

September 26/27, 2026

"The Desert"

Pastor Jeff Manion



**SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY, + ACT.**

**2026 Focus: 12 Months of Prayer | October: Surrender**

Each month, journey through a different biblical model of prayer.

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## Day 1 [Exodus 15:22–27](#) | Complaint in the Wilderness

*During the Spaces series, Beyond the Weekend will preview the coming weekend's message rather than looking back at the previous one—mirroring our group curriculum and helping prepare our hearts for the upcoming sermon. This week, that means looking ahead to The Wilderness.*

**So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"** Exodus 15:24

Israel's song of victory still rings in their ears. Days earlier, they walked through the Red Sea on dry ground and watched the waters swallow Pharaoh's army ([Exodus 14](#)). The people sang and danced, praising a God with no equal ([Exodus 15:1–21](#)). Now the song fades into the silence of the desert. For three days, they trudge under a blazing sun without finding water. What they finally find at Marah is too bitter to drink. Even with the miracle fresh in their minds, the people grumble against Moses instead of bringing their need to God. Moses responds differently. He cries out to the Lord, and God shows him a piece of wood that makes the water sweet. God tests his people and gives them a promise: "I am the LORD, who heals you" ([Exodus 15:26b](#)). Then he leads them to Elim, an oasis with twelve springs and seventy palm trees. The God who split the sea also cares about their thirst.

Israel's grumbling may surprise us, but we often do the same. Desert seasons come for all of us: grief that won't lift, months of job hunting, the ache of infertility, a sin pattern we can't break, or a dry soul for no clear reason. Complaint comes naturally there. But complaining about God differs from bringing our complaint to him. Moses shows us a better way: lament. Lament tells God what hurts, asks him to move, and lands in trust. God still meets his people in bitter places.

**TODAY:** Bring your complaint to God in lament. Pray: "Lord, this season is so hard. Please provide what I need. I trust you in this space. Amen."

## Day 2 [Numbers 11:4–17](#) | Provision in the Wilderness

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**The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat!"** Numbers 11:4

God's presence has hovered over Israel for a full year. Now the people leave Mount Sinai with his law and instructions for the tabernacle ([Numbers 10](#)). Complaints rise almost immediately. A rabble among them—likely non-Israelites who left Egypt with them—craves meat, and soon the whole camp weeps for the food of Egypt, the place of their slavery. They have God's presence, his direction, and fresh manna every morning, yet they focus on what they lack. Their complaining angers God because they are rejecting his faithful care. The grumbling so overwhelms Moses that he begs God to take his life. God responds with both anger and compassion. He provides quail and appoints seventy elders to help Moses carry the burden of leading the people.

Our culture celebrates independence, but God calls us into deeper dependence on him, one day at a time. Like Israel, we can long for the false security of our old life—the habits, comforts, or control that once felt safe, even when they held us captive. Comparing ourselves to others only feeds our grumbling. But God sends manna one morning at a time so his people learn to trust him for each day's need. Gratitude is the antidote to complaint. It keeps our eyes on God's daily provision and reminds us that every good gift comes from him ([James 1:17](#)). Giving thanks for today's manna teaches us to depend on the God who provides it.

**TODAY:** Give thanks for your daily manna. Before bed, write down three things God provided—something you needed, something you enjoyed, and something you might normally overlook. Thank God for each one by name.

## Day 3 [Matthew 4:1–11](#) | Jesus in the Wilderness

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

Heaven opens over the Jordan River. The Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove as John baptizes him, and the Father declares, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” ([Matthew 3:16–17](#)). Straight from this moment of blessing, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. Jesus fasts for forty days, echoing Israel's forty years in the wilderness. Israel gave in to grumbling and distrust, but Jesus remains faithful. The devil tempts him with bread, spectacle, and power, and each time Jesus answers with Scripture from Deuteronomy. Jesus is fully God and fully human, and in his humanity, he shows complete trust in God's Word. He proves himself the faithful Son that Israel never was.

We face our own desert seasons, too. Loneliness, discontent, and weariness can leave us ready to grumble or give in to sin. Our temptations often fall into three categories: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” ([1 John 2:16](#)). Jesus shows us how to stand firm: “It is written.” God's Word speaks truth when our feelings are loud and reminds us who God is and who we are. Taking in Scripture each day keeps us ready. And when we fall short, we can turn to Jesus, who stayed faithful in our place and offers grace for every failure.

**TODAY:** Hide God's Word in your heart. Memorize [Matthew 4:4](#) and think on it throughout the day. Ask God to help you live by his Word and stand firm in it.

For more encouragement, listen to the *Beyond the Weekend Podcast* as the team discusses last weekend's sermon—find it wherever you listen to podcasts or [watch on YouTube](#).

## Day 4 [Deuteronomy 8:3](#) | Growing in Faithfulness

*During the Spaces series, Beyond the Weekend will preview the coming weekend's message rather than looking back at the previous one—mirroring our group curriculum and helping prepare our hearts for the upcoming sermon. This week, that means looking ahead to The Wilderness.*

**He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.** Deuteronomy 8:3

A new generation stands at the edge of the promised land. Their parents never reached it. After forty years of wandering, they camp on the plains of Moab, ready to cross the Jordan. Moses looks back and reminds them why God let them go hungry before feeding them manna. God was humbling them and teaching them to depend on him instead of themselves, one day at a time. The hunger made room for something greater: real life comes from God's Word. Jesus speaks these same words to the devil ([Matthew 4:4](#)). Where Israel failed to trust God, Jesus trusts his Father's Word above what he can see.

Jesus's faithfulness isn't only something to admire. It's an example we can grow in. We don't become more like Jesus through one big decision. Faithfulness grows through small, consistent practices: prayer, reading God's Word, memorizing Scripture, gathering for weekend services, and serving others. As we turn to Jesus for help each day, the Holy Spirit empowers us to grow in Christlike faithfulness, no matter what hard season or temptation we face. And our faithfulness doesn't just shape us. It strengthens everyone around us.

**TODAY:** Take your next step toward faithfulness. Choose one small practice—reading Scripture, praying, memorizing a verse, or serving someone—and commit to it regularly over the next week. Consider an Ada Bible Academy class on the theology and practice of prayer or cultural apologetics. [Sign up here.](#)



## Day 5 [Proverbs 3:5–6](#) | Prayers of Surrender

*This year in Beyond the Weekend, journey through different biblical models of prayer—one each month. October's focus is Prayers of Surrender: yielding our will to God's will.*

**Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.** Proverbs 3:5–6

King Solomon writes the proverbs to guide his son and all who read them in the way of God's wisdom. Proverbs use short, memorable sayings to teach general truths about right living, not specific promises for every situation. In this proverb, Solomon presents two paths: one crooked, bent by human understanding, and one made straight by trusting God and his ways. He calls his readers to surrender their own understanding and trust the Lord's leading in every area of life, believing God will make their paths straight.

Our natural bent leans toward what we want, not what God wants. It's part of our sin nature. From childhood, we grab for what we desire and resist being told no. Surrender means yielding what we want to God, trusting that his ways are better than we would choose for ourselves. This isn't easy—it means giving up control and admitting that his understanding is greater than ours. Yet when we come to him in prayer, surrendering our

will and submitting to his leading, he promises to direct us. We may not see the path clearly yet or understand why he's leading us where he is, but we can trust that he is making it straight.

**TODAY:** Pray [Proverbs 3:5–6](#). Identify one area of your life where you're holding onto your own will—a decision, a relationship, a fear—and surrender it to God. Ask him to lead you, trusting his path is better than your own.