



Into the Wilderness – Understanding & Embracing the Dark Times of Your Life

Words translated as “wilderness” occur nearly 300 times in the Bible. Wilderness seasons are brutal, but God is powerfully at work in the wilderness seasons of our lives. The only question is, do we have eyes to see it?

In order for God to give us the choice whether or not to trust him, He must present us with a moment of crisis, and, since he wants us to seek help from Him, he brings us through the wilderness to remove all other help first. When we’re in a wilderness season, it’s easy to lose sight of God’s protection, provision, and preparation. We might even wonder, “How can I trust God’s goodness when I’m in this desolate place?” But remember Jesus! He went through the ultimate wilderness—the desolation and humiliation of dying under the curse of God. If that is the measure of God’s love and commitment to us, we can trust him in our own wilderness seasons. Let’s journey together!

Highland Colony Men’s Roundtable

www.MensTable.com

Wilderness: What’s the Point?

February 13, 2020

A Man Understands how God uses the wilderness to shape and train.

Bible Verses: I Peter 4:1,2; Numbers 13:17-33; Numbers 14:1-9; Hebrews 11:6; II Corinthians 11:23-29; Psalm 44:17-24

Music: Alan Jackson - The Old Rugged Cross
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JS9P8d2iOc>

Videos: Band Of Brothers – Disc One – Part 2 – Day of Days

Resources: *Walking with God through Pain & Suffering* by Timothy Keller.

Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores by Diane Langberg.

Restoring the Shattered Self – A Christian’s Counselor’s Guide to Complex Trauma by Heather Davediuk Gingrich.

Into the Wilderness: What’s the point?

1. _____ → The Lord delivered His people from Egyptian bondage as described in Exodus 1-12. They were to take possession of the land God had promised their forefathers, a land “flowing with milk and honey” (Exd. 3:8). But the Israelites were convinced they could not oust the current inhabitants of the land, even though God told them they could. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until the unbelieving generation died off.
2. _____ → Upon arrival at Kadesh-Barnea, which bordered the Promised Land of Canaan, they sent out 12 spies to survey the land and its peoples (Numbers 13:17-33). They returned after forty days of exploration. Only Joshua and Caleb believed God (Numbers 14:6-9). The people believed the 10 doubters, the people lost heart and rebelled (Numbers 14:1,2).
3. _____ → God promised victory. God will never lead us where His grace cannot provide for us or His power cannot protect us. The Israelites had seen the powerful hand of God at work during the plagues and miracles of the Exodus. Yet, they walked by sight and not by faith (Hebrews 11:6).

Into the Wilderness: Suffering Leads to Growth.

1. _____ → Suffering produces fruit. Men who have not suffered much are often shallow, unacquainted with both their weaknesses and strengths, naïve about human nature and life, and almost always fragile and unresilient. Suffering does not deepen and enrich us automatically.
2. _____ → Both images—of a furnace and of a gymnasium—reveal that suffering can lead to ruin or growth. Fire in the furnace can kill, and gymnasiums can severely injure. “The same sun that melts wax hardens clay.” The same traumatic experience can ruin one person and make another person stronger and even happier.
3. _____ → The Bible does not teach a “one-size-fits-all” prescription for handling suffering. Not only does suffering come in so many different forms but sufferers themselves come with so many different kinds of temperaments and spiritual conditions.

Into the Wilderness: Four Kinds of Suffering.

1. _____ → There is suffering caused by our own bad behavior. Jonah, the prophet endured two very different but traumatic experiences. First, God sent a massive, life-threatening storm at sea. Later, Jonah was upset that God destroyed the plant that was giving shade. Jonah was filled with a racist hatred of God saving the Ninevites. David had an affair with another man’s wife, and he arranged to have her husband killed. Psalm 19:12 -“ Cleanse me from hidden faults.” We wrestle with repentance.
2. _____ → There is the suffering caused by good and brave behavior. Such behavior may be the occasion of betrayal or attacks from others. Paul’s suffering – II Cor. 11:23-29. Jeremiah was unfairly imprisoned (Jer. 20:1-6. This kind of suffering causes us to wrestle with the issues of forgiveness.
3. _____ → Some suffering will crush you with grief. Some have called this kind of suffering “universal” because it eventually comes to everyone, no matter your behavior, good or bad. It is grief and loss in the face of mortality, decay, and death. Jesus comforts Mary and Martha in the loss of their brother, Lazarus. This suffering invites us to direct our minds and hearts to the various forms of comfort and hope that their faith offers them (I Thess. 4:13 & II Cor. 4:16-18).
4. _____ → This is the mysterious, unlooked for, and horrendous suffering that people most often call “senseless.” This is the suffering of Job. Psalm 44:17-24 is a cry to God – “WHY?” Job-type suffering requires a process of honest prayer and crying, the hard work of deliberate trust in God, and what St. Augustine called a re-ordering of our loves.

ACTION: Journal this!

1. What question would you ask God about your suffering?
2. Has suffering helped you to trust God?
3. Who do you know that is in the wilderness NOW?

Bible Verses – The Message

I Peter 4:1,2 - 1 Since Jesus went through everything you're going through and more, learn to think like him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. 2 Then you'll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want.

Numbers 13:17-33 - 17 When Moses sent them off to scout out Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and then into the hill country. 18 Look the land over, see what it is like. Assess the people: Are they strong or weak? Are there few or many? 19 Observe the land: Is it pleasant or harsh? Describe the towns where they live: Are they open camps or fortified with walls? 20 And the soil: Is it fertile or barren? Are there forests? And try to bring back a sample of the produce that grows there - this is the season for the first ripe grapes." 21 With that they were on their way. They scouted out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob toward Lebo Hamath. 22 Their route went through the Negev Desert to the town of Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, descendants of the giant Anak, lived there. Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. 23 When they arrived at the Eshcol Valley they cut off a branch with a single cluster of grapes - it took two men to carry it - slung on a pole. They also picked some pomegranates and figs. 24 They named the place Eshcol Valley (Grape-Cluster-Valley) because of the huge cluster of grapes they had cut down there. 25 After forty days of scouting out the land, they returned home. 26 They presented themselves before Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation of the People of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They reported to the whole congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 Then they told the story of their trip: 28 The only thing is that the people who live there are fierce, their cities are huge and well fortified. Worse yet, we saw descendants of the giant Anak. 29 Amalekites are spread out in the Negev; Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites hold the hill country; and the Canaanites are established on the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan." 30 Caleb interrupted, called for silence before Moses and said, "Let's go up and take the land - now. We can do it." 31 But the others said, "We can't attack those people; they're way stronger than we are." 32 They spread scary rumors among the People of Israel. They said, "We scouted out the land from one end to the other - it's a land that swallows people whole. Everybody we saw was huge. 33 Why, we even saw the Nephilim giants (the Anak giants come from the Nephilim). Alongside them we felt like grasshoppers. And they looked down on us as if we were grasshoppers."

Numbers 14:1-9 - 1 The whole community was in an uproar, wailing all night long. 2 All the People of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The entire community was in on it: "Why didn't we die in Egypt? Or in this wilderness? 3 Why has God brought us to this country to kill us? Our

wives and children are about to become plunder. Why don't we just head back to Egypt? And right now!" 4 Soon they were all saying it to one another: "Let's pick a new leader; let's head back to Egypt." 5 Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in front of the entire community, gathered in emergency session. 6 Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, members of the scouting party, ripped their clothes 7 and addressed the assembled People of Israel: "The land we walked through and scouted out is a very good land - very good indeed. 8 If God is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land that flows, as they say, with milk and honey. And he'll give it to us. 9 Just don't rebel against God! And don't be afraid of those people. Why, we'll have them for lunch! They have no protection and God is on our side. Don't be afraid of them!"

Hebrews 11:6 - 6 It's impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him.

II Corinthians 11:23-29 - 23 Are they servants of Christ? I can go them one better. (I can't believe I'm saying these things. It's crazy to talk this way! But I started, and I'm going to finish.) 24 I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, 25 beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times, and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. 26 In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. 27 I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather. 28 And that's not the half of it, when you throw in the daily pressures and anxieties of all the churches. 29 When someone gets to the end of his rope, I feel the desperation in my bones. When someone is duped into sin, an angry fire burns in my gut.

Psalms 44:17-24 - 17 All this came down on us, and we've done nothing to deserve it. 18 Our hearts were never false, our feet never left your path. 19 Do we deserve torture in a den of jackals? or lockup in a black hole? 20 If we had forgotten to pray to our God or made fools of ourselves with store-bought gods, 21 Wouldn't God have figured this out? We can't hide things from him. 22 No, you decided to make us martyrs, lambs assigned for sacrifice each day. 23 Get up, God! Are you going to sleep all day? Wake up! Don't you care what happens to us? 24 Why do you bury your face in the pillow? Why pretend things are just fine with us?

The Old Rugged Cross – By Alan Jackson

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest
and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true,
It's shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then he'll call me some day to my home far
away,
Where his glory forever I'll share.

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1 Peter 4:1-2

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2. **We Can Do It** → Upon arrival at Kadesh-Barnea, which bordered the Promised Land of Canaan, they sent out 12 spies to survey the land and its peoples (Numbers 13:17-33). They returned after forty days of exploration. Only Joshua and Caleb believed God (Numbers 14:6-9). The people believed the 10 doubters, the people lost heart and rebelled (Numbers 14:1,2).
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