



## Depend

### **Psalm 62:7 NIV**

**My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.**

Are You A Dependent?

Going to Russia to teach there was an exciting adventure each time. Just getting through customs and making it from the airport to the school had its fair share of tense moments. But what really was the most nerve wracking and at times scary was the effort to get from one place in Moscow to another on the Metro. The Metro is a massive subway system constructed in the 1930s and 1940s during the despotic rule of Stalin. It is magnificently effective at moving nearly 13 million Russians through Moscow each day. For an American though who knew no Russian, it was not exactly easy. Stations and maps were in Russian but also spelled out phonetically in English letters. However, I could not always sound out the names of the stations and had a rough time...a terrible time trying to understand the drivers' announcements about upcoming stations so I was nearly always on pins and needles trying to determine when I was supposed to get off the train. The first two years I went, I was totally dependent upon one of my fellow teachers to help me get around. Nearly every night he wanted to go on an adventure somewhere, whether it was to a McDonalds or the Bolshoi Ballet. I had no confidence at all which station I needed to get where we were going and because at many stations, there were several other stations above and below that would lead to other routes and destinations, I was sometimes in a panic to find the right station. As a consequence, I followed my friend like a loyal puppy dog and trusted his judgment unconditionally when he led me around through the maze of underground tunnels leading to the various stations and trains. He often laughed at my inability to figure out what train to take and which station to use because all the routes were color coded...purple lines, green lines, red lines, yellow lines. Here was my great downfall in it. I am partially color blind and

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## **Awakening**

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was rarely certain what color was what. Each subway station was a complete mystery and I was a thoroughly incompetent tourist. I was dependent on my friend to get me where we were going every single time we stepped out and headed off on the Metro. Depend is an interesting term that carries quite a bit of baggage given its close connection to two other words...dependent and depends. "Depends" sounds dicey. It could go one way or another. Depends implies uncertainty, or even chaos. If you asked your parents if you could go to the amusement park or a movie and the reply was, "it depends", you were not happy with the response. You knew you might have to do something or avoid something or it could be completely at the whim of your parents if they wanted to do it or not. A thousand different possibilities might come along that could shipwreck your dreams. Dependent is an even worse term. It indicates that you are immature or incapable. A dependent child or a dependent adult each are weighed down by the fatigue of counting on others constantly to provide help or give direction. Dependents feel like they are enslaved to their youth or their physical infirmities. Dependents lack the basic rights and freedoms non dependents accept as normal. Dependents have to hope they will be heard, helped and accepted and if they aren't, life can be awfully miserable.

Have you ever felt dependent? How did it feel to depend on your parents to take you places...or to buy your clothes...or take you to the doctor? Are you afraid of growing older and being dependent on your children or your grandchildren to take care of you? Are you excited about the prospect of living in a nursing home and depending on the staff to clean you or take you to the bathroom or fix your meals? Do you want to be dependent on the government to buy groceries or have medical care? Is it a good thing to be dependent on someone's insurance company to repair your damaged car? Do you feel good about the US being dependent on foreign oil? What are your thoughts on being dependent?

In the Bible, we see dependence cutting both ways. Some chose to be dependent upon God others didn't. Peter had no problem crying out to Jesus for help when he started to sink while attempting to walk on water with him. The waves and wind were too much to bear...**Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"** (Matthew 14:29-30 NIV) Hannah also, the childless wife, wept passionately in dependence, crying out for God to give her a baby. **In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."** (1 Samuel 1:10-11 NIV)

The rich young ruler on the other hand was not willing to be completely dependent upon Christ for his happiness and peace. When challenged to sell all he had and give it to the poor and follow as a dependent, he would not. **When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.** (Matthew 19:22 NIV) In the same way, Judas Iscariot could not depend on Jesus or would not and took matters into his own hands by betraying Him. Lest we forget, Judas at one time chose to follow Christ, chose to go with Him through the towns of Galilee and Samaria but when it came time to put

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his life in Jesus' hands he would not. And even at the end, when the horror of what he had done was upon him, Judas would not allow himself to depend upon Jesus for forgiveness. He took matters into his own hands and hung himself. Moses however when faced with a terrifying circumstance did not hesitate to beg God for help. If it were not such a horrifying moment and in the end extraordinary, Moses might have laughed at himself. With Pharaoh and his army of chariot warriors barreling down upon him and the people of Israel, Moses reassured the Hebrews that everything would be ok. **Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."** (Exodus 14:13-14 NIV) "Quite trusting", we would say if we were there. "Bold." "Courageous!" Yet that is not the total story there. Apparently, Moses was full of faith when standing before the people but when he got away from them, Moses fell to begging for God's help. **Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.** (Exodus 14:15-16 NIV) Moses was a picture of calm and assurance as long as he stood before the leaders of Israel but once he got away from them, he fell apart in a heap of panicked dependence. Have we not also been there when the great crisis hits, feeling and acting secure on the outside but desperate for help within?

There is a clear picture in the Bible that tell us how things ought to be when we are aware of God's presence...that He exists and works for our good. It is found in Jeremiah 2: 13. **My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.** (NIV) We might not consider the two sins egregious; in fact we probably would hail the second as true moxie, the sort of behavior we expect of strong, hardworking people. Yet both are anathema to the God who really is Lord and Master over all. The accusation is simple. The people stopped looking to God for help, stopped expecting Him to empower them, innervate them. He was forgotten and ignored; at least as it pertained to the everyday struggles and stresses of life. The people had strategies and resources and organizations to work out whatever problems and obstacles they faced. God was irrelevant. If you have marital problems, then see a counselor, live in separate bedrooms or find someone else. If you need a job, send out your resumes, build business alliances, and make connections. If your kids are struggling in school, hire a tutor, talk with the teacher, berate your child, and spend extra time working with him. If you are upset with someone, then fume, talk about the person's faults, avoid her or pay her back somehow. If you have financial problems, then worry, get a second job, complain about all your struggles, take out your frustrations on others, buy lotto tickets or read books on how to start your own business. Every part of life has as its endpoint what I can or cannot do. I figure out a way to get things done or fail in the effort.

God makes it clear that we have settled for a rotten substitute; doing things without the Lord at the center of all we do. The metaphor is stunning. Clear, mountain spring water is offered but we accept musty, grimy water stored in an earthen cistern that leaks. Sometimes the muddy water is there to drink, other times even that filthy water is gone. We certainly can build our lives without God and we will die doing it. Or we can go to Him for help and direction and empowerment constantly and have a life that busts out of

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its shell; that throws off its constraints of talent and intelligence and training and goes beyond itself, transcends itself.

When we drink from the cisterns we construct, we are the sum of our parts, nothing more and nothing less. But when we are drinking living water bubbling up out of God, then we are beyond ourselves. We can have a joy that we cannot produce, a peace we cannot concoct and we will do things we cannot accomplish. When the God of the Universe enters the relationship, the dilemma, the task, the struggle or the question, we are in as different a situation as the thirsty man choosing between a clear, cold mountain stream or a dug out hole in the ground with some muddy water pooled at the bottom. When we go to God with anything whatsoever, the entire situation changes. Dependence on Christ is an upgrade to first class, a shift from public transportation to a brand new Jaguar. Would you rather have an outhouse or a bathroom with running water inside your home? It really is as simple as that. The turning to Christ is the most important and logical decision you can make regardless of the situation. Jesus Christ reworks the circumstance both within us and outside us each time we call Him to us. God did not part the Red Sea until Moses stretched out His hand over the sea. God will leave you alone if you do not call out to Him.

You have two choices at every spot in your life. Depend on God or don't. If you depend on God, then He will enter that moment and change everything that you face. If you don't depend upon God, then it all stays as it is and you are left with only your own intelligence and abilities. Practice depend this week. Before you start dinner, depend. Before you get in the car, depend. Before you get online, depend. Before you walk into work, depend. Before you check in on your kids, depend. Before you enter the market, depend. Before you start to pray or read your Bible, depend. Before you start to work on your engine or your paper or your friendship, depend. You are not better off alone and on your own. Upgrade each part of your life. Depend!

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