

Patterns and Positioning

Zoe Christian Fellowship of Whittier

Darnella Ferguson, Small Groups Ministry Coordinator

Objective: Throughout this lesson, we will explore, provoke thought and receive revelation regarding the patterns that God used to properly position those he chose to either impart knowledge, instruction or uniquely bring about a level of change. One of these patterns can be observed by God's use of the number 40. This number was often used to mark a specific measurement of time. The other pattern involves the mountain! In Mark 11:23, the mountain is figuratively described as an obstacle, however, this lesson will view the mountain in a different light.

There's purpose in these patterns and it's worth giving our full attention.

Key Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 29:29 NIV

29 The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Romans 8:28 NIV

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Week 1:

40 Days and 40 Nights of Taunting (David):

In our May and July life group lessons, we reviewed the story of King David from two different angles. Let's review a third!

Group Discussion: *Were you aware of the number of days Goliath mocked and taunted the Israelite army?*

I Samuel 17:16-17, 24,32 & 37 NIV

16 For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

*17 **Now** Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah^d of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. .*

24 Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled from him in great fear.

32 David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

Patterns and Positioning – AUGUST 2022

37 The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

Group Discussion: Do you think the Israelite army and King Saul would have been as willing to receive help from David prior to the 40-day mark?

Note:

I Samuel 17:16, specifically calls out the number of mornings and nights that Goliath taunted the Israelite army. The timing, in which Jesse told David to deliver lunch and check on his brothers, was at the 40-day mark. By this time, the Israelite army was filled with fear. As stated, in I Samuel 17:24, “Whenever the Israelites saw the man (Goliath), they fled from him with great fear”. The soldiers may have experienced a level of vulnerability and reached a point of hopelessness and helplessness. This was the perfect opportunity for God to prompt Jesse to send David and strategically position him in the right place, at the right time. David’s timely positioning proved to the whole world that there is a God in Israel (I Samuel 17:46).

David’s willingness to stand in this position, also led to David’s overflow (I Samuel 17:25) – great wealth, a new bride and a tax-exempt life in Israel!

40 Days and 40 Nights of Rainfall (Noah):

In the story of Noah, God was not pleased with the wickedness he observed within humanity and scheduled a continuous rainfall (flooding) over all the earth for 40 days and 40 nights.

Group Discussion: What are your immediate memories of this story?

- ***For context, take a moment to read Genesis 6:1-8***

Genesis 6:9, 11, 18 NIV

9 This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence.

18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.

Genesis 7:1, 4, 11, 12, 23 NIV

1 The Lord then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.”

4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.

12 And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

Patterns and Positioning – AUGUST 2022

23 Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

Note:

While, we may never know why God chose the pattern of 40 days and 40 nights, we can observe what occurred during that time. The duration of 40 days and 40 nights appeared to be a time of reset, purging and new beginnings. There was a definite sense of urgency to reposition humanity back into alignment with God, even if it meant nearly starting from scratch.

Positioning was also experienced on a more personal level. In Genesis 6:9, it states that “Noah was a righteous man and found blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God”. The Bible does not state that Noah’s family was found righteous and blameless. However, because Noah properly positioned his life under covenant with God, it also safely positioned and became both a spiritual and physical (ark) covering for his entire family.

Group Discussion:

- **Noah Life reflected Romans 12:2 NIV**, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will”.
- **Is there a clear distinction in the positioning of your life in relation to the world?**
- **Is your life in need of a reset, purging or new beginning?**

Week 2:

40 Days and 40 Nights of Fasting in the Wilderness (Jesus):

Group Discussion: *Why do you think the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil?*

Matthew 4:1-11 NIV

1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’[b]”

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

*“He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’[c]”*

7 Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’[d]”

Patterns and Positioning – AUGUST 2022

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

10 Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’[e]”

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Note:

The Bible states that Jesus was hungry after fasting for 40 days and 40 nights. Could it be that Satan viewed Jesus' hunger as a moment of weakness? Matthew 4:3, indicates that the “tempter came” after his fast, as well as the 40-day mark. What Satan failed to realize was that Jesus' apparent physical “weakness” (hunger) did not equate to the spiritual positioning (fortitude) he'd developed during his time of fasting.

Additionally, prior to Jesus' wilderness experience, he had received power, which was given through the infilling of the Holy Spirit. As Matthew 3:16-17 states, “16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”.

It was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus to the wilderness. By this time, Satan was dealing with God's Spirit-filled son! Jesus sent a strong message to Satan, as he unleashed bold responses beginning with the phrase, “it is written”. This phrase was a direct rebuttal to every temptation Satan tried to bring upon him. Jesus consistently positioned himself with God every time he said it. As a result, he could neither be swayed nor deceived. Per Matthew 4:11, “Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended to him”.

Group Discussion:

- **What benefits have you received from fasting?**
- **Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?**
- **How will you prepare for Satan's inevitable temptations and what will be your response?**

40 Years in the Wilderness (Israelites):

Group Discussion:

Wilderness – A neglected or abandoned area; uncultivated; uninhabitable; wasteland (Oxford Dictionary)

- ***Why do you think the Israelites remained in the wilderness for 40 years?***

Exodus 16:1-3, 7-9 NIV

1 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. 2 In the desert the

Patterns and Positioning – AUGUST 2022

whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

7 and in the morning, you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?” 8 Moses also said, “You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.”

9 Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.’

Deuteronomy 29:1-6, 12 NIV

1 These are the terms of the covenant the Lord commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.

2 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:

Your eyes have seen all that the Lord did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. 3 With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those signs and great wonders. 4 But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. 5 Yet the Lord says, “During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. 6 You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God.”

12 You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God, a covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath.

Note:

During the 40-year time span, God was intentional about showing the Israelites, in very tangible ways, that he was their Lord, true source and preserver. It was God who delivered them from over 400 years of slavery in Egypt, however, based upon the Israelite’s murmuring, it appears that their bodies successfully crossed the Red Sea, but their minds were left behind (as seen in Exodus chapter 16). Their minds were still tethered and tied to slavery. The promise was before them, but they were out of position. Embracing the covenant became a challenge (Deuteronomy 29). It’s difficult to enter into an agreement with someone you are not completely vested in. This 40-year time span became a measurement of time for development, correction and repositioning of the mind.

Week 3:

The Mountain (Jesus):

In the Bible, there is a pattern of location, in which God would position his people to pray and hear from Him.

Patterns and Positioning – AUGUST 2022

- Where did Jesus go after he fed 5000 people with two fish and five loaves?

Matthew 14:23 NIV

23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.

- Where did Jesus go after he taught in the synagogue and healed a man's withered hand?

Luke 6:12 NIV

12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

- Where did Jesus take Peter, James and John when he wanted to share more of himself with them?

Matthew 17:1-13 NIV

1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." 10 And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" 11 He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. 12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also, the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Note:

Jesus routinely stepped away to pray on a mountain and yielded Himself to the voice of God. It appeared to be his place of rest and recharge. He strategically positioned himself to plug into the source.

On the other hand, Peter, James and John experienced something supernatural on the Mount of Transfiguration. The fact that Jesus led them up the mountain, confirms the importance of positioning. Perhaps, they may not have experienced this supernatural moment, if they'd remained on the level, in which they were accustomed (doing life as usual/bottom of the mountain). One might assume that while transfiguration was taking place, transformation followed in the lives of Peter, James and John, as it related to the shifting of their mindset, spiritual vision, faith and level of commitment to Jesus. Change occurs on the mountain!

The Mountain (Elijah):

I Kings 18:19, 42 NIV

19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." 20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

42 So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

NOTE:

Elijah was a prophet of God who also understood the importance of positioning himself on the mountain (I Kings 18:42). In fact, at a time when prophets of God were being hunted and killed, Elijah obediently followed God's instructions and had his enemies meet him there. On Mt. Carmel, Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to prepare their animal sacrifice and call down fire from their god (Baal). These prophets made every attempt to no avail! Elijah simultaneously prepared a separate animal sacrifice with an abundance of water poured on it, because he was aware that God could do the impossible. He operated with a high level of assurance. Elijah's outcome was different. He called on the name of the Lord and fire fell from heaven and completely burned the wet sacrifice. The Israelites who had turned away from God, experienced a repositioning of their hearts, as they turned back to Him.

Group Discussion:

- *Are you striving to walk with the level of assurance that prophet Elijah and Jesus walked in?*
- *Can you recall a moment where God showed Himself mighty in your life, to the point that it impacted a change in someone else's life? Explain.*

Week 4:

The Mountain (Moses):

Here is where the patterns we're discussing, in this lesson, intersect!

Exodus 24:1-18 NIV

1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, 2 but Moses alone is to approach the Lord; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him."

3 When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do." 4 Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. 6 Moses took half of the

Patterns and Positioning – AUGUST 2022

blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.”

8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up 10 and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. 11 But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

12 The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction.”

13 Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. 14 He said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them.”

15 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, 16 and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud. 17 To the Israelites the glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. 18 Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Note:

God called Moses to a higher level of positioning where he remained 40 days and 40 nights. There are moments in our lives when we truly need to hear from God. This often leads to a place of solitude. If you'll notice, in Exodus 24:16, during the first six days that Moses was on the mountain, the cloud hovered, but the Lord said nothing. It was not until the seventh day that the Lord called to Moses and began to give instructions. Could it be that the Lord was waiting on Moses to be in the right position (posture and mindset) to receive? Perhaps, there were distractions, cares or concerns he brought along with him to the mountain, which needed to be released. God required Moses' full attention...just as he requires ours.

We all have an opportunity to go higher. In fact, our mountain may not look like Mt. Sinai, but it can resemble that of a prayer closet, treadmill, morning walk, bubble bath, or bench on the beach. He is calling us to the mountain!

Group Discussion:

- ***How would you describe your mountain?***
- ***Are you positioning yourself, in such a way to remove distractions?***
- ***Has God met you on your mountain? Explain.***