

## 4Ws for Week 12, 18- 24 Mar 2019

### WELCOME (15minutes)

Choose one of the following icebreakers:

*(If you have first-time guests, begin with a round of introduction and warmly welcome the new visitors.)*

#### 1. Most Unique

Everyone to sit in a circle. Have each person share something that makes them different from anyone in the group, like, "I've never left the country I was born in" or "I am one of 10 kids."

#### 2. M&M's Game

Pass a bag of M&M's around and tell everyone to take a few. Then, before they eat them, ask them to share something for every M&M. For example, something about their family for every red one, something about their plans for every green one, something about how they are feeling now for every yellow one, etc...

#### Transition to Worship:

*As we enter a time of praise and worship, let the fruit of our lips and the meditation of our hearts be an acceptable offering to Him whose love for us endures forever!*

### WORSHIP (20 minutes)

You may use the following suggested worship songs:

- 1) Forever (D)
- 2) Blessed Be Your Name (G)
- 3) How Great Is Our God (D)
- 4) What A Beautiful Name (D)

Wait upon the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to everyone who hungers for His presence. Encourage the release of words, visions, tongues and interpretation of tongues - to minister to the people who are present.

#### Transition to Word:

*Lord, continue to bless us with fruitful insight as we study Your Word. Indeed, help us to learn and apply Your truths into our lives so that our hearts are molded to live according to Your ways.*

### WORD (45minutes)

#### Memory verse of the week: Hebrews 11:1 (NIVUK)

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

**Sermon Title: Hardhearted**

**By DSP Rev Daniel Khong**

**on 16-17 Mar 19**

#### Scripture: Hebrews 3:7-19 (NIVUK)

*<sup>7</sup> So, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. <sup>10</sup> That is why I was angry with that generation; I said,*

*“Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.”<sup>11</sup> So I declared on oath in my anger, “They shall never enter my rest.”<sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.<sup>13</sup> 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>14</sup> We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.<sup>15</sup> As has just been said: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.’<sup>16</sup> Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt?<sup>17</sup> And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness?<sup>18</sup> And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?<sup>19</sup> So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.*

## **Introduction**

In this week’s message, we review three conditions in our lives that can cause us to have a harden heart as revealed in Scripture.

1. Stagnation
2. Self-absorption
3. Suffering

When we recognize these conditions in our lives, let us ask God to melt our hearts and give us a heart of flesh. This is what He has promised in Ezekiel 36:26 *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”*

## **Discovery and Understanding Questions:**

**Q1.** Let’s start with a biblical definition of a hardened heart. Read Mark 8:17-18. What do you think Jesus was specifically referring to when He mentioned to His disciples that their hearts were hardened?

### **Mark 8:17-18 (NIVUK)**

*<sup>17</sup> 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?’<sup>18</sup> Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember?*

#### **A1.**

- (1) They were unable to perceive / understand
- (2) They were unable to see / hear
- (3) They were forgetful

Biblical hardheartedness is a certain insensitivity to what God is doing in us, through us and around us. It means that we are incapable of being touched by God and transformed by Him i.e. not referring to being simply affected in our emotion, having a sensation or momentary experience.

**Q2.** Let’s move on to the first cause of a harden heart – Stagnation or specifically Spiritual Stagnation. What does it mean?

**A2.** Spiritual Stagnation means our spirits are inactive and we are not growing in faith. The passage that we read in Hebrews 3:7-19 is basically a summary of the people of Israel as they left Egypt to go to the Promise Land. Moses had been used by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. The people had experienced the goodness and miracles of God, but yet after they were set free, they began to grumble and complain against God. Their hearts had become harden and they would

actually prefer a life of slavery in Egypt where they were provided for rather than as free people who had to strive for their survival. As a result of their hardened hearts, this led to unbelief and they ended up wandering in the desert for 40 years. Thus, this first generation that left Egypt was unable to enter into the Promise Land. Consider what Hebrews 3:12 and 19 say:

### **Hebrews 3:12, 19 (NIVUK)**

*<sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.*

*<sup>19</sup> So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.*

It was because of their unbelief that they were unable to enter into God's rest. Unbelief is something very serious because it is something that will ultimately lead us to a place of spiritual stagnation.

### **What can we do about it?**

The only way out of spiritual stagnation is for us to be constantly living by faith, stepping out in courage and doing the things God calls us to do which we have never done before. And we are reminded in Hebrew 11:6 that *"without faith it is impossible to please God."* Furthermore, when we read Hebrews 11, we see that faith is not about a feeling. It is a commitment to God, it is faith seen by our actions and our deeds. It is the opposite of spiritual inactivity.

**Q3.** The second cause of a harden heart is Self-absorption. It is a heart that is self-absorbed with oneself. What is the danger here?

**A3.** Self-absorption or preoccupation with oneself is really the core of pride. A person who is self-absorbed wouldn't see the need for God. Over time, this person would have distanced himself or herself from God and thus his or her heart would have become hardened. Again, we see this clearly being a serious issue with the Israelites in the desert then. Let's consider these three passages:

### **Exodus 16:2-3 (NIVUK)**

*<sup>2</sup> In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. <sup>3</sup> The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.'*

### **Exodus 17:1-3 (NIVUK)**

*<sup>1</sup> The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, travelling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> So they quarrelled with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses replied, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?' <sup>3</sup> But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, 'Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?'*

### **Numbers 14:20-24 (NIVUK)**

*<sup>20</sup> The Lord replied, 'I have forgiven them, as you asked. <sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, <sup>22</sup> not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times – <sup>23</sup> not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with*

*contempt will ever see it. <sup>24</sup> But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.*

Despite all that God had done for them and provided for them, they continued to be self-absorbed with how they were feeling and what they wanted. They kept grumbling and complaining. This led to their hearts being hardened. Their hearts were in such a big contrast with Caleb whom God said his heart was not hardened. Why? Because Caleb was not self-absorbed, instead He was preoccupied with what was on God's heart and followed God wholeheartedly. When we are self-absorbed, we are cutting ourselves off from all that God is doing in our midst because we will not be able to perceive, to see what God is doing in our midst. More than that we can become forgetful of what God has done for us in our lives and in our midst.

### **What can we do about it?**

Keep our hearts soften by constantly focusing on God. Live a life of surrender by laying down our own desires and embrace God's will for our lives. This is living a life of humility before God as opposed to a life of pride that is marked by self-absorption of oneself. And God's word is that He opposed the proud but shows favour to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

**Q4.** The third and final cause of a harden heart is Suffering. It is referring to any kind of hardship or distress that one may face, be it physical, psychological or emotional. How is Suffering a cause for a hardened heart?

**A4.** We see from the passage that the Israelites were indeed going through a certain time of hardship in the desert. Although they were suffering as slaves previously, they probably did not expect that they had to go through more hardship than what they had expected for in the desert. It is therefore understandable that they could be feel distressed. However, the problem with them was they allow themselves to be continually affected in their emotions (even though God repeatedly demonstrated His goodness). This led them to grumble, complain and finally rebel against God (see Hebrews 3:12).

This was what could have happened to Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. His heart could have been so distressed with witnessing the torture and death of Jesus that it became difficult for him to accept the news from his fellow disciples that Jesus had resurrected from the dead. His response was a stark contrast to the other ten disciples. Thomas' response showed a heart that was hardened because of distress and disappointment that he went through. His remark could be a way to protect himself emotionally so as not to be disappointed again if the news of Jesus' resurrection turned out not to be true.

### **John 20:24-25**

*<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'*

### **What can we do about it?**

This issue on hand again is unbelief. Consider Hebrew 3:12-13 again.

### Hebrews 3:12-13

<sup>12</sup> See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today', so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

And Jesus' response to Thomas when He appeared to the disciples – **"Stop doubting and believe."**

### John 20:26-29

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. **Stop doubting and believe.**' <sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Indeed, life is full of uncertainties and challenges. We will all go through difficult moments at some point in our lives. But let us not be like Thomas; let us not allow the distress that we feel to cause our hearts to be hardened and turn us away from God. Let us soften our hearts and return to Him because He is good and His love for us endures forever.

### Application Questions:

Break into smaller groups, share, pray and minister to one another on what have been discussed.

- 1) Is your spiritual life in a place of stagnation? You need to be constantly living by faith, stepping out in courage and doing the things God calls you to do which you have not done before.
- 2) Are you self-absorbed with your own life? You need to keep your heart soft by constantly focusing on God. Learn to live a life of surrender by laying down your own desires and embrace God's will for your life.
- 3) Are you going through suffering such that you are angry with God? Do not allow the distress that you are feeling to cause your heart to be hardened and turn you away from God. Return to God because He is good and His love for you endures forever.

### Family Altar Time (F.A.T.)

(Cell Leader: Encourage your members to be faithful in keeping the weekly F.A.T. and refer them to this segment of the 4Ws for suggestions for their F.A.T. A possible time for the F.A.T. is after a meal together, say during the weekend.)

Use either of the two icebreakers in the WELCOME segment above, and select worship songs that are meaningful to your family. If they are old enough, ask your children to select the songs and lead worship, and take this opportunity to teach them skills in waiting on God, praying, and leading with a servant's heart and as a willing vessel for God.

After worship, you may wish to:

- 1) Discuss last Sunday's Family Bible Study in the Living Life journal, or
- 2) Review your children's take-home materials from GKidz, or
- 3) Review and discuss this week's memory verse, or
- 4) Have one person to read Hebrews 3:7-11, another to read Hebrews 3:12-15, another to read Hebrews 3:16-19, and another, Mark 4:17-18.

In Hebrews 3:7-19, the writer repeatedly warns us against hardening our hearts (3:8, 13, 15). With reference to the **Introduction** and the **Discovery and Understanding Questions** of the **WORD** segment above, lead in the following discussion.

**Question: What is meant by a hardened heart?**

*[Let your family members answer spontaneously. Then with reference to Hebrews 3:12 & 19 and Mark 4:17-18 and the answer in A1 in the WORD segment above, explain that it means an insensitivity to what God is doing in us, through us and around us, and is characterized by unbelief. It means that we are incapable of being touched by God and transformed by Him.]*

**Question: Have you ever experienced a hardening of your heart? Describe your experience.**

*[Let your family members share freely without feeling condemned or judged. Share your own experiences too.]*

**Question: What do you think will lead to a hardened heart?**

*[Let your family members respond freely. Then summarise what DSP Daniel Khong preached last weekend. Refer to the Introduction, A2, A3 and A4 in the WORD segment above.]*

**Question: What is the remedy for a hardened heart?**

*[Let your family members respond freely. Then summarise the action points recommended in the second part of A2, A3 and A4 in the WORD segment above (“What can we do about it?).]*

**Question: Which of these remedies do you most need to act upon in order to keep yourself from a hardened heart?**

*[Let your family members share freely and take note of the answers when closing in prayer.]*

End by praying for each other that your hearts will be kept soft and tender before God, and keep in mind the applications shared in the last question. Pray also for the salvation of pre-believing family members, relatives and friends.

**Transition to Works:**

*God has promised in His Word that He will be with us and will empower us for His work, so that we can do the impossible through His power. He is a faithful God and will fulfil as He has promised in His Word. Let us now move with the confidence of His Word and His faithfulness to establish His Word in our lives as we reach out to our 3x3 and as we embark on running XFXZ or Alpha groups.*

**WORKS (15minutes)**

**1. 幸福小组 (XFXZ) – Week 4/Topic 4: Happiness Connection (18 - 24 Mar)**

- Review last weekend’s training and improve on this week’s XFXZ session.
- Continue praying in unity for your ‘Best’ to experience the power of the gospel and to know God.
- Re-confirm attendance of your ‘Best’ as early as possible.
- Before XFXZ meeting: arrive earlier to prepare for the meeting. Pray half an hour before ‘Best’ arrive.
- After XFXZ meeting: debrief with the XFXZ members on this week’s meeting.
- Continue to build relationship with your ‘Best’ and follow up after the session. Look for practical ways and find an opportunity to express care and encourage them to come for next week’s XFXZ.

## 2. **3x3 Prayer**

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the strongholds that bind the people. Ask Him to set divine appointments for us to minister His power over them (words of knowledge, healing, helps, etc.). Pray for one another for boldness, courage and obedience to follow through.

## 3. **Inviting Friends to our Services**

Continue to encourage one another to invite pre-believing friends to our weekend Services. Make time to listen to 'The Voice of God' for prophetic utterances that speak to our pre-believing friends' circumstances as a prelude to inviting them. In addition, take some time to discuss, plan an activity and pray toward achieving the goal you have set as a cell.

## 4. **Connecting with your pre-believer friends**

Create opportunities to do so - invite them for lunch/dinner/to go for a show; offer to babysit; buy groceries for them; buy them birthday gifts; do special things to make them feel loved and honored.

## 5. **Consolidation of New Converts**

Consolidate those who have accepted Christ - contact them via phone calls; meet up with them over a meal; make house visits; introduce them to members of the cell and invite them to fellowship with the faith community during cell meetings and celebration Services. Make them feel belonged.

Introduce them to **LifeClass**. **LifeClass** is an exciting package of equipping that guides new believers through the foundations of their faith and leads them into a life-transforming encounter with Jesus. It does this through nine weeks of personal study, combined with fun and interactive classroom sessions of Bible teaching and an Encounter Weekend. It replaces the former Pre-Encounter Class, Encounter Weekend and Post Encounter. Please check out the Equipping page at our website or Mobile App. Visit <https://fcbc.org.sg/equipping/event-listing> for more details.

## **Announcements:**

Please visit <https://www.fcbc.org.sg/bulletin/> or our FCBC app for more details.