

Deuteronomy 8

Men's breakfast announcement

Introduction

Though it's hard, and often painful, the humbling periods that we sometimes experience in our life create big opportunities for dependence on God. Naturally we will do everything we can to avoid being humbled, but in hindsight, with the right attitude check, we probably recognize how important it was, and hopefully will accept the lessons we learned out of it. We probably value humility, and we have probably prayed, "Lord make me a humble person," but rarely do we outwardly *desire* to be humbled!

A humbled spirit is the starting point of spiritual growth

READ V.1-2 In this passage it is pretty clear that His purpose in leading them through the desert was to break them down. Have you ever had a humbling period of a month or a year? God humbled them for 40 years. They weren't lost. This was a direct consequence of not going into the promised land. "You don't think you can go into the Land because there are giants?" Looks like we have some education to do. No they weren't lost, they knew exactly where they were and could have zipped through the desert in a straight line. Moses knew the backroads of the region - he'd been a desert man for the past four decades. Just like subsequent periods, this was God's teaching time. He kept them in the furnace of total dependence. He brought them to the breaking point in every aspect, because he wanted to teach them the greatest lesson, "God is my answer to everything." No generation since has ever experienced that lesson as tangibly as they did. Remember, that generation had no experience of God. They were born on the tail end of 400 years of silence - since Jacob. So God had to start at the bottom, wipe the slate, and start building upwards. Humbling is the starting point of spiritual growth because...

It exposes the deepest layers in our hearts

Testing you to know what was in your heart... God wanted to expose their hearts. Was He trying to find something out for Himself? Or was He trying to open up their hearts for them to understand what truly ruled their own hearts? God already knows the heart, "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind (Jer 17:10). There's no part concealed or hidden from His sight, "everything is open and laid bare to the one of whom we have to do (Heb 4:13)." But while God knows our hearts in every way imaginable, the truth is that we don't know our own hearts - at least not fully. We don't have clarity and objectivity, because the eyes that we use to evaluate ourselves are blurry. And that's where God uses the circumstances of our lives to first expose our prideful stony hearts, and then as we let him, He replaces it with a spiritual heart.

The group who refused to go into the promised land from Egypt had 3 months of understanding who this God was and who they were. The group going into the promised land in our text had 40 years of painful humbling heart-education. He didn't do that for Himself, but for their own Good! That principle remains true today. As God humbles us and reveals what's in our hearts, we recognize that God is teaching us, and hopefully if we respond correctly, we gain a greater sense of allegiance toward Him. Humbling is a starting point of spiritual growth.

[Military] The best way to build up a man or woman is to take everything away from him. This is mantra of any military training. Remove every comfort, remove name, rank, identity, ability to control anything,

break him down - and then see how they responds. That's what God was doing in the desert, and though not as extreme, that's what God needs to do with all of our lives. "He who agrees against his will is of the same opinion still..." And God wants to teach us to agree with Him, deep in our own will.

All the great Bible characters were severely humbled. Moses himself being the first. God tested Abraham, and David was chased out of Jerusalem barefoot, by his own son. Let's change our view just slightly and view humbling as a starting point for new levels of spiritual growth. I'm not sure we need to go look for it. If you're a believer and you desire to grow, don't worry God will find ways to shape you, and sometimes it won't be pleasing. But, that's His area of expertise (and he's gracious), and if we respond well, the product is a softer heart and renewed vigor. God works on those who are recipients of His favor. I know it might not feel like it, but being humbled by God is actually *part of the favor of God*. It's taking raw ore, and refining it. For now, let's learn from their mistakes.

It re-prioritizes the thoughts that are misaligned

How did He do the humbling in this case? **He humbled you, and he let you hunger...** Are we OK with God letting someone hunger? Really think about that for a moment. Are we ok with God allowing us a season of serious deprivation. Food – boy that's going straight to the juggler. And by the way the hunger he's talking here isn't the hunger we experience at the office between 2-4 in the afternoon [scattered light snacks but none of those appeal to me now]. God delayed the provisions, *let* them hunger, and took them to the brink of human survival.

Have you ever wrestled with an unanswered prayer? Is it really unanswered? Or is the answer, "no!" Or is the answer, "not now!" Or is the Maybe it's, "I have a plan in this, and you can't quite see it – but can you trust me?" Hopefully this doesn't sound unfair or calloused. When we remind ourselves that He cares deeply about us, and that He is zealous about what's being accomplished in the deepest recess of our hearts within us, then we can see that the circumstances around us are His tools to accomplish His great purposes.

There could be a season when God "lets us hunger." Let's substitute any need: a certain kind of intimate love that you're hungry for, for a child, for another person's forgiveness, for acceptance in someone's eyes... not to mention a season financial desperation.

Wait, notice the strange parallel. It says he humbled you and let you hunger, and then right after that he fed you with Manna. **Read V.3.** They experienced serious hunger pains, and then God fed them the miracle powder. I can't help but chuckle when I think of this story. Manna, literally means in Hebrew, "what's this?" Can you imagine them looking at each other, stuffing this into their mouths, starving, "what's this?" "I have no idea, man."

The purpose is so clear in the text. God is using this experience **to make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.** God was teaching them at the most basic level [at a deeper level than you knew before] that He is the source of... everything life. Everyone of us knows that truth mentally, but who gets it at a deeper level? The one who has suffered, who's been empty and desperate, and God has filled that void in some way. *He is the source of Everything: life, happiness, satisfaction, and food.*

Nothing will refocus our thoughts like a major humbling experience. But two things can happen. 1) It will either turn someone bitter, or 2) it will expose something in their heart, they'll turn to God for

clarification, and grow deeper in their relationship with the Lord. And in the desert it had that same effect.

Jesus, when hungry for 40 days and tempted by the Devil to turn stones into bread (Matt 4), quoted this verse. He demonstrated the reality of His life, "My food is doing the will of the father who sent me!"

It's probably unlikely that any of us are likely to be humbled by lack of food any time soon (not that that would be a bad thing in America), but can we substitute the idea into other aspects of spiritual growth?

- He humbled you and let you become injured? No one wants that, but how deep was my identity tied up in that thing that was taken away from me? I don't wish that on anyone, but is there an opportunity for spiritual growth, and a re-aligning what really matters. Man does not live by his score card alone... but by the nearness of God in my life.
- He humbled you and let your reputation be destroyed. Did it come to me, or was it of my own doing? Opportunity for spiritual growth and dependence. Man doesn't live by his reputation alone... God I need you!

Some might think, "it sounds like God is out to get me." Does he do this because He's harsh, or because He wants to pulverize them into submission? Does He have any compassion? Look at God's tender provisions in the next verse. It's such a passing thought in this context, but it easily could have been expanded into a chapter if he listed all the good things God did for them. **Their clothing did not wear out, and their feet did not swell these 40 years.** In a tender miracle, God preserved their garments and their feet. This is particularly dear to me, and I think I've shared it a few years ago. I've been in the Sinai desert a few times. It's not a big sand desert like the Sahara. It's mountainous and jagged. It's made of quartz and chert (sharp flint), and every tree has hard thorns. I don't think I've ever been there without catching my shorts, or my shoes on a corner and creating a tear. Regular old tennis shoes get trashed. Everyone of them would have been dressed in total rags within three years. The beating sun is a massive destroyer [Replica of the Tabernacle is totally bleached]. So God was also compassionate. He wanted to humble them, so as to make them "know," both his goodness and severity. But especially, their utter dependence on Him for everything.

[It re-affirms the relationship we have to our heavenly father](#)

God was humbling and testing the nation to bring out what was really in their heart. So, God is rooting out of the heart the wrong thoughts, and then replacing into the heart the truth of a sustaining God, a gracious and compassionate God, and yes sometimes disciplining God. It's compared to a father/son relationship. **V.5-6 - Know then in your heart, that as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.**

Unfortunately, comparing God to broken human fathers needs a little explanation. There's plenty of people that have had bad experiences with harsh and unloving fathers. Maybe some of you hear this and say, "yuck" I remember the anger in my father's eyes as he lost control. Not all of you had a good experience. I did and this analogy works extremely well for me. I hope it works for my children, even with all the mistakes. Once we insert what we know of God here, it's a beautiful relationship. He is in it for the good of His people. His desire is always, ONLY, to bring good to us. His is not personally vindictive, he is slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness. When he disciplines he does it because he cares, just like a loving father truly cares that his son would change. He cares about the motives of his son's heart. A mature father figure understands that it isn't about getting obedience, it's about

training to see him become a trusted and mature man. In the boyish phase, when immaturity overruns good character, he disciplines him, because he knows it's better for him. Maturity is the end goal.

Proverbs 3:12, "For the Lord reproveth him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights."

Heb 12:10, "For they (earthly fathers) disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

There's nothing like a good humbling experience to realign the thoughts of our hearts, and help us refocus on our position before the Lord. We were getting a little big for our britches. Generally, many small humbling opportunities across life are much better than getting away with murder until something major comes crashing down.

- When you feel humbled by God, that's a precious opportunity. God has been working on you! You know he cares for you, and if you look to him and then move forward in His strength, that's a major spiritual victory! [Humbled at Christmas time]

V.16 "He fed you with manna... that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end."

God was doing it for their good! He loves them, not because they were awesome DT 4, but because He chose to put his love on them. And God loves us for that very same reason. Because He decided it in the wisdom of the trinity, before the foundations of the world! That's why. Notice the whole mood change. He's a father that disciplines, just like an earthly father who loves his son.

How sweet the following words would have sounded to someone who had grown up in the desert their whole life **V. 7-10, "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land..."** Notice the 7 fruits of the land of Canaan. It's a land of hills and valleys, cut by flowing streams and abounding with wealth. It's a narrow land bridge so if God allows you to control it you control the wealth of three continents. And wealth is coming to you, and the scarcity of the desert, the bland manna will be replaced with fresh fruits, the days of hunger will cease and become a distant memory. You can almost feel the satisfaction of replacing the dry river beds with perennial streams, the incessant sun for shade and grapevines, and the flaky manna with dates and olives and fruits.

But, just as the desert was dangerous with poisonous snakes and scorpions, the spiritual dangers in the promised land are equally frightening. Moving from the desert to the fat land, we approach a potentially more dangerous enemy.

The real peril was not where they expected it. Anyone could guess that the danger ahead would be in the trials of conquering the new lands, getting a nation set up, getting the necessary "problems solved." That's where we get hung up, and our prayers reflect that when they focus on solving technical problems instead of heart issues. How much does he care about the technical stuff? I don't know. But I do know how much He cares about the heart, and He saw ahead of time what they couldn't see on the edges of the promised land. The real peril to their relationship would come in the form of exploding prosperity, and a life of ease. When the problems are solved, when you have eaten and are full, when you are in your beautiful homes (only a glimmer in your eye in the early days) he says, and gathered large herds... when you are comfortable... heed the words I spoke to you in the plains of Moab.

A forgetful spirit is the starting point of spiritual pride

Keep your eye open for correlation between being forgetful and a haughty spirit. This passage links the seemingly benign aspect of forgetting to a heart that is lifted up – a prideful heart. It's actually a strong warning passage. Forgetfulness is a major enemy! It's a massive tool of the enemy to put distance between us and God. From the enemy's position, distraction is a great tool for slight of hand.

It minimizes the dangers that lurk in the days of ease and comfort

Notice the next verse. **Read v.11-16, Take care lest you forget.** The Lord is all too familiar with the dangerous road of wealth and ease. Do you notice the three areas he addresses? Hard to get closer to home right here. When should we be alert? 1) When our bellies are full (all your physical needs are met), 2) you've build good houses (this summer couldn't be a better time to sell and upgrade to something "a little more comfortable"), 3) your silver and gold is multiplied (stock market at an all time global high). When do we need to be careful? Comfort *can* have a blinding affect on the heart. The mesmerizing feel of success, and the achievement of accomplishing our tangible goals, *can potentially* also lead to heart of forgetfulness. And so it's just a warning – be careful! Not that God doesn't exist – no one would say that. The danger lurks when we just want to relax a bit, entertain ourselves a bit, live the easy life. Once every need is met and the trial of survival has been attained, is there a chance that we allow a change in our *serious* dependence on God.

Here's the solution. *Reminding* ourselves is an active exercise that God asks us to do. What's this bracelet for (kind of sick of it)? Do you know people that do ridiculous things to remind themselves? Remember the memorial stones? Remember Tefillin... remember! Remember the Mezuzah's on every doorpost? Our own mind can bring things to mind, "Hey, remind me to clean up my room this afternoon."

Years later Jeremiah is looks at the smoldering ash heap of Jerusalem in 586 BC, ravaged by the Babylonian army and says, "*This I call to mind*, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end."(Lamentations 3:21–22)

So, the idea here is simple – be on the alert during the days of ease and comfort. There's nothing wrong with days of opulence... however, the Bible repeatedly warns in those days, "be careful!" The influential power of (aka god of) comfort and ease might be a little more powerful in each of our lives that we can fully assess.

[Illust] I generally don't share too many strong personal opinions, but I do have one here that could fit the topic. Debt! It's an issue of contentment.

So let's periodically ask ourselves these questions in the days of comfort:

1. How am I still very dependent even in days of prosperity? Make that a question that periodically flows through your mind and seek to answer it. How am I dependent? Can I just periodically do something just to "remind" myself, that I depend on God.
2. What are the desires I have, that could potentially make me feel like I've arrived? What's that number, what's that accomplishment?

"Calling to mind God's promises" only takes a minutia of time (in the car or during a song). Those reminders (which are given through the Spirit of God), are feeding our minds with the proper mind food.

Being alert and remembering God's centrality in every aspect of life is a spiritual discipline that God asks us to work on. It's replaying God's deeds in our own lives (like watching a re-run of a favorite movie).

It highlights personal success and somehow omits God's involvement

God had sustained their every need in the wilderness, and a new generation was entering the land. The Canaanite forces would soon be completely annihilated. They were scared and they panicked, and God drove them out of their homes before the Israelites even came near. Only three cities were burned by fire (Ai, Hazor, and Megiddo). All the others they walked into! When God swung open the doors, they were conquering heroes! And what they were so thankful for in the first days... they quickly became accustomed to in the succeeding days, and the attitude change.

V. 18 - Beware that you don't say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth..." No one is going to say this out loud, and that's exactly what it says, "lest you say this in your heart..." Man I pulled off a smokin' deal! Look at how much I made through this business decision! I killed it! It's the Olympic final interview (out of breath) "I worked so hard to get to this point and it paid off." All of this is absolutely true, but incomplete. Something's missing. Who got you to that point, who lined everything up? You could have been born in Nigeria. And did He hear you whisper from the depths of your heart, "Lord I owe everything to you. My education, my ability to reason and pursue my dreams... you gave me everything!" Every lineup that got me to this point is from you!

And that's what reminding ourselves constantly does to our soul. It's part of the process of shaping our spirit to receive everything from God's hand, from Him, and return Him glory. Didn't the verse last week just say, "you are not your own, you were bought with a price... so glorify God with your body (1 Cor 6)."

David Powlison has written that "the only way we ever sin is by suppressing God, by forgetting, by tuning out his voice, switching channels, and listening to other voices. When you actually remember, you actually change. In fact, remembering is the first change."

It's not that we deny God. It's more that we didn't make Him a priority, and we got distracted. That's why forgetting to do the assignment isn't a valid excuse. Forgetting isn't something that happens to you. It's a failure to take the action of reminding yourself, making it a priority, and then acting on it as a result.

So here it is again: **V.18 "You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day."**

It's not hard, and as believers this is the thing we love to do more than anything. There's nothing more life giving and fulfilling than giving Him the worship He deserves. Honestly that's why we need church. We're really short changing ourselves without a body of believers surrounding us.

Notice that God gives power and wealth? It's probably ok to interact with Him on this. Just think of all the possible scenarios.

- Some people don't want power, but they are given it. A man finds himself at the helm of a company. What's the believer's responsibility?
- Some people want, but never get it. How do you respond, and what attitudes emerge?

And there's every shade in between. I don't see a reason that we couldn't dialogue with God on this. He's the giver. I feel like I'm growing more and more confident to just be 100% honest with God with

my thoughts and struggles in both of these areas. After all He's going to do whatever He thinks is appropriate, and I'm totally fine with that. I don't know that we can always pull it off, but if someone is totally submitted to God being the giver, we being the receiver, let your needs, requests, desires be prayed in earnest. What has God put on your heart? I'm periodically inspired by people with God's dreams and aspirations that are totally beyond their own capabilities. They have no way to pull it off, but they're asking the one who can make anything happen.

And why wouldn't God, the maker of everything, be more than liberal about everything we need, but also bless us if our desires are submitted to His will. And, all He asks of us to do is perpetually remember, "You have given me everything: house, kids, wife/husband, my arms, my legs, my friendships at church and school... and Lord – I love you." Combine that grateful attitude, with the activity of giving back to God in proportion with the blessings He's given us, and God's floodgates of blessings open wide.

[It makes us vulnerable to worship false gods](#)

V.19-20

The ancients worshiped an image plated in gold and silver. But what's today's invisible god of power or comfort, of learning and knowledge, god of work, god of theology, or sexual fantasy, or the premier god of putting myself before anything.

Conclusion

The Christian objective is not to get us to heaven, which it does, but to build the richest, deepest relationship possible between God and his child during every season of life. To show us that God is intimately involved in our lives. He wants to be near and close, and he wants to remove the things that have the appearance of security (which rob our dependence), and put Him in that place.