



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: A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words! - I Peter 4:1-2; Numbers 21:1-9.
A Man Understands how God uses the wilderness to shape and train.

June 25, 2020

Bible Verses: I Peter 4:1,2; Numbers 21:1-9; John 3:10-21; John 19:38-42; Ephesians 4:20-24

Music: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus - Selah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3NIYNKvZfQ>

Videos: Band Of Brothers Concentration Camp Clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ9G16kYXuU>

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: How a Snake points us to Jesus! - Numbers 21:1-9.

1. _____ → One of many incidents in which the Israelites complained about their circumstances on their journey to the promised land. God punished their impatience and lack of faith by sending venomous “fiery serpents” into the camp (Num. 21:6).
2. _____ → After many fatalities, the people begged Moses to intercede with God on their behalf. God relented and instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. Anyone bitten by a serpent would be healed by gazing at the bronze serpent. Why didn’t God heal the people directly? Remember: Symbol is always greater than reality.
3. _____ → God is not a God with whom to trifle. He could punish faithlessness by commanding the forces of nature—sending venomous serpents against the Israelites. But He also had the power to reverse the effects, offering His divine healing through a bronze serpent. Healing came with one condition: The Israelites had to exercise faith in the offer.
4. _____ → God sent a plague of snakes, venomous snakes, and they bit them and they were dying. And in a sense, the venom represented sin in their life. Basically, the venom represented in their bodies what was killing them in their soul. And what Moses was told to do was to take a bronze serpent—an image of the thing that was killing them—put it up on a pole (you know, “as Moses lifted up the serpent”), and all they had to do was look... because some of them were so sick, and so immobilized, they couldn’t possibly go over to it and rub it or touch it or any of that. All you have to do is look. And this text says *that’s* an image of what it means to repent and believe.

Into the Wilderness: Jesus is the Way! - John 3:10-21; John 19:38-42.

1. _____ → To believe, to repent, the repentance that brings about eternal life. Repentance that’s consonant with the new birth is repentance that doesn’t just say “I’m sorry for my sins,” but also “I’m sorry for all the things I thought were righteous but really were just filthy rags.” And faith—the faith that brings eternal life, the faith that’s consonant with the new birth—is to see the costly grace of Christ and to rest in it. To see that it’s his works that have saved us. And the results of his suffering he shall see and he’ll be satisfied. Repent and believe, and you will be saved. You must be born again!
2. _____ → “What is the sign of the new birth? How can you tell somebody has been born again?” Every theologian who understands anything about the Bible has always said: “Changed life.” We’re saved by faith alone, but not by faith which remains alone. We’re saved not by our works. We’re saved by faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone. But if you really are saved, it always results in a changed life. Always. Now when you get to the end of John 19, what do you see? You see Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea asking for the body of Jesus Christ and then personally dressing the body for burial. And you start to ask yourself, “Wait a minute. What’s going on here?” Now, this is no proof. I am not trying to say that this is proof that Nicodemus was born again, but there is something going on.

Into the Wilderness: The Dance of Life – Repent – Believe – Fight!

1. _____ → The most integrated model of discipleship, Christ-centered mentoring, must be seen in terms of a waltz—a three-step dance to spiritual growth. the first step of the waltz is “repent.” As believers are encouraged to live in the love of God, we become open to seeing that all Christian growth begins with an awareness of sin, failure, weakness, and an understanding of our desperate need to be changed. We must repent—acknowledge our brokenness & failures and turn to a better way.
2. _____ → The second element of the dance is to appropriate. Believers must be taught and reminded continually to appropriate the power of the blood of Christ at the particular point of repentance. In other words, just as those of us who know Jesus and have been saved from eternal condemnation have experienced the converting power of the blood, we Christians must realize the transforming power of the blood of Christ as well. We are to appropriate —to grab hold of by faith and make our own—by the power of the Holy Spirit, the transforming value of the blood of Christ at our particular point of repentance. Ultimately, we are not changed by simply trying harder. As the late theologian Francis Schaeffer taught so ably in his book *True Spirituality*, we are changed by trusting God to apply the “present value of the blood of Christ” to our daily lives. This model of discipleship keeps people rooted in the supernatural, not in themselves. We are to believe in and claim the reality that God is at work, and that the power of Christ’s blood will not fail.
3. _____ → The final element of the waltz is the “fight” step once we’ve acknowledged our sin and our helplessness; preached ourselves to the point of encouragement concerning our legal and positional standing before God in Christ (realizing that we’re non-condemnable), which does not change; and appropriated the power of the blood to change us at our point of sin; we are now indeed called to exercise our renewed wills to make choices to follow Christ in new obedience. Paul’s letters clearly call the Christian to engage the will to present ourselves as slaves to righteousness. We are called by Paul to put off the old self and to put on the new self (Eph. 4:22–

24). The author of Hebrews charges us to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb.12:14). Peter calls us to make every effort to add to our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love (2 Peter 1:5). though it is true that the Father does not delight in us because of our obedience but rather on account of our union with Christ, all our actions and attitudes either are or are not objectively pleasing to God based on the clear commands of Scripture.

ACTION: Journal this!

1. What reminds you of what is most valuable to you?
2. How are you engaged in the fight to keep what is valuable to you?
3. Who do you know that's in the wilderness NOW?

Bible Verses – The Message

1 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 21:1-9 - 1 The Canaanite king of Arad, ruling in the Negev, heard that Israel was advancing up the road to Atharim. He attacked Israel and took prisoners of war. **2** Israel vowed a vow to God: "If you will give this people into our power, we'll destroy their towns and present the ruins to you as a holy destruction." **3** God listened to Israel's prayer and gave them the Canaanites. They destroyed both them and their towns, a holy destruction. They named the place Hormah (Holy Destruction). **4** They set out from Mount Hor along the Red Sea Road, a detour around the land of Edom. The people became irritable and cross as they traveled. **5** They spoke out against God and Moses: "Why did you drag us out of Egypt to die in this godforsaken country? No decent food; no water - we can't stomach this stuff any longer." **6** So God sent poisonous snakes among the people; they bit them and many in Israel died. **7** The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke out against God and you. Pray to God; ask him to take these snakes from us." Moses prayed for the people. **8** God said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it on a flagpole: Whoever is bitten and looks at it will live." **9** So Moses made a snake of fiery copper and put it on top of a flagpole. Anyone bitten by a snake who then looked at the copper snake lived.

John 3:10-21 - 10 Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? **11** Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. **12** If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God? **13** "No one has ever gone up into the presence of God except the One who came down from that Presence, the Son of Man. **14** In the same way that Moses lifted the serpent in the desert so people could have something to see and then believe, it is necessary for the Son of Man to be lifted up - **15** and everyone who looks up to him, trusting and expectant, will gain a real life, eternal life. **16** "This is how much

God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. **17** God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. **18** Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him. **19** "This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. **20** Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. **21** But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is."

John 19:38-42 - 38 After all this, Joseph of Arimathea (he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, because he was intimidated by the Jews) petitioned Pilate to take the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission. So Joseph came and took the body. **39** Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus at night, came now in broad daylight carrying a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. **40** They took Jesus' body and, following the Jewish burial custom, wrapped it in linen with the spices. **41** There was a garden near the place he was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been placed. **42** So, because it was Sabbath preparation for the Jews and the tomb was convenient, they placed Jesus in it.

Ephesians 4:20-24 - 20 But that's no life for you. You learned Christ! **21** My assumption is that you have paid careful attention to him, been well instructed in the truth precisely as we have it in Jesus. **22** Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything - and I do mean everything - connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life - a God-fashioned life, **23** a life renewed from the inside **24** and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you.

"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus by Selah

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And the things of Earth will grow strangely dim
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