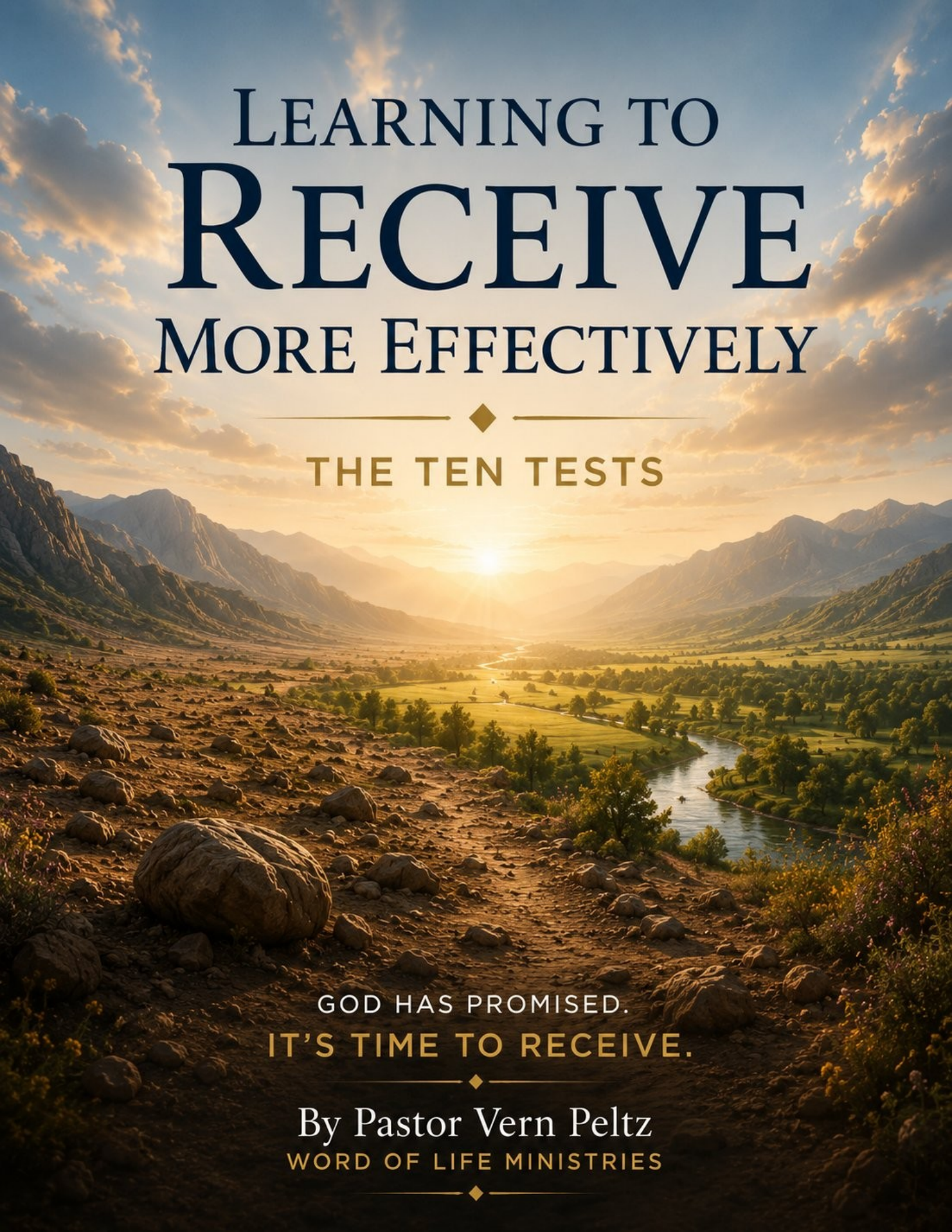




LEARNING TO RECEIVE MORE EFFECTIVELY

— ◆ —
THE TEN TESTS

GOD HAS PROMISED.
IT'S TIME TO RECEIVE.

— ◆ —
By Pastor Vern Peltz
WORD OF LIFE MINISTRIES
— ◆ —

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Word of Life Ministries
3640 County Rd 6 NW
Stanchfield, MN 55080



Introduction

By Pastor Vern Peltz

This booklet is designed to be an outline of the basic thrust of the information contained in the 'Learning To Receive More Effectively' series. If you have never heard the series, it is strongly recommended that you listen to the series in conjunction with this booklet. Otherwise, the greatest amount of understanding that was brought out in the messages will be lost.

This booklet is to be a refresher and reminder of the main ways we as Christians do two things that we were warned about in Heb. 3.

Purpose For This Booklet

This came out of a series on Receiving and the Heart.

One of the things that can be a challenge to the average Christian is the fact that Jesus has bought and paid for so much for us — it's available to us — but at times we have difficulty receiving it. Getting it to manifest in the physical.

In my opinion, that's one of the main reasons for so many different Christian denominations.

People will build their theology around their experience rather than what the Word declares.

We struggle to make the promises of the Word take place in our lives. But rather than coming to the conclusion we might be missing something, or doing something wrong; we'll make excuses for ourselves or blame the Word or God. In the end, many will change their beliefs and theology to match their experience.

The Lord told me something at the end of last year that has to do with receiving. Just like anything else in the kingdom — receiving is supposed to be easy. But for many of us it's not.

This is what he said on December 18, 2011:

"See what happened when the people increased their expectations. (Referring to the movement on the church building) Now I want you to learn how to receive more effectively."

This became our Theme for 2012 — 'Learning To Receive More Effectively'.

The Approach To This Series

During the Wednesday evening service of the Open Heaven Meetings (January 8, 2012), this is what happened to me while a song played at the end of Jim Isakson's speaking.

The Lord asked me: "Do you want to know how to receive more effectively?"

Before I could even answer — the Lord gave me a vision. This is what I saw.

There were 2 clear glasses filled with what looked like water. They were floating in mid-air. They were hovering above a table. Beneath them on the table were two things:

#1 — A pile of sand.

#2 — A hard lump of what looked like clay. I could tell it was very hard and dry. As I watched, the glasses tipped forward and the water began to pour onto the sand and clay. It immediately soaked into the sand. However, it seemed very little went into the clay. It all ran off.

Then the Lord said: "It's that simple".

I knew immediately what he was showing to me. The dirt represented our hearts. The harder our heart, (like the clay) the less we receive. The softer our heart, (like the sand) the more we receive. And when our heart is soft, the receiving happens effortlessly.

The application I was to understand was: the blessings/promises are being poured out on an on-going, continual basis. However, we struggle to receive them.

RECEIVING IS ALL DEPENDENT ON THE CONDITION OF THE HEART.

This concept is easily seen in Heb. 3 & 4. These will be our theme chapters for this series.

Here is the heart of what God is saying to us. It is Heb. 3:7-11. (Amplified)

(3:7) "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear His voice, (3:8) Do not harden your hearts, as [happened] in the rebellion [of Israel] and their provocation and embitterment [of Me] in the day of testing in the wilderness, (3:9) Where your fathers tried [My patience] and tested [My forbearance] and found I stood their test, and they saw My works for forty years. (3:10) And so I was provoked (displeased and sorely grieved) with that generation, and said, They always err and are led astray in their hearts, and they have not perceived or recognized My ways and become progressively better and more experimentally and intimately acquainted with them. (3:11) Accordingly, I swore in My wrath and indignation, They shall not enter into My rest."

What were they supposed to receive? The promised land, deliverance, freedom — which are a picture / type of our salvation and all the promises given to us. But they did not receive. Why?

Their Hearts were Hardened. What does that mean? A Brief explanation is that they had become hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Heb. 3:13) As a result, they lived and made choices according to the dictates of how sin would react. So when it came to God & how he works, they didn't get it. They were always erring, being led astray, couldn't recognize or perceive God's ways of doing things. Their response was usually sin filled. Because that's all they understood in their heart was the ways of sin. It had deceived and hardened them.

So to receive more effectively, we must deal with our Heart. It will need to be changed from a hard heart to a soft one. This is not something we can do. God is

the only one who can change the heart of a person. However, we are the ones who determine whether we will allow him to do it or not. So right from the beginning of this series, we need to determine to be correctable, teachable, and pliable to his Word and the Holy Spirit.

This entire study will come from the perspective of trying to discover where we are wrong. The two things emphasized in Heb. 3:7-11 are:

- (1) Do not Harden your hearts as the Israelites did.
- (2) They always err and are led astray in their hearts — they have not perceived or recognized my (God's) ways.

So our focus will be to understand how they hardened their hearts, and as a result — didn't perceive or recognize the Way God does things. As a result they were always missing what he was trying to do and teach to them. Ultimately it cost them the ability to RECEIVE his Promises. (Promised Land).

To do that we're going to study their trip from Egypt to the Promised Land. This is the time period God is referring to in Heb. 3. We know that because the passage of scripture in Heb. 3:7-11, 15; 4:3, 7 — were all quoted from Ps. 95:7-11. In Ps. 95 it specifically refers to the temptation in the wilderness and how as a result they spent 40 years in the desert because God refused to let that generation inherit the promises.

In Num. 14:22 — which is at the end of the testing period — God states that the people had disobeyed and tested him 10 times in their trip from Egypt to the edge of the Promised Land. He was now done with their disobedience, and he would 'Forgive' them, but as a result they would not 'Inherit' the Promised Land. (Promises)

So we are going to study the 10 tests and see what they did, or did not do. We are specifically looking for 2 things:

- (1) What are the characteristics of a hardened heart? We need to see them so we can determine whether we have a hard heart in areas of our life.
- (2) What are the 'Ways' God does things? Because we don't want to miss the way he operates like they did. If our heart remains hard and we don't grasp the way God is doing something in our lives, we'll likely miss the promises also.

As we go through the tests, we will simply list the 2 things we're looking for in each test. Again, to gain a fuller understanding of these things, it is strongly suggested you listen to the series.

Heb. 3:10-11

A very important point to keep at the top of our mind as we look at each of these tests is made in these two verses.

That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" (NIV)

“And so I was provoked (displeased and sorely grieved) with that generation, and said, They always err and are led astray in their hearts, and they have not perceived or recognized My ways and become progressively better and more experimentally and intimately acquainted with them. Accordingly, I swore in My wrath and indignation, They shall not enter into My rest.” (AMP)

HERE IS THE POINT THAT WE CAN'T MISS IN THIS STUDY:

1. If we're not perceiving & recognizing God's ways, we won't know if God is working in our situation or not. That's what caused the Israelites to go into unbelief and eventually sin. It will do the same thing to us.
2. So I'll re-state it. As a Christian, if we're not sure whether God is working in our life or not — we will wander off into unbelief and sin. (The 2 main things mentioned in ch. 3-4)

God was Angry about the people's inability to become “intimately acquainted” with his ways in their hearts. They would “always err” and be “led astray in their hearts”.

That's why he didn't allow them into the Promised Land. (Read v. 10-11 above again) That will keep us from receiving also!!!

Test #1 — Ex. 14:10-12

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #1)

1. They Looked at what was happening in the physical realm as their benchmark for reality. (v. 10)
 2. This resulted in Fear. (v. 10)
 3. They cried out to the Lord — however it was in a Negative Fashion and out of fear. (v. 10)
 4. They started with the questioning. (v. 11)
 - a. Remember these people had issues of the heart.
 - b. One of the first indications that we have a hard heart problem is — Questioning God and what he is or isn't doing — rather than taking him at his Word!!! Especially when the tone is tied to WHY is this happening...
- *** A good heart will immediately take its stand in faith.
- *** Rather than Question God, we need to Quote Him!!! What did he say? What has he told us? These are the things that need to come out of our Heart and Mouths. (Matt. 12:33-37)
5. The presumption of the questioning that will come from a hard heart is:
 - a. 'This is going to turn out badly'. (v. 11-12)
 - b. The questioning produced their conclusion. Rather than stand in Faith on what God had told them, (beginning of ch. 14) they concluded how this whole thing was going to end because of what they were seeing in the physical. (v. 11-12)

- c. In v. 12, they even threw in an 'I told you so'!!!
- 6. The focus of their Fear & Questioning turned on the Leadership. (Moses)
 - a. Hard hearts will not look at themselves first.
 - b. They will (always) cast the blame on someone else — typically it will be the Leadership.

***** REMEMBER: THESE ARE THE TYPE OF THINGS WE THINK AND DO THAT COME FROM A HARDENED AREA OF OUR HEART. IF THESE TYPE OF CHARACTERISTICS ARE IN OUR LIVES, THEY WILL KEEP US FROM UNDERSTANDING THE WAYS OF GOD, AND ULTIMATELY WE'LL MISS OUT ON THE PROMISES AND SUPERNATURAL.**

The Ways of God (Test #1)

- 1. It's not all about you. While he's dealing with you, he's also working with others who are associated with you or somehow attached to the same situation you're going through.
 - a. God will work in it to do the most good for both (or all) the people involved.
 - b. As Christians, he may even allow us to be stretched in our faith and/or emotions during the situation, so he can work in others. (14:1-4)
 - c. God is always looking to bring Glory to himself. (14:4)
 - Why??? — There are others on this earth who need him also!!! He will be endeavoring to influence and reach them also.

*** God followed this pattern all the way through the wilderness. (Point #1 — above)

*** HE WILL FOLLOW THIS PATTERN IN THE WAY HE DEALS WITH US IN OUR LIVES ALSO.

- 2. HERE WAS THEIR WORD FROM THE LORD!!!! (14:1-4)
 - a. He had explained to them what he was going to do and why he was going to do it.
- 3. 14:5-9. (The plan playing out)
- 4. 14:15-18 — A portion of the conversation is missing. We don't know what Moses said.
 - a. However, this much we can see. In the heat of the crisis, God will give direction through the God-ordained leadership.
- 5. 14:19-20 — Pillar of Cloud & Fire.
 - a. "Angel of God, or the Lord" is referring to one of the Trinity. In this case... the Holy Spirit — because of how the pillar works among them. (Like the office of the Holy Spirit)
 - b. THIS POINT IS ABSOLUTELY how God does things, his ways of doing things!!!

*** HERE'S THE APPLICATION TO US & PERCEIVING / RECOGNIZING...

Where is the Holy Spirit in your situation???

- Were you led by the Spirit to get to this spot you are currently at?

- Was he active among you right before the crisis?
- Is his presence with you now?
- Is he active in what is happening now??

Look for the presence, leading, involvement of the Holy Spirit. If you can sense the Holy Spirit is still active in the situation — RELAX!!! God is still working in your situation, and he likely has you exactly where you need to be. This one point alone was the only answer the Israelites needed. All they needed to do was look up and see the cloud. There was no reason to doubt and begin questioning whether he had failed them.

This point is monumental in recognizing how God does things in our lives. This is a picture of how he will work in our lives and reassure us all is well.

Application to us: In the middle of crisis or difficult situations, we need to look for the Presence and Anointing of the Holy Spirit. If it is still there, we are fine. God is still with us. He'll speak to us and teach us whatever we need to know. If the Presence of the Spirit and the Anointing are very difficult to sense, we need to do some deep soul-searching and ask him to show us why. Then deal with whatever is causing the problem.

6. Heb. 3:13 — Amplified. (cf. Ex. 14:15-18)

- a. A key to overcoming a hardened heart is 'Accountability'. Without 'accountability', it is likely sin will deceive us.
- b. It is possible to not be hardened by sin!!!!

THIS POINT IS HUGE!! WE CAN LIVE ABOVE THE HARDENING AND DECEITFULNESS OF SIN IN OUR LIVES.

Test #2 — Ex. 15:22-24

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #2)

1. Again they focused on the physical. (v. 22-23)
 - a. They are facing a physical obstacle.
 - b. It's their first response that's bad. They are still putting too much emphasis on what is happening around them in the physical realm.
 - c. What should they be looking at here? (Where is the cloud? — Holy Spirit)
 - d. Instead of looking to the true indicator of God in their midst, they Grumbled.
2. 'Grumbled'. (NIV) 'Murmured'. (KJV) (v. 24)
 - a. "Murmured" — This is a Disturbing word.
 - b. Murmured Hebrew Definition — (H3885)

"a primitive root; to stop (usually over night); by implication, to stay permanently; hence (in a bad sense) to be obstinate (especially in words, to complain):--abide (all night), continue, dwell, endure, grudge, be left, lie all night, (cause to) lodge (all night, in, -ing, this night), (make to) murmur, remain, tarry (all night, that night)."

c. Description of the attitude shown in Grumbling or Murmuring.

It's when we dig in our heels and refuse to go any further. We become stubborn and obstinate: esp. in our words. We complain. We'll get a chip on our shoulder. Hold a Grudge. We just won't let certain things go or forget them. If the right subject gets touched, we'll bring all this stuff back up again. It could have been years ago, but it's fresh in our mind.

d. Who did they Grumble against?? — Leadership. (Always the person in charge)

3. GRUMBLERS — TYPICALLY THEY'RE A PART OF THE PROBLEM, BUT NOT THE SOLUTION.

a. They think they are part of the solution, but they're so hard in their heart, they can't see that the solutions they offer are UNGODLY.

b. God will ask us to move forward in obedience and faith. Even when things become difficult. The Grumblers solution to new difficulties and problems is to go back to Egypt. (Go back to the way life used to be) In other words — let's quit; stop this. I don't like this. This is hard. I liked life better the way it was before. If I have to live this way, I'm going to be unhappy / miserable the rest of my life. They will choose to quit and go back to the way life used to be. Even though God is trying to move them forward, or to a different place in life.

c. They view the transition process (the season) as the end result. (permanent lifestyle)

d. 1 Cor. 10:10-13. (Read — NIV & AMP)

Murmuring/Grumbling releases the spirit of destruction & death into our lives. We are specifically warned to be on guard to this in the end times.

Let's Look at Hebrews — Heb. 3:7-8

Chapter 3. (v. 7-11 — Quote from Ps. 95:7-11)

*** Please notice: Who is ultimately responsible for hardening of the human heart. (The Person)

Who are we talking about? — Israel in the Wilderness.

Three things happened there — what were they?

(1) Time of testing.

(2) The People Rebelled.

(3) The people hardened their hearts.

“Harden” — (G4645) from 4642; to indurate, i.e. (figuratively) render stubborn:--harden.

indurate (adjective): physically or morally hardened

Synonyms: callous, hard-hearted, heartless, insensitive, merciless, obdurate, ruthless, unfeeling

Antonyms: compassionate, kindhearted, merciful, sympathetic, tender, warmhearted

“Rebellion” — (G3894) from 3893; irritation:--provocation. — ‘Provocation’ (KJV)

- (G3893) from 3844 and 4087; to embitter alongside, i.e. (figuratively) to exasperate:--provoke.

“Testing” — (Temptation — KJV) (G3896) from 3985; a putting to proof (by experiment (of good), experience (of evil), solicitation, discipline or provocation); by implication, adversity:--temptation, try.

- (G3985) from 3984; to test (objectively), i.e. endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline:--assay, examine, go about, prove, tempt(-er), try.

Let's Look at Heb. 3:14-19

1. v. 14 — As we get further into the 10 tests, it will become obvious the people didn't do that. (Persevere) Which makes this a characteristic of the hard heart and a condition to living in the anointing. (Notice both) (cf. Num. 14:20-24)

“Hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first” (NIV)

“For we have become fellows with Christ (the Messiah) and share in all He has for us, if only we hold our first newborn confidence and original assured expectation [in virtue of which we are believers] firm and unshaken to the end.” (AMP)

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (KJV)

a. What's a characteristic of a hard heart?

Lack of Perseverance.

b. Cross-Reference — James 1:2-4

Hard heart — Lacks maturity.

Is not complete.

Does not do well with trials.

*** So when the evil in our flesh is confronted with the Word, the suffering/enduring of the temptation (if dealt with correctly) should soften our heart. (James 1)

c. A hardened heart messes with the anointing operating in our lives. To have the anointing operate in our lives, we must keep our confidence (faith) and not allow our heart to be hardened.

d. v. 16-18 (Read)

- Who rebelled?
- Who was God angry with?
- Who sinned and died in the desert?
- Who missed the promises of the rest & land?

v. 16 — The Israelites Moses led out of Egypt.

2. Heb. 3:19

a. The reason they didn't receive the promise?

Their unbelief. (cf. 3:10-12)

Characteristic of a hard heart — Unbelief.

b. Remember: The unbelief & sin came from not understanding God's ways.

The Ways of God (Test #2)

1. v. 25 — Moses went to God for help. (Cried out)
 - a. When we're facing a difficult situation — God wants us to call out to him.
 - b. Then he will show us the answer.
2. God's answer to Grumbling & Murmuring: (v. 25)
 - 'Decree & Law' (NIV)
 - 'Statute and Ordinance' (KJV)
 - God tested them.
3. God will teach us what to do. (Decree/Law) Then he'll tell us/command us to do it. (Statute and Ordinance) Then he'll watch us to see if we're doing it.

"Statute" — H2706 ('Decree' — NIV) "from 2710; an enactment; hence, an appointment (of time, space, quantity, labor or usage):--appointed, bound, commandment, convenient, custom, decree(-d), due, law, measure, X necessary, ordinance(- nary), portion, set time, statute, task."

"Ordinance" — H4941 ('Law' — NIV) "from 8199; properly, a verdict (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree (human or (participant's) divine law, individual or collective), including the act, the place, the suit, the crime, and the penalty; abstractly, justice, including a participant's right or privilege (statutory or customary), or even a style:--+ adversary, ceremony, charge, X crime, custom, desert, determination, discretion, disposing, due, fashion, form, to be judged, judgment, just(-ice, -ly), (manner of) law(-ful), manner, measure, (due) order, ordinance, right, sentence, usest, X worthy, + wrong."
4. v. 26 (KJV)

"give ear to all his commandments"

"keep all his statutes" (H2706)

"Commandments" — H4687 ('Commands' — NIV) "from 6680; a command, whether human or divine (collectively, the Law):--(which was) commanded(-ment), law, ordinance, precept."

"Statutes" — (H2706) ('Decrees')
5. v. 26 — God will then reward or allow consequences — according to our obedience.

In Test #2 — God's ways of doing things are revealed as:

1. First thing God wants is for us to call upon him when facing difficult situations. (v. 25)
2. God continued to take care of them, even in their disobedience. (v. 25)
3. He Instructed & Taught them. (v. 25-26)
4. He Commanded them & expected Obedience. (v. 25-26)
5. He watched over them. (Test us) (v. 25)
6. Rewards will be given, or Consequence will be permitted according to our choices. (v. 26)

*** And our choices will go back to the condition of our Heart. (Soft or Hard)

Look at v. 26 a little deeper

"I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

Let's deal with:

- "I will not bring on you any of the diseases..." (NIV)
- "I will put none of these diseases upon thee..." (KJV)

What about God putting it on them?

"Dr. Robert Young, author of Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible points out in his book 'Hints and Helps to Bible Interpretation', that in Ex. 15:26, the literal Hebrew reads: "I will permit to be put upon thee none of these diseases which I permitted to be brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Permission should not be confused with commission. In other words, God's permitting something, such as sickness or disease, is not the same as His commissioning it."

Test #3 — Ex. 16:1-18

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #3)

1. Grumbling (v. 2)
2. Self-pity. Loathing the fact they followed God. (v. 3)
3. Accusing God of bringing them into the wilderness to kill them. (v. 3)

The Ways of God (Test #3)

1. In the beginning of our Christian walk, or until we learn this lesson, God will strip us down in the area of 'self-provision, or self-reliance', (See what I've done) (v. 1-3) so we learn to trust him. — He did this with their food (meat) issue.
2. God had them exactly where he wanted them on this journey. They had been on the road for about one month. God was leading them very slowly. This was intentional. They were running out of their livestock to eat. They are in a desert. What will they eat? That's why they brought up meat and bread. (v. 3) God wanted them in this position so they could learn to trust him and have faith in him. He wanted to do a supernatural thing among them that would set himself apart as God. (v. 6-7, 12)
3. He will take care of us even though we're still immature and doing some things wrong. (v. 4, 8, 11-12)
 - He will try to teach us some things while he's providing for us. (v. 4-12)
 - We may be doing everything right, and he may let us use up our stash, our store, our supply — so we learn to trust him and depend on him. Have Faith

and Trust Him. (It'll be OK. He'll provide) Obedience. (Do what's right even though it looks bad.)

4. He will watch us ('test') to see if we will obey. (v. 4)

He wants this question of 'him being God' settled. (v. 12)

He wants us to stop testing him. (v. 6-12)

Do not test/tempt the Lord your God. (Deut. 6:16; Ex. 17:7; Num. 14:22; Matt. 4:7)

*** Here's a question that often comes up:

Why is God allowed to test us, but we are forbidden to test him?

Good question. We are told not to test God, except for one area — tithing. (Mal. 3:10) Why? How is that fair? The answer really is quite simple if you'll step back and look at the big picture. God will test us to see what is in our heart, and if we'll obey him. Will we do what is right, (obedience from our heart) or will we do what is wrong (disobedience from our heart)? That's what his testing us is all about.

God cannot do what is wrong. He already revealed his heart toward us in his Word. He is sinless. He's immutable. (He cannot change) There is no darkness (sin) in him at all.

So for us to test him is futile. To what end? It will not reveal anything to us.

When we test God, it is coming from a heart of doubt and unbelief. We're not sure about him, or what he's 'Really' going to do. So we feel the need to have him 'prove himself' to us. (Test him) That way we can be sure. The problem with that is: IT'S NOT FAITH. And without faith we can't please him, (Heb. 11:6) nor should we expect to receive anything from him. (James 1:3-8)

So for us to get into the mindset and possibly the habit of testing God, we're actually growing in and exercising our Unbelief. That will stop us from receiving anything from God. So it would make sense — that out of Love for us, and the desire for us to receive from him — God forbids us to test him.

The Whole Point of Test #3:

1. We will face difficult physical situations in life — How will we respond??
2. In faith, trust, commitment... or in Murmuring/Grumbling, making God prove himself, discipline him, etc.
3. This is a foundational building block for the rest of our spiritual lives.
4. SOMETHING IMPORTANT. When you're grumbling against Leadership (Moses) you're actually grumbling against God. (v. 8)

Test #4 — Ex. 16:19-35

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #4)

1. Ignoring what the Lord and Leadership said.

2. Disobedience.

The Ways of God (Test #4)

1. As we're growing, God continues to supply for us physically. (v. 4, 14-18)
2. He tells us what he expects of us. (Instruction & Command) (v. 5)
3. Then he watches if we'll obey. (v. 4b)
4. Notice v. 28 — God's Question.
 - a. Starting to see a bewilderment with the Father.
 - b. Remember: He doesn't understand sin. (James 1:13) There is no comprehension of how we can know to do right, and not do it.
 - c. The Father is still that way, that's why we need Jesus as our intercessor & advocate/lawyer to communicate with him on our behalf. (1 John 2:1-3)
 - d. Without an understanding of this sinful realm, The Father is at a loss as to why...

*** Now we're beginning to see the downward spiral of the bulk of the people.

This is the foundation of where it all started. As Christians we will face problems / difficulties in life. How will we handle them? Will we Grumble, Murmur, Complain? Or will we deal with them the right way? The Holy Spirit is faithful to show us the correct way of handling this life and all the things that get thrown at us. He'll use Instructions and Commands. Then he'll watch to see if we will obey.

In an effort to set himself apart as God, and to settle that question in us, He'll allow us to come to the end of ourselves and our way of providing for ourselves, or taking care of ourselves. Then he'll take care of us. Even though we're immature and are handling things incorrectly. He wants us to trust him, and believe he'll take care of us, so he'll prove it to us by doing just that.

He wants the question settled in us — Is he God or not? He'll use the supernatural to settle it.

Is that question settled in you? What supernatural events / happenings has he used to set himself apart as God?

If you have not had those type of encounters with God, you need them. Ask God to reveal himself to you that way. (Supernaturally)

Test #5 — Ex. 17:1-7

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #5)

1. v. 2 — 'Quarrelled' (NIV) 'Chide' (KJV)
2. v. 2 — Unbelief concerning a Physical need. (Again)
3. v. 2 — Putting the Lord to the 'Test'
4. v. 3 — 'Murmuring / Grumbling'
5. v. 3 — Using children as an excuse.

6. v. 4 — Becoming violently emotional. (Getting very worked up)
7. v. 7 — Questioning: 'Is the Lord among us or not'.

The Ways of God (Test #5)

1. v. 1 — He'll allow trials. God led them to a place he knew there would be no water. (Trials are needed for growth — James 1:2-8)
 2. v. 1 — He's trying to mature them. (cf. James 1:2-8)
 3. v. 1-2 — He's watching to see their responses. (cf. 16:4, 28)
James 1:2-3 — He's putting their faith to the test (the proof).
 4. v. 5-6 — Through it all, he continues to supply for them.
- *** When things don't come easily — It's not always a bad thing. How else will God be able to achieve James 1:2-8 in us?

Looking at the tests we've studied so far, I don't want you to miss the types & shadows.

1. ch. 14 — Moses' staff — Jesus. (Isa. 11:1)
14:16 — Raise the staff (If I be lifted up...)
Pillar of Cloud. (v. 19-20, 24) (Holy Spirit)
2. ch. 15 — Wood in water — (v. 25) — Jesus (Isa. 11:1)
3. ch. 16 — Manna & Quail (Meat & Bread)
Jesus — John 6:30-35, 41, 47-58
4. ch. 17:5-6 — First Application — Met the people's need.
 - a. The rod — Jesus. (Isa. 11:1)
 - b. The rock — Jesus. (1 Cor. 10:4)
 - c. Striking the rock — Jesus' death. (Matt. 26:31)
 - d. Water from the rock — Life from Jesus' death.
(John 4:7-15; 1 Cor. 10:4)

Test #6 — Ex. 32

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #6)

1. Felt dismayed about God & Leadership. (Let Down, Abandoned...) (v. 1)
 - a. Remember: they came from the background where they were used to choosing gods of their liking, and these gods didn't tell them what to do. (v. 1)
2. Lack of Patience/Endurance. (v. 1)
3. So they chose to do their own thing aside from God. (They've now made themselves God & will choose their own god & spiritual leader) (v. 1)
4. Following religious leadership that is without God. (v. 2-5)
5. Soothed their conscience with a derelict spiritual leader. (Aaron) They had church and gave to their god. (v. 4-6a) This is religion without relationship.

6. Lied to themselves about their god & condition. (v. 4b-5)
7. Which opened the door to fleshly & sinful gratification. (v. 6b, 18-19a, 25) A picture of a present day worldly Party.
 - a. v. 25 — The old nature without Godly Leadership.
 - “Aaron let them get out of control”
 - “Running Wild” (NIV) “Naked” (KJV) “Unruly, Unrestrained” (Amp)
 - “Out of Control” (NIV & Amp)
 - “Laughing Stock” (NIV)
 - “Naked unto their shame” (KJV)
 - “A derision (laughing stock, joke ridicule, scorn) & object of shame” (Amp)
 - b. “Naked” (H6544) — “a primitive root; to loosen; by implication, to expose, dismiss; figuratively, absolve, begin:--avenge, avoid, bare, go back, let, (make) naked, set at nought, perish, refuse, uncover.”
8. It's interesting to me that the same things are at an ungodly party today.
 - a. Choosing to be god of our lives and do our own thing. (v. 1)
 - b. Food. (v. 6)
 - c. Drinking. (v. 6)
 - d. Music. (v. 18)
 - e. Dancing. (v. 19)
 - f. Scantily dressed, or partially naked. (v. 25)
9. FAILING OF A LEADER — Aaron. (v. 2-5)
 - a. He folded to their pressure.
 - b. He betrayed God.
 - c. He created an idol.
10. ‘Stiff-necked people’. (v. 9) — Stubborn, Obstinate.
 - a. #7186 — “from 7185; severe (in various applications):--churlish, cruel, grievous, hard((hearted), thing), heavy, + impudent, obstinate, prevailed, rough(-ly), sore, sorrowful, stiff((necked)), stubborn, + in trouble.”
 - b. v. 10 — God's feelings towards stubbornness — 1 Sam. 15:23 — Stubbornness is as Idolatry.
11. Leadership not being honest and accountable. (v. 21-24)

The Ways of God (Test #6)

1. God makes plans well ahead of time, therefore he can take his time. (v. 1)
2. A definite change in attitude with God. He is angry. (He wants something to stop) If the people want spiritual death, a false god, etc. — give it to them.
3. Once a people have reached this level of hardness of heart, intercession by someone else may be the only way for them to be saved. (v. 11-14)
4. Type/Picture of spiritual death because of sin. (v. 28-29)
5. Stubbornness, Obstinate, (Idol worship) results in:
 - Without intercession — Spiritual Death. (v. 7-10)

- With intercession — Spiritual Death. (v. 33)
- The sin will be revisited upon the people via plague. (v. 34-35)

The Point We Need to Get Here

God has been patiently working with them to mature them. He is doing everything he can to help them trust him, believe what he says, and begin operating in faith rather than unbelief. They are not responding. By their choice, they persist in their old habits and ways of dealing with life.

He can't allow this to go on, and continue to act as if they're not in sin and unbelief. So he's getting angry. He wants this vicious cycle of choices and behavior to stop in the people.

Please note: from this point forward, he will not deal with them in the same manner he has been. They should be maturing past this stage of their lives — and they're refusing. That willful rebellion will cause a change in attitude with God, and he's not going to deal with them the same way he has been.

Application to us: We need to pay attention to what we're doing and the Gentle Nudge of the Holy Spirit telling us what God thinks of it. If we don't, it's almost guaranteed that we'll lose the power of the anointing, and the presence of God.

Continuation of Test #6 — Ex. 33

1. Principles.

A. Attitude switch on God's part. (v. 1-3)

1. Because of their 'stubbornness' ("stiff-necked") — 'Idolatry'

Please note: The calf merely came out of their attitude of 'Idolatry' (STUBBORNNESS).

2. The calf wasn't the biggest Idol — Their Stubbornness Was!!!

3. God was now backing off of them. He'll keep his promise/Word. But he was personally not going to be involved!!!! (v. 3)

4. He was going to send an angel in his stead. (v. 2a) This is a different angel than was referred to in Ex. 23:20-23. (See explanation below)

B. Remember: the cloud — was a picture/type of the Holy Spirit.

C. But also Remember: 1 Cor. 10:4

1. Jesus was personally going with them.

2. 1 Cor. 10:3-4 — 'Christ' accompanied them. ("The Anointed One & His Anointing")

3. Tie that to Ex. 23:20-23.

v. 21 — This angel had to be a pre-incarnate Christ. (1 Cor. 10:3-4)

Because:

a. He had the ability to forgive sins. (No ordinary angel can do that)

b. He carried the name of God. (No ordinary angel was ever given that)

D. So what has just taken place is the pre-incarnate Christ, (Jesus) is no longer going with them, and he's being replaced by an ordinary angel.

E. This is a concern to Moses. He seems to understand the impact of what is happening here. We've now lost — The accompaniment of 'Christ'.

'Christ' depicts the 'Anointing'.

v. 14-15 — 'Presence' lost also.

1. First is the Presence, then is the Anointing. Can't have the Anointing of God without the Presence of God.

2. We didn't lose Jesus according to 1 Cor. 10:4. (Jesus means — 'Salvation')

God was still keeping his Word and taking them to the Promised Land.
But 'He' is not going with.

We've lost the Presence and the Anointing of God.

3. What are we stuck with: A common angel.

4. We know this is a big deal to Moses because of what he said in v. 14-16.

***** Please see the application to us today.**

IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE SAVED (Forgiven), BUT NOT BE LIVING IN THE PRESENCE AND ANOINTING OF GOD.

2. Why is this happening?

A. Their stubbornness — stiff-necked ways. (v. 3)

1. Remember: The same anointing that does wonderful, awesome, Glorious things among us — That same anointing destroys sin. (Acts 5 — Ananias & Sapphira)

2. Could we in America have the full power of God — or would it destroy us???

B. Moses was concerned the nation of Israel would no longer be set apart from the world by the Presence of the Lord.

1. In the N.T. — the things that are to set us apart from the world are:

'Signs' & 'Wonders / Miracles' (God working with us)

Jesus set the example: (Luke 4:18-19; Acts 10:38)

Mark 16:15-18, 20

2 Cor. 12:12

2. "Signs" — (Rick Renner — 'Sparkling Gems')

"The official written notice that announced the final verdict of a court. The signature or seal applied to a document to guarantee its authenticity and a sign that marked key locations in a city."

***** A (or THE) distinguishing mark of a Christian church is to be the PRESENCE and ANOINTING of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, and miracles following our lives!!!!**

3. Do we have them?? Does it bother us if we don't? If we don't, WHY don't we????

Test #7 — Num. 11:1-3

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #7)

1. 'Complaining' about how hard their life is.

The Ways of God (Test #7)

1. Since the Stubbornness of the Golden Calf incident there is an attitude change in God.
2. When we persist in our sin long enough — not heeding instruction, command, correction — God's attitude will change toward us.
3. Now God's getting angry. (Anger means he wants something to stop)
4. Result: The fire of God burned among them and consumed some of the camp.
5. Remember: the same Glory and Anointing that brings the good things to us, also destroys sin.
6. Moses prayed — fire died down.
*** NOTICE — How God responds to intercession / prayer.

Test #8 — Num. 11:4-35

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #8)

1. Complaining about God's provision.
2. Supernatural has become common-place.
3. Thinking that if it gets uncomfortable, it's no longer God.
4. Comparing ourselves among ourselves. (Egypt) (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12)
 - a. Complaining about not having the comforts, cravings, and desires met like we are accustomed to.
 - b. Be better off without God in our lives.
 - c. Rejecting God's way of leading/provision.
5. Manipulation — Wailing, complaining loud enough for others to hear. (Gossip/Slander)

The Ways of God (Test #8)

1. There is a point God becomes very angry. (v. 10, 33)
2. God gives them what they asked for — meat. (v. 19-20, 31-33)
 - a. To the point it made them sick.
 - b. It became a plague/curse to them — "Kibroth Hattaavah" — "Graves of Craving".
3. Our current season is likely a form of a test. How we handle it will help determine a lot about our next season. (v. 4-6 — 19-20, 31-33)

4. If you allow yourself to crave after the things of the world — God isn't going to stop you — You may get exactly what you want — Resulting in curse / plague / spiritual death. (ch. 33)

5. Once God becomes angry about something that he wants to stop — He will discipline & punish us. (v. 18-20)

- Mark 3:5 (Jesus)
- Heb. 3 & 4 apply to today. (3:7-12; 4:11)
- Heb. 12 — Discipline and Punishment — For those he LOVES.

“Discipline” (Chastize — KJV)

- “The whole training and education of children”
- “Instruction that aims at the increase of virtue”
- “Whatever cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing passions”
- “To chastize/castigate with words or blows”

“Punish” — (Scourgeth — KJV) — “To whip or flog”

***** THIS IS NEW TESTAMENT.**

I'm quoting from Heb. 12. This is the same book we are using chapters 3 & 4 as the theme chapters for this series of messages. Remember, this is a letter written to a group of people. In its original state, there were no chapters or verses. It was one long continuous letter. So the thoughts of chapter 12 are connected to what he was talking about in chapters 3 & 4.

What's my point? When we are struggling with a 'hard heart' and 'perceiving and understanding the ways of God', if we persist in our disobedience long enough — GOD WILL DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH US — BECAUSE HE LOVES US. He won't just allow it to go on unattended. He will eventually turn the heat up on our lives and deal with us and what's wrong in our lives.

*** So again I say it — THIS IS A NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLE AND WAY GOD DEALS WITH HIS PEOPLE.

To repeat:

If we persist in our bad habits, ungodly — worldly ways, stubbornness — Refusing to mature and change — there will come a time when God will get angry and begin to discipline and even punish us.

WHY?? — He loves us.

- He wants to save us from destruction.

Test #9 — Num. 12

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #9)

1. Talking against Leadership. (v. 1)

2. Problems with the minister's/pastor's wife. (v. 1)
3. Picking at the wife because of her position and influence. (See below) (v. 1-2)
4. Problem was competition (They wanted to 'Lead' with Moses)

- a. Most commentators say they were picking at her because she was black. (Racial)

- b. That doesn't make sense with the statement:

"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it."

Num. 12:1-2 (KJV)

- c. Stop and think about this. If it is racial prejudice it doesn't make any sense. Why would the color of HER skin make any difference to THEIR ability to hear God? The two don't go together.

- d. It makes sense if you take the issue back to the incident in Gen. 9:20-27.

There are 2 trains of thought here.

(1) Canaan was a representative of all of Ham's lineage. So when Noah cursed Canaan, he was actually cursing all of Ham's lineage.

(2) 'In the minds/thinking' of Shem & Japheth, they extended the curse given to Canaan — to all of Ham's descendants. They believed it applied to all, so they treated all of them as servants/slaves, and taught their descendants the same.

Either way, this is believed to be the source of the black race being a slave or servant people. No matter which of the two is correct, we have the same result taking place with Moses and Zipporah. (See explanation below)

*** Please note: For me personally, whether the 2 trains of thought are accurate or not — I don't believe the black people are destined to be slaves. I don't feel they are any less than any other race. They are God's creation like all humans. If this was a curse put on them by Noah, it has been removed through Jesus. So let's get over all the racial prejudice and allow them all the freedom and rights bought for them in the Salvation given to us by Jesus.

Back to the story of Gen. 9:20-27 and Noah:

Here Noah experienced one of the first changes after the flood. It was fermentation. Never before had grape juice fermented into alcohol. Noah became drunk and was lying naked in his tent.

It was in that condition, he was seen by Ham. (His youngest son) Then Ham went and told his two brothers about it. When Noah found out about that, Noah cursed Ham's lineage — specifically Canaan. (See explanation of the 2 trains of thinking — above)

Since Ham and Cush (one of Ham's sons) went south and it's believed they settled northern Africa, the Ethiopians (Cushites — or black race) would be

their descendants. Hence the ongoing struggle with slavery among the black race.

So how does that affect Moses and Zipporah. She was a Cushite, or Ethiopian. She was of Ham's lineage. Therefore, under the curse of servanthood/slavery. So for Zipporah to be married to Moses, the leader. Having direct influence on him as his spouse in helping him lead. When in their thinking, she is to be their slave/servant and be doing what they tell her to do and not vice/versa — this was a HUGE problem. In their minds it wasn't right. She has no right or authority to have any influence on Moses or give him any input. This was the true point of contention.

With that in mind it makes sense in the context of the scripture. They were upset with her, as a result, the leadership issue came up. Who was in charge? After all, they could hear God's voice too. He spoke to them too. That should qualify them to lead as much or maybe more than Moses' Cushite/Ethiopian wife. (Zipporah)

THE BOTTOM LINE: Setting everything else aside, the problem was their issues with Zipporah, and talking about Moses in a way that undermined his authority and ability to lead.

*** Application — Most people think the minister's wife should be serving them and the church. Doing the things they want done, and doing them the way they want them done.

Here's the problem that sets up:

- If she's not doing what they want — something is wrong with her.
- And if she does try to do something and she doesn't do it the way they want it done — she's still not right.
- When there's a hard heart involved, there's no winning!!

As a result, attitudes will splash over on the Pastor & his leadership capabilities or style, etc. Gossip, evil reports, and slander will begin to undermine the minister and his wife. After all, how can he and she be the leaders — when they do, or don't do, the things the way some in the congregation think they should. Criticism with the intent to undermine takes place.

In reality, it's competition about leadership that is the real issue. They want more say in what is done & how things should be done. After all, they can hear God and be used by him too.

All of this points to characteristics of a hardened heart in some area.

The Ways of God (Test #9)

1. Context: God is no longer coddling them like he had been up until now. He wants their disobedience, stubbornness, etc. to stop. He wants them to mature.
2. He confronts the problem. Brings it out into the open. (v. 4-5)
3. States the facts. (v. 6-8)
4. He's looking for 'Fear of the Lord' in Aaron and Miriam. (v. 8b)

5. We are seeing a definite attitude change. God is becoming angry at these things now. (v. 9)
6. He lets them have the harvest of their sin. (v. 10)
 - a. Gossip and Slander get on a person & eat away at them — just like the leprosy.
7. Again after intercession — sin is forgiven. (v. 11-13)
8. Consequence for this sin: (v. 14-15)
 - a. Public Exposure.
 - b. Treated as if God spit in her face.

Tells you something of how God feels about this type of sin.
 - c. Removed from the Presence/Protection.

Application:

Don't talk in a negative, undermining, or belittling way about the minister or his wife. There are better ways to deal with whatever the issues may be. They are called:

COMMUNICATE — COMMUNICATE — COMMUNICATE — COMMUNICATE.

Test #10 — Num. 13:1 - 14:35

Hard-Heart Characteristics (Test #10)

1. Looking at the physical. (13:31) — (Just like it started at the Red Sea)
 - a. Coming to conclusions from what things look like in the physical.
2. Bad (Evil — KJV) report is spread. (13:32-33)
 - a. 'spread' — Gossip.
 - b. Bad/Evil — Contrary to what God told them to do.
 - c. The fruit of the report is Fear & Unbelief.
3. Outright lie. (Land devours everything)
4. Focus on physical. (Size of inhabitants)
5. Exaggerated, ungodly perspective.
 - a. (Totally without Faith) Grasshopper mentality.

If a Grasshopper is 3" long, and you compared that to a 6' tall man, the Giants would have to be around 144' tall.
6. Giving in to Fear & Loss of Hope. (v. 1)
 - Verbalizing it. (v. 1)
 - Grumbling (v. 2)
 - Self-pity — regret for following God (v. 2)
 - Coming to conclusions via fear, loss of hope, and NO FAITH. (v. 3)
 - Making accusations on the basis of it. (v. 3)

- Again, using children (wives) as an excuse to not do what God commanded. (v. 3)
 - Entertaining Rebellion. (v. 3)
7. Effort to Remove Leadership via Division and taking charge.
 8. Go back to the old ways. (Egypt)
 9. Rebellion and Murder. (cf. Matt. 5:21-26)

The Ways of God (Test #10)

1. God will defend those who are for him. (v. 10)
2. When we continue to disbelieve, and treat his Word/promises with 'contempt' — God will move to another group. (v. 11-12)
This is what happens in many Revivals. God will by-pass the established denominations, and move on to a new people. And the people you would expect to be in the Revival, often are not part of it all.
3. With intercession — again there is forgiveness. (v. 13-19)
4. It's possible to be forgiven, but still miss the promise. (v. 20-23a)
 - a. The determining factor on that taking place has to do with us treating the God and the Word with Contempt in an area. (v. 23b)
5. Those who follow God with ALL their heart, God will honor and keep his promises to. (v. 24)
6. God is still looking out for the people, but they've lost the promise. (v. 25)
7. The Power of our spoken words (v. 26-35) — cf. Ex. 10:28, 11:5.
8. Coming decision/judgment was based on their words — when they grumbled & complained. They received what they had said would happen to them. (v. 26-28)
9. Everything they had said. (v. 29-35)
10. Notice: — v. 29 — Age of accountability
 - v. 30 — God made an oath with uplifted hand. (Covenant)
 - v. 33 — Children suffer for parents' stupidity and sin.

Concluding thought for Test #10

36 "And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, 37 Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. 38 But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still."

Num. 14:36-38 (KJV)

When we ask for the Glory and want the Power to be among us, do we consider that if God showed up in the Splendor of his Glory (which we are asking for) how many in the service would end up dead because of it??? Because of our Hard Hearts & the Attitudes that flow from us.

(1) After going through all 10 tests — it's much more easily seen why the power and glory of God are so limited among us.

I've had the question asked after we spent 2-3 weeks hard after God in Open Heaven Meetings — and we did have wonderful things happen — but the question was asked — Why didn't God just show up in his Glory and blow our faces off??

Can you see the answer to that now? How many would drop over dead if he did that? Not being in the spiritual condition to absorb that amount of the Glory of God without it doing damage to them.

(2) That's what 1 Cor. 11:28-32 is talking about — sick, weak, & dead.

That's what happened to Ananias & Sapphira in Acts 5.

That's what Heb. 10:27 is talking about.

(3) It also answers other questions I've had — like:

Why is it when we're hard after God, and there's a cold night or snowy night, or it gets late into the night during Open Heaven Meetings, and much fewer people are at the service — why is it that many times the power of God will show up in an especially strong way?

Could it be that it's safer for him to manifest in powerful ways then, because there are fewer hard-heart issues/people at the service. The people who are taking the things of God more lightly are not there??

God doesn't want to come and manifest his awesomeness and Glory, to the detriment, or damage of his people. So he will only manifest to the degree it isn't counter-productive.

(4) Now in case you feel held back by others around you — when you're alone, or with your wife — there is no limit. (That's why the devil hits marriages so hard) Just press into God, and live everything the Word has for you.

Matt. 18:18-20.

Gen. 11:6.

(5) The Anointing, Presence, Power, and Glory of God are precious. Never to be taken for granted, or taken lightly. We need to always revere and respect the supernatural.

Heb. 4

Review — Heb. 3:7-19

A. What we learned in this chapter:

1. Who is ultimately responsible for hardening of the human heart? (The Person) (v. 8)

2. Hardened Hearts, Rebellion, and Testing God are tied together. (v. 9)

3. The people were going astray in their hearts. This comes from a hardened heart. (v. 10)

4. Tied in with it is the people didn't know God's ways. Result of a hardened heart. (v. 10)
5. The reason they didn't get into the Promised Land was not because of sin or unbelief. It had to do with this: They were always going astray in their hearts and couldn't perceive or recognize the ways of God. (v. 10-11)
6. A hardened heart struggles with: Unbelief, Sin, Turning away from God (v. 12)
7. It is possible to not be hardened, but it takes effort and accountability. (Because sin will always try to get into us and deceive us) (v. 13)
8. A hardened heart messes with the anointing that will operate in our lives. (v. 14)
9. The reason we don't receive some of the promises and the rest — Unbelief. (Which comes from a hardened heart) (v. 12, 19)

Verse-by-Verse Review

- v. 1 — We know the principles we just studied apply to us, because here the writer of Hebrews is making the direct application.
- a. The promise of entering his rest still stands. What is the rest he's talking about? It's our version of the promised land. The Israelites had no rest in Egypt, so God was going to give them rest via giving them their own land in which they could govern themselves and not be slaves to a different government. (Can you also see the application to sin and righteousness? God wants to take us out of slavery to sin, so we can be free to live a life governed by righteousness.)
 - b. It is possible to live without ("fallen short of") the promises. Doesn't mean we've lost our salvation, we're just not living in the rest/promises he's offering to us.
- v. 2 — The key to realizing the promises/rest in our lives is faith.
- a. It's the same message, just one chooses to believe God can and will do it, while the other doesn't.
 - b. This is kind of the summary of all 10 tests. They chose not to believe, but rather to do all the things they acted out in the 10 tests. Here we are warned not to do the same thing and miss out on the promises.
- v. 3 — It's as easy to get into the place (rest) God wants us to live, as it is to be disqualified. It all comes back to belief. (faith)
- a. An interesting statement at the end of the verse.
"And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world"
 - b. God's part in this is already done. It's been done since the creation of this world. So what's the point. God has done everything he's going to do. It's up to us to make the right choices now. We determine if we'll live in the promises or not. Not God.
- v. 4 — This is verified by the 7th day illustration. God set everything into motion when he created the world. How this system operates, faith, obedience, etc. —

it's all been set into motion as a part of the creation of this world. Now God is done. He's not going to do any more. The way he said it will operate — it will operate. God is now at rest. He's sitting back and allowing us to choose how it will play out in our lives.

v. 5 — Re-emphasizing the principle: We can miss this rest and the promises.

v. 6 — Some of us will achieve the rest. (Our Promised Land) Notice the key thing to watch out for — Disobedience.

a. Notice the 2 factors that enter into achieving the promises.

(1) Faith. (3:12, 19, 4:2)

(2) Disobedience. (3:12, 4:6)

b. Reminder: These two come out of a heart that is “always going astray” and “has not known my ways”. (3:10)

v. 7 — Since they didn't get in, that's why God is warning us — TODAY. (Quoting Ps. 95:7-8)

v. 8 — He's saying that even under Joshua — when they did get into the Promised Land — they didn't achieve the full rest God wanted them to have. So God spoke through David (Ps. 95) about a different time and people who would achieve it. The author is saying that's for us TODAY in the age of Grace. This is not talking about our future rest in Heaven. The warning is for us alive NOW. So that we don't fall short. WE ARE TO ACHIEVE IT.

v. 9-10 — The rest (entering the promises) still remains for us. He's comparing it to God's rest. What's the comparison? Once we are truly living in the promises in some area of our lives, we are no longer working. We've ceased from the work, just like God has ceased from his work. The promise (rest) is achieved and we just live in it.

v. 11 — So since the promise still stands, let's work at entering until it takes place. (Keep Believing and Obeying) That takes effort. WITHOUT A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO BELIEVE AND OBEY — WE WILL DO WHAT THEY DID — FALL SHORT OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE TO US IN THIS LIFE. Just like they did when they disobeyed.

v. 12-13 — WHAT IS OUR GREATEST HELP IN THIS???

a. Getting into the Word of God, and getting the Word into us.

b. There is nothing that can lay us bare and reveal what is really going on inside of us like the Word can.

c. Treasure it. Hold it in High Esteem. It is our source of LIFE. (Matt. 4:4 ; John 6:32-58)

Additional Thoughts on Receiving — ‘Good Soil’

Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15.

When we look at the 4 kinds of soil that Jesus talked about. Only one produced a harvest. Here Jesus gives us another illustration on what it takes to receive harvest (the promises & rest) in our lives.

A. In Mark we see again (just like in Hebrews) it's tied to the Word. The only key Jesus gives in Mark is: When we Hear the Word — we must Accept it. (v. 20)

1. What does that mean?

- a. Don't make excuses for yourself that allow you to believe and live in a way that is contrary to the Word!
- b. Don't argue with and reject certain areas of the Word as not pertaining to you.
- c. Simply hear it, take it in, apply it, and live it.
- d. Cf. Mark 7:8.

B. In Luke 8:15 — we see a little more what it means to be in a position where we will Receive.

1. Here we are given keys to self-examine (cf. 1 Cor. 11:28-32) and determine if our heart is a receptive one or not.

2. The things we need to look for are: (NIV)

- a. Hear the Word.
- b. Retain the Word.
- c. And Persevere in the Word.

3. Here's how it reads in the Amplified: (Luke 8:15)

"But as for that [seed] in the good soil, these are [the people] who, hearing the Word, hold it fast in a just (noble, virtuous) and worthy heart, and steadily bring forth fruit with patience."

4. Again, the same 3 characteristics are stated. What are they?

- a. (#1) We're diligently in the Word and getting the Word into us — trying to HEAR what God is saying to us. (cf. Heb. 4:12-13)
- b. (#2) We're accepting what it says. (Mark 4:20 — NIV)
We're retaining it. (Luke 8:15 — NIV)
We're holding it fast. (Luke 8:15 — AMP)
- c. (#3) Persevere in it. (Luke 8:15 — NIV)
Bring forth fruit with Patience. (Luke 8:15 — AMP)
This last point is speaking of working at doing the Word. It's taking effort. We're Persevering. We're Patiently remaining focused and steadfast. (See definitions below).

Conclusion

We're being given the same message in all three areas of scripture. (The 10 Tests, Heb. 3 & 4, and The Sower.) What is that message?

(#1) When God speaks (His Word) — Pay attention and Listen. It's Important.

(#2) Now it's decision time. Will we accept, believe, and hold fast to what God has said? Or will we go back to our old habits, beliefs, and ways of living our life? To Retain the Word, and Hold it Fast — we MUST OBEY it.

This is the first step where Christians will lose out on the promises. They don't DO what is required.

(#3) The last step we miss is the Perseverance and Patience step. This step is talked about all the way through Heb. 11 where the people who inherit the promises are talked about. Answers don't always come easily, or quickly. Sometimes it takes a lot of "Effort" (work) to enter the Rest. (Receive the Promises)

We can't get tired and QUIT or GIVE-UP. (Heb. 12:12-17) We must take the attitude that says: WE WILL NEVER STOP PURSUING WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED!!!! It's ours by Covenant and Inheritance. If it's with my last breath, I will overcome this thing. (Rev. 21:11)

A Few Scriptures on Receiving

According to the scripture, Receiving is to be easy. In fact, from God's perspective — once we're saved — IT'S ALREADY HAPPENED. We've already received salvation and everything in it. We're now heirs, and the whole kingdom is ours.

John 1:12; Acts 26:18.

Matt. 7:8; 10:8; 13:19-23; 20:7-12; 21:22.

Mark 10:15, 30; 11:24.

Luke 11:10; 18:29-31.

John 4:35-37.

Acts 1:8; 3:5; 8:15-17; 9:11-18; 10:47; 11:1; 17:11.

Rom. 5:11, 17; 8:15.

1 Cor. 2:12; 4:7; 15:1-3.

Gal. 3:14; 4:5.

Heb. 9:15; 10:36; ch. 11.

James 1:7; 4:3.

1 Pet. 4:10.

1 John 2:27; 3:22.

Rev. 3:3.