day, carting that hardened heart of ours to the grocery store, to church, and even into relationships as we allow its evidence to slip off our tongues or stew in our thoughts. And sadly, we don't even realize it.

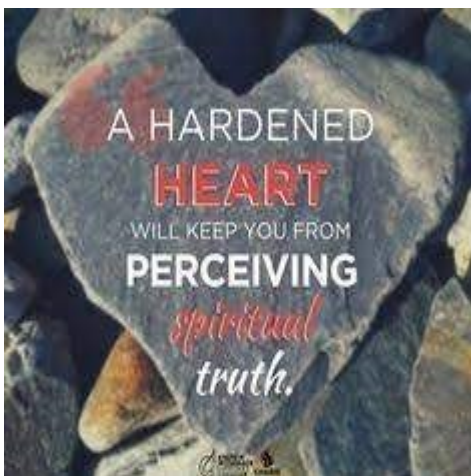
But that can change. How do we find out if this dangerous spiritual plague festers within us? If so, can God help? Let's investigate seven warning signs of a hardened heart.

## What Is a Hardened Heart?

In order to understand the heart, let's first look at it physiologically. This central muscle forms in humans around the third week of pregnancy—nearly the beginning of our lives. With each thrust or thump of the heart, blood courses throughout the body. The heart is a human engine of sorts, dispersing life flow from that first month after conception until the moment we breathe our last breath. It sends blood throughout the body in an amazingly organized manner—impacting even the tips of our toes and fingers.

But there's more to the heart. A spiritual side awaits too. It's just as important, maybe more so. Take a look at Romans 10:9. The World English Bible version, says this: "[T]hat if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." The heart sits central to our salvation. Belief resides there.

A heart hardened toward Jesus refuses Him as Savior of the world, disbelieving God raised Him from the dead as a sacrifice for our sins. This calloused condition can keep a person from believing in Christ. That's huge because eternity in heaven rests on that belief. But there are other concerns as well. Keep reading.



## What Does the Bible Say about Hardened Hearts?

In the heart, we grasp the spiritual truths our loving Father desires to share with us. And when we dwell with true understanding, it's good—very good! Hardened hearts, however, equate to walking around with both our eyes and ears closed. Imagine strolling in this manner near a construction site, a cliff, or in a yard where a dog has dug holes. There's a good chance we'd land with a twisted ankle or even life-threatening injuries. Talk about peril!

Matthew 13:14-15, the World English Bible version, helps us understand. It says, "*In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, 'By hearing you will hear, and will in no way understand; Seeing you will see, and will in no way perceive: For this people's heart has grown callous, Their ears are dull of hearing, Their eyes they have closed; Or else perhaps they might perceive with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their heart, And should turn again; And I would heal them.'*"

Unbelievers, however, aren't the only ones who carry hardened hearts. Believers remain at risk as well. The disciples, men who touched, saw, and spoke with Jesus daily, provide an example. Check out Mark 8:17 to read more about their situation. Honestly, their story brings relief. If the disciples walked this dusty earth alongside Jesus—in person!—yet struggled with heart issues, we shouldn't feel shame for falling prey, too. Instead, we can keep our eyes on the Lord, as they did, and find our way past this obstacle of darkness.

## 1. A Lack of Understanding

Many Bible verses assure us it's true. A hardened heart prevents us from understanding the beautiful, good, challenging, life-altering and life-giving words God shares with us. Take a look at the earlier mentioned Bible verse, Mark 8:17, for instance. The disciples experienced a miracle firsthand—saw it with their own eyes—yet they failed to grasp the power and potential Jesus offers.

"*Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?'*"

If we lack understanding, we might fail to understand God's will, His power, and His potential. We may feel our prayers are unanswered, and disbelief might weave through our thoughts. To battle this, we can ask God to forgive us, uncover any hardened spots, then fill us with understanding.



## 2. Bitterness and Resentment

People sometimes entertain bitterness or resentment due to hurt caused by others. Sometimes, that hurt is caused intentionally. Oftentimes, however, it's simply a misunderstanding. We notice an "edge," negativity, grumbling or criticalness in the conversations of those housing these emotions. We also might find these warning signs amid our own inner chatter or taking space among our decisions if we're the one battling this.

Many times, we can avoid this heart hardening by simply thinking the best of others and communicating well. Prayer and forgiveness are paramount, too. Read Ephesians 4:31-32 to soak in God's truth concerning bitterness and resentment.

"*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*"

## 3. Isolation from God and Others

Some folks hide from God or specific people when carting around a hardened heart. They may grow angry or bitter, so they rely on avoidance. A clue for this includes avoiding the person with whom we're upset, turning away from church, or distancing ourselves from God—or anything to do with Him.

Genesis 4, the story of Cain and Abel, provides an example of this. Cain's less-than-favorable offering spurred jealousy in him. He isolated himself from God, taking matters into his own hands by killing his brother. We, too, can take matters into our own hands, or we can refuse isolation and look toward a resolution. This might include spending time talking with God, the offending party, or wise counsel.

#### 4. Refusal to Forgive

Have you ever met someone who felt they were wronged and refused to forgive the offending party? That's a sign of a hardened heart. We can all fall prey if we're not careful. Consider forgiveness withheld to be a blaring siren, warning of impending danger. Below are three Bible verses concerning forgiveness. Personalize, memorize, or pray them to help in the battle against a hardened heart due to unforgiveness.

Col. 3:3, "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God."

Matt. 6:14-15, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Luke 17:3-4, "So watch yourselves. If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."



#### 5. Indifference

Indifference can be an indicator of a hardened heart. Some folks find themselves shut down to God, the church, the Bible—even other people. They've lost the joy that once resided within them and have embraced apathy. It's a dangerous landing spot.

God, in His goodness, allows for turnarounds. He changes indifference into a fire that burns for the world to see. He can take the emotionless and cause praise to travel over our lips and joy to emanate from us.

If we find ourselves or a loved one living with indifference, recognize the warning signs first. It's not a safe place. Then, talk with someone who will offer godly counsel. Pray and be honest with God. (He can handle it.) And when we can't muster the desire to pray, we can always ask a friend to do it for us. God will hear.

#### 6. Pride

Pride often indicates a hardened heart. This form of self-protection can be bold or quiet. Ultimately, pride leads us to trust ourselves more than God. We might notice a refusal of His wisdom or the correction of others, too.

We need God. When we realize this and lean on Him versus ourselves, we find freedom and often a softened heart. It's a beautiful, powerful thing. If you're not certain if you're battling pride, ask God. He knows what's in the heart.

For an example in the Bible, read through Daniel 5, paying special attention to verse 20:

"But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory."

#### 7. Refusal to Serve or Be Ministered To

Jesus ministered to singles and the masses. He served many. Miracles happened. Lives were changed. Can you imagine missing that opportunity? Oftentimes, a hardened heart will cause us to do just that. We'll refuse to serve. We'll refuse being ministered to. And we'll miss those Jesus miracles.

Several Bible verses describe missed miracles and ministering opportunities—and the grief a hardened heart brings Jesus. Read Mark 3:3-5 for one example: "Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Stand up in front of everyone.' Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored."

But it's not too late. We can pray about those opportunities and our heart's condition. We can jump in and get involved once again.

#### 8 Bible Verses about Hardened Hearts

The Bible contains many verses about the heart. Several are listed below in the WEB translation with one KJV verse noted.

2 Chronicles 36:13, "He also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning to Yahweh, the God of Israel."

Ephesians 4:17-19, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their hearts; who having become callous gave themselves up to lust, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Matt. 15:19, "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual sins, thefts, false testimony, and blasphemies."

Mark 6:52, "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened" (KJV).

Proverbs 28:14, "Blessed is the man who always fears; But one who hardens his heart falls into trouble."

Romans 2:5, "But according to your hardness and unrepentant heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;"

Zech. 7:12, "Yes, they made their hearts as hard as flint, lest they might hear the law, and the words which Yahweh of Hosts had sent by his Spirit by the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from Yahweh of Hosts."

Matt. 19:8, "He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so.'"



#### Can a Hardened Heart Change?

Yes, thank the Lord, a hardened heart can change! Every saved soul exemplifies this, as do the disciples. What about you? If you sense this hardness, why not let God change it? Offer that situation, hurt, or question to Him. Simply ask for understanding, offer repentance, then change. Allow the Almighty to soften your heart and lead you in a better, more peace-filled way.

#### A Prayer Concerning the Heart

If you're not a believer, start here. Believe in the Lord Jesus—that His death on the cross is your atonement for sins. He's what you've been missing.

If you're a believer, strengthen your faith and take a step forward, praying the prayer below.

**Father, You are good. Your love endures forever. And You can be trusted. Forgive me for harboring a hardened heart. I offer it (the situation, the person, the circumstances) to You. I will trust You instead. Give me a softened heart, Lord. Lead me with Your faithfulness. Open my eyes and ears to hear all You desire to share with me. Instill Your understanding, and I'll be faithful with it. I love and thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen.**