

## Dependence Day

**THEME:** Yesterday our nation celebrated a holiday that many of us hold very dear. In history classes students learn all about the declaration that put the world on notice- WE are an independent nation. We don't need, or want, anyone to govern us...we'll govern ourselves, thank you very much! Over the years many have sacrificed greatly to maintain this freedom. While Independence Day certainly is a significant day in our nation's history- and worthy of celebration- we must be careful not to let this spirit of independence creep into our relationship with God, and the church he loves.

### ICE BREAKER:

If you are an adult, reflect back upon your childhood- think about the day you owned your first car. What did that event mean in your life? If you are part of a high school/middle school group, share why you believe there is so much anticipation tied to getting your driver's license and the set of keys that will eventually go with it.

### CONVERSATION STARTER:

I spent a good portion of my younger years in Northern Europe. My parents were missionaries in the small country of Belgium. At the age of 10, we came back to the U.S. Later that year I took part in my first 4th of July celebration...complete with a jaw dropping fireworks show- at least it was jaw dropping for a 10 year old boy who had never seen fireworks before. I had already learned earlier that year what the 4th of July meant to this country- INDEPENDENCE! I recall clearly learning the phrase, "no taxation without representation," in an elementary school classroom. The Boston Tea party, in its own right a declaration before the actual Declaration was signed, declared loudly, "We don't need your tea, or anything else of yours for that matter!" For the last several years I have been confronted by a challenging thought: could the independence we hold so dear, and often times consider to be a virtue, actually be a vice in some ways? The early Christian community was a tightly knit group. They were dependent on each other, but more importantly, they were dependent upon God. Is it possible we have allowed some of our desire for independence to affect our attitude toward our relationship with our Heavenly Father?

### THINK:

The theme for this week's group is dependence. How does our culture view the idea of dependence? Is dependence, or independence typically viewed as more virtuous?

I once had a lady approach me, and ask where in the Bible she could find the verse that stated, "God helps those who help themselves..." She was shocked when I told her that this phrase couldn't be found anywhere in scripture, but actually originated in humanistic Greek philosophy, and was later repeated by Benjamin Franklin. Is there Biblical validity to this statement? Are there Scriptural issues with the concept of God helping those who help themselves?

How could our emphasis as a culture on self-reliance actually be a hindrance to a close and meaningful relationship with God?

### EXAMINE:

Read [2 Corinthians 1:8-11](#) to answer the following questions:

As you examine these verses can you recall any of the hardships Paul had to endure that he might be referencing?

What jumps out at you as you read verse 8- especially the second half of the verse?

Does Paul give any indication as to why he believes he and his companions faced these troubles?

What about us? Is it possible that God uses our troubles to teach us to rely on Him? If anyone is comfortable sharing a specific experience in which God taught him or her to **DEPEND** on Him...go for it! (-;

When we fully depend on God, or as Paul puts it, "set our hope on Him," what message do we send to others around us? What message do we send when we fully depend on ourselves?

Read Acts 17:28. To what extent does Paul say that we are dependent upon God?

**THIS WEEK:** As you move through your week, take time to explore the idea of dependence. As you have opportunity in prayer, ask God to teach you to rely on Him. Warning: God often gives us situations that we can't handle when he teaches us to become fully dependent upon Him. But the end result- a heart that fully trusts God for everything- is worth it!