



July 21–22, 2012  
Exodus 5–6  
*“A Hard Heart”*  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

Today’s study picks up with Moses and Aaron appearing before Pharaoh. Remember, God had commissioned Moses, who was living in exile in the wilderness of Midian, to go back to Egypt and lead the Hebrews out of their slavery to the God’s Promised Land.

Four hundred years earlier, the Hebrews had gone down to Egypt as a family of seventy to escape a severe famine. When their company of seventy had multiplied to around three million, the Egyptians enslaved them. Because of their misery, their cries went up to God and he heard their cries. He called Moses to be the prophet that would lead them home.

Moses initially resisted God through a series of questions and an objection. He even suggested that God find someone else. In spite of that, Moses, who was approximately 80 years old, reluctantly went along with his brother, Aaron, who would be the spokesman for Moses since Moses complained of having a speech impediment.

The first person they needed to convince that God’s desire that they be set free was of course, Pharaoh. <sup>1</sup> The confrontation did not go quite as Moses had hoped. Pharaoh was not only unwilling to let the Hebrews go, but he became belligerent and cruel, and he treated them even more harshly than he had before. Pharaoh was angry about Moses and Aaron’s request, and he took that anger out on the Hebrew slaves. He required them to produce their quota of mud bricks without supplying them the materials needed to do the job. They were even forced to go out and find their own straw (needed as an adhesive).

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<sup>1</sup> [Exodus 5:1–9](#)

Moses returned to the Lord, and *“the Lord said to Moses, ‘Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.’ ”*<sup>2</sup> The mighty hand of God was revealed through a series of ten plagues.<sup>3</sup>

In this study we’ll learn that behind the scenes, God was up to a lot more than just bringing the nation of Israel home.

### Purpose Of The Plagues

1. To reveal God’s power so that Pharaoh would let the Israelites go.<sup>4</sup>
  - a. Pharaoh was obviously stubborn and hard hearted, and this account brings up a number of difficult theological questions, because the Bible says nine times that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart,<sup>5</sup> and four times we read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.<sup>6</sup>
2. To reveal God’s power so the Israelites would know that He is God.<sup>7</sup>
3. To reveal God’s power so the Egyptians would know that He is God.<sup>8</sup>

This raises an important question. Was Pharaoh stubborn because God had hardened his heart, or was he stubborn because Pharaoh had hardened his own heart? The answer is, “Yes!” It’s both. But God does not supplant our conscience. Taken together it means that Pharaoh’s heart toward God was hardened, and God gave Pharaoh what Pharaoh wanted—more of the same.

This brings us to an essential point. Everyone has a free will, which means that anyone can rebel against God to the point where God gives him or her exactly what he or she wants.

**Romans 1:21-28** tells us: *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged*

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<sup>2</sup> [Exodus 6:1](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Exodus 7-11](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Exodus 6:1](#)

<sup>5</sup> The first time is in [Exodus 7:3](#). It is repeated nine more times in [Exodus 7-14](#).

<sup>6</sup> See [Exodus 7:22](#) and [8:15](#) as examples

<sup>7</sup> [Exodus 6:7](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Exodus 7:5](#)

*the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.”*

The Bible tells us “God gave them over.” We would do well to remember that there is a point when people resist God long enough that He “gives them over.” When God allows us to experience the self-destructive nature of our sin, it’s actually an act of mercy. It’s interesting to see that God loves us enough to not violate our free will.

The King James Version says, God “*gave them up.*”<sup>9</sup> That is not in the sense that God gives up on people or that they can no longer be saved. It’s the sense that God allows some people to feel the full extent of their sin. He will not shield them any longer from the pain and misery of their behavior, so that they may understand the consequences of sin and turn from their wickedness.<sup>10</sup> C.S. Lewis put it this way, “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ ”<sup>11</sup>

It is crucial for Christians to guard themselves against bitterness and a hard heart. The writer of the book of Hebrews encourages us in this area when he wrote: “*See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.*”<sup>12</sup> Also, remember it is much easier to uproot sin while it’s small and not yet fully grown. We need to deal with “young sins, young attitudes, and young thoughts,” before they grow up and become hardened and deeply rooted in our hearts.

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Exodus 5:1-6:1](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. When you examine your life, do you have a hard heart about anything?

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<sup>9</sup> This is an example of why Cornerstone Chapel uses the NIV.

<sup>10</sup> See [Hebrews 12:7-11](#) for further clarification.

<sup>11</sup> *The Great Divorce*

<sup>12</sup> [Hebrews 3:12-13](#)

- a. Is your heart hard about your circumstances?
  - b. Is your heart hard towards an individual (co-worker, friend or family member) or a group of people?
  - c. Has your heart become hard because of a sin issue?
4. What are some of the signs of a hardened heart?
5. How can Christians be proactive in avoiding a hardened heart?
  - a. Read and discuss [Hebrews 12:2-6](#).
6. Discuss the difference between God “giving [someone] over” to their hard heart and God hardening their hearts.
  - a. Remember, our loving Heavenly Father will not violate our free will.
7. Read [Proverbs 28:14](#) and [Psalm 51:17](#) and discuss the importance of brokenness.
  - a. Allow people in your group to share experiences when they were broken?
    - i. What was the result in their Spiritual walks?
  - b. What examples of brokenness do we see in Scripture, and how can we learn from those examples?
8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: guard against a hardened heart and bitterness; ask the Lord to give them a broken and contrite heart so they may be sensitive to his Spirit.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984). (JM - ME)