

**TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP**

JOIN A SERVE TEAM

**NEW HERE?**

CONNECTION CARD

**STAY UP TO DATE**

SUBSCRIBE TO DIGITAL BULLETIN

**Message Series: 40 Days | Seek. Ask. Fast.****Message Title: 40 Days of Dependence****Scripture: Deuteronomy 8**

Independence is at the very core of who we are as Americans. This year, as a nation, we will celebrate the 250-year anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, when the thirteen colonies declared their freedom from the tyranny of England's king and unjust taxation.

The values of America often clash with the values of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. While we as Americans uphold independence as a God-given right, the Scriptures actually call us to the exact opposite. Followers of Jesus are designed to be dependent on God for salvation, provision, direction, and satisfaction.

These forty days are not about self-improvement, but about re-formation. The Lord promises in Jeremiah 29:13, "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*" Throughout this 40 Day series, together as a church, we are committing to three actions:

**Seek:** intentional attention. To seek is to choose to direct our attention toward God deliberately.

**Ask:** prayerful dependence. To ask is to pray with trust, naming our need before a good Father.

**Fast:** sacred subtraction. To fast is to remove something good so we can make room for something greater.

The greatest threat to our faith is not persecution or hardship, it's the quiet belief that we don't really need God. And today, as we step into the wilderness with Israel, we're going to see that God doesn't lead his people there to abandon them, but to teach them how to live again by being dependent on God alone.

In Numbers 14:28-35, the Lord punishes the Israelites for their disobedience and lack of trust. "Because your men explored the land for forty days, you must wander in the wilderness for forty years—a year for each day, suffering the consequences of your sins (Numbers 14:34)." Even after their punishment, the people struck out in independence to conquer the land, only to be defeated by their enemies.

The Lord used the wilderness to form his people as a people that depended not on themselves, but on the Lord alone. The entire book of Deuteronomy is one long speech of Moses to the new generation of Israelites who were born and grew up in the wilderness of their parent's own making. Now, forty years later, at the border of the Promised Land, they are ready to possess something their parents failed to perceive. While they may have bemoaned their lives for over forty years because the everyday rhythm of the wilderness was mundane and normal, Moses reminded them of the purpose of the wilderness from God's perspective.

The wilderness years of the Israelites teach us how we, as the people of God, are designed to live dependent on the Lord.

1. We depend on the Lord for provision. (Exodus 16; Numbers 11:1-15; Deuteronomy 8:3-4, 16)
  - The Lord provided food and water in a place of scarcity. In Exodus 16, months after being rescued from Egypt, the wilderness highlighted the contrast between scarcity and abundance. In the past, they experienced plenty in Egypt, but the present scarcity caused complaints and anxiety.
  - Manna literally means “What is it?” as they encountered food for nourishment they had never seen or tasted before. Every day, they would gather manna, “bread from heaven” (Psalm 105:40), as part of their morning routine for forty years.
  - Manna was a daily test of trust. Every day, the Lord taught the Israelites to trust him enough for only today. In Deuteronomy 8:3, Moses spoke to the generation that had grown up on manna in the wilderness, reminding them of God’s purpose for the manna to teach them that *“humanity does not live on bread alone.”*
2. We depend on the Lord for direction. (Exodus 13:21-22; Deuteronomy 1:32-33; 8:15)
  - Out of Egypt, the Lord led his people when they had no direction. He led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The visible presence of the Lord led them like a shepherd through the perils of the wilderness.
  - While the Lord did have a destination to which he was leading the people, the journey shaped them more than the destination.
  - We want to know where God is leading us, but sometimes we need to just obey his way. The wilderness teaches God’s people that direction comes not from urgency, but from attentiveness and obedience.
3. We depend on the Lord for satisfaction. (Deuteronomy 8:18; Psalm 90:14-17)
  - Psalm 90:14 is a Psalm of Moses perhaps written in the wilderness. His prayer cries to the Lord to *“satisfy us each morning with his unfailing love.”* The Lord provided and satisfied Israel for forty years because of his faithfulness.
  - We often go after many things to satisfy us: success, money, fame, family, etc., but only the Lord can truly satisfy the longing of our broken hearts.
4. We depend on the Lord for formation. (Deuteronomy 8:2, 5)
  - As Moses said, the purpose of the wilderness was to *“test you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands.”* The wilderness is about our hearts. We can harden our hearts to the things God desires to teach us through the difficult wilderness, or we can allow the wilderness to melt our hearts as we allow God to remove what is useless so that God can shape us to be useful.

Noel Forlini Burt writes in *Hope in the Wilderness*, “In the wilderness, we can’t make the pretense of relying on God while secretly living as functional atheists, really relying on ourselves. If we’ve truly been in the wilderness, we know that only God is able. The wilderness is the place where God bids us to come and die.” Functional atheism isn’t denying God with our lips. It’s confessing God with our mouths while organizing our lives as if he does not exist and won’t actually come through. Functional atheism is defined by self-reliance, control, illusions of independence, and the belief that we are more capable than we really are.

This week, pursue every day as a day to be formed in dependence.

SEEK: Set aside intentional time for prayer and Scripture

ASK: Pray for the Lord for daily satisfaction through his word.

FAST: Subtract independence from your life.