

1983 U2 Track Stands as One of Rock's Greatest Songs Inspired by the Bible.

<https://parade.com/entertainment/1983-u2-track-stands-rocks-greatest-songs-inspired-by-the-bible-40>. Sep 6, 2026, By Lucille Barilla, Entertainment Writer, Parade.

When U2 was putting the final touches on their 1983 album *War*, they were literally running out of studio time and needed one last song. Lead singer Bono opened a Bible to Psalm 40 and started singing the verses right off the page. The result was the song “40,” which morphed into a raw, spiritual track that turned an ancient prayer into one of the most unforgettable concert closers in rock history. According to a 2024 post on the band’s official blog, Bono explained the song’s origins during the band’s residency at the Las Vegas Venue, The Sphere. He shared how matter of fact its creation was. “It’s been 40 days and 40 nights in the desert. What’s a fella with a messianic complex gonna do?” Bono began. This is a song we wrote in 40 minutes. We had 40 minutes left on the *War* album to record,” he concluded. “I opened up the sacred text to the Psalm of David and just kind of read it out. That was the lyric. This is ‘40.’” The lyrics are a psalm of praise. “I will sing, sing a new song. I will sing, sing a new song. How long to sing this song? How long to sing this song?” According to Songfacts, U2’s bass player Adam Clayton was unavailable when they recorded “40.” Therefore, The Edge played both guitar and bass. Larry Mullen Jr. drummed. The song became an instant fan favourite and a concert closer. For many years, the band ended their live shows with the tune, and as each member walked offstage, Mullen remained to play out the song’s remaining beats. Bono said in an undated interview, as reprinted by Far Out Magazine, “I didn’t really begin spending a lot of time on lyrics until halfway into the ‘80s, so this and a lot of the early songs were written very quickly – in just minutes in many cases.” Fans of the band continue to call this song “special.” There is an entire Reddit thread dedicated to why this is so. “One time I saw U2 way back in the day they closed with ‘40.’ The entire stadium walked out singing. Absolutely amazing experience,” one penned. A second wrote, “If you experienced it live...It sticks with you.” A third listener agreed, “I am not remotely religious- the opposite, in fact. Even when I became a fan in the ‘80’s as a teen. That said, this song has always been beautiful, and as others have mentioned, hearing it and singing along to it live is an incredible experience.” More than four decades later, “40” hasn’t lost an ounce of its quiet power. By taking an ancient song of hope and turning it into a vulnerable, arena-sized prayer, U2 proved that the oldest stories can still speak directly to modern listeners.