



The battle between God and the Pharaoh inflicts hardship on the Egyptian people. God knows the Pharaoh won't respond until the stakes are drastic, but he always has a choice, and a consequence. We too harden our hearts to the Lord who persists until we see things his way. Sometimes it takes a hard heart for the Lord's work to succeed.

Opening Question:

Describe a time when you experienced a serious display of God's power - a hurricane, tornado, flood, lightning storm, etc. How did it make you feel? How did it change your view of your own sense of control over life?

Read: Exodus 7:8 - 10:29

Where did you experience God's presence this week?

What insights or questions do you have from this weekend's message or worship service?

Understanding the Story:

In Exodus 7:17, God answered Pharaoh's question with 10 plagues. Do you think it's possible that God answers people's doubts today with hard times? Why or why not? Have you ever experienced this in your life?

How did God show his faithfulness to the Israelites in Exodus 8:23, 9:4, 26? Does God always do this (Matthew 5:45)?

Sometimes Pharaoh is described as hardening his heart, sometimes it's the LORD who is said to harden his heart and sometimes it's just stated that his heart *was* hard. What do we make of the interplay of the LORD's hardening and Pharaoh's? How did God plan to use Pharaoh's hard heart? (Exodus 10:1-2)

Living the Story:

How do you respond or act when you feel out of control?

In your life, where do you need God's deliverance? Have you noticed any signs that your own heart might be hard in places?

How does the story of the Exodus relate to Christ's deliverance of us? What were we enslaved by? What have we been freed from? What are we freed to do?

Pray:

Pause for a time of silent listening prayer where each individual in the group can pay attention to the condition of their hearts. Do you find yourself feeling generally hopeful and optimistic or discouraged and negative? Where do you notice the presence of God in the midst of your circumstances? Pray for each person to come to a place of freedom from complaining, hardness of heart and discouragement and to be released from your time together as bearers of blessing and encouragement to the lives of those they encounter this week.