



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: Hearing the Voice of God! - I Peter 4:1-2; Numbers 22:21-38

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

July 02, 2020

Bible Verses: I Peter 4:1,2; Numbers 22:1-6; Numbers 22:21-38; Nehemiah 13:1-3; Galatians 3:10-14; II Peter 2:15-16; Isaiah 55:1-3; Hebrews 4:12

Music: MERCY ME - WORD OF GOD SPEAK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYu8ZyETnKo>

Videos: Band of Brothers - Church scene

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_kjryymZY

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: Listen! Listen! Listen! – Numbers 21:28-35.

1. _____ → The King of Moab recognized God’s power in Balaam’s words – see Numbers 22:1-6.
2. _____ → God informs Balaam that he has chosen Israel as a blessed nation and commands Balaam neither to go to Moab nor to curse Israel (Num. 22:12). However, after multiple embassies from the king of Moab, Balaam agrees to go to Moab. His hosts try to bribe him to curse Israel, but Balaam warns them that he will do only what the Lord commands (Num. 22:18). God seems to agree with this plan, but as Balaam rides his donkey toward Moab, an angel of the Lord blocks his way three times.
3. _____ → God spoke to Balaam as clearly and directly as to Israel’s own prophets and priests. Even more surprising—both to Israel and to Balaam himself—is that God’s guidance at the crucial moment came to him through the mouth of an animal, a lowly donkey. In two surprising ways, we see that God’s guidance comes not from the sources most favored by people, but from the sources God chooses himself. If God chooses to speak through the words of a potential enemy or even a beast of the field, we should pay attention.
4. _____ → It becomes easy to believe that God is telling us exactly what we already thought. Leaders often reinforce this by surrounding themselves with a narrow band of like-minded deputies and advisors. Perhaps we are more like Balaam than we would like to believe. But by God’s grace, could we somehow learn to listen to what God might be saying to us, even through people we don’t trust or sources we don’t agree with?

Into the Wilderness: Lessons from a Donkey!

1. _____ → Israel was undeserving of the curse that Balak wanted to put on the nation, and the Lord transformed the curse into a great blessing. Today, He often does the same when we are suffering. But the glory of His grace is seen in salvation — His will to take the curse that He has justly pronounced on our guilt and make for us a blessing (Nehemiah 13:1-3). We deserve the greatest curse for breaking His covenant, but God has taken the curse off His people and placed it on another, giving us the great blessing of salvation in exchange (Gal. 3:10–14).
2. _____ → That Balaam affirms his desire to obey God and goes with the king’s men when God commands him to do so (Num. 22:8–21) might make us question his greed. However, God’s anger towards Balaam even when he obeys (v. 22) shows us that indeed Balaam’s motivations were not godly (II Peter 2:15-16).
3. _____ → God sometimes gives spiritual gifts to those who are not truly His, as we see in the case of Balaam’s prophecies in Numbers 22–24. Unless the gifts and talents are accompanied by the love of God and love for God, they are ultimately worthless. Love, in the sense spoken of by Paul, is uniquely Christian. The Greek word for it is *agape* (pronounced “ah- GAH-pay”). Ordinary affection between people is called *phileo* (“phi-LEH-oh”). In the New Testament, agape love is regarded as a gift, as the accompaniment of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The wellspring of love is the Holy Spirit dwelling in us

Into the Wilderness: Hearing the Voice of God!

1. _____ → See Isaiah 55:1-5. God has a passion for being heard. Many voices clamor for our attention, and we need His voice to rise above the noise and confusion. God will cut through the haunting voice of our *shame*. Sometimes the “what if’s” and “if only’s” of our past paralyze our ability to hear from Him clearly. We long for God to speak with more authority than our *fears*.
2. _____ → “God told me.” Danger! When we read Scripture we are not just reading a record of what God has said in the past. God actively speaks to us in the here and now through the words of this amazing book. The writer of Hebrews makes this point clear when he quotes Old Testament passages and presents them not as something God said to his people sometime in the past, but as something God is currently saying to his people (Hebrews 1:6,7,8, 2:12, 3:7, 4:7). He writes that “the word of God is living and active” (4:12).

ACTION: Journal this!

1. How do you listen to God? When have you heard His voice?
2. How important is prayer and Bible reading to your relationship with God?
3. Who do you know that’s 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 22:1-6 - 1 The People of Israel marched on and camped on the Plains of Moab at Jordan-Jericho. **2** Balak son of Zippor learned of all that Israel had done to the Amorites. **3** The people of Moab were in a total panic because of Israel. There were so many of them! They were terrorized. **4** Moab spoke to the leaders of Midian: "Look, this mob is going to clean us out - a bunch of crows picking a carcass clean." **5** sent emissaries to get Balaam son of Beor, who lived at Pethor on the banks of the Euphrates River, his homeland. **6** Come and curse them for me - they're too much for me. Maybe then I can beat them; we'll attack and drive them out of the country. You have a reputation: Those you bless stay blessed; those you curse stay cursed."

Numbers 22:21-38 - 21 Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went off with the noblemen from Moab. **22** As he was going, though, God's anger flared. The angel of God stood in the road to block his way. Balaam was riding his donkey, accompanied by his two servants. **23** When the donkey saw the angel blocking the road and brandishing a sword, she veered off the road into the ditch. Balaam beat the donkey and got her back on the road. **24** But as they were going through a vineyard, with a fence on either side, **25** the donkey again saw God's angel blocking the way and veered into the fence, crushing Balaam's foot against the fence. Balaam hit her again. **26** God's angel blocked the way yet again - a very narrow passage this time; there was no getting through on the right or left. **27** Seeing the angel, Balaam's donkey sat down under him. Balaam lost his temper; he beat the donkey with his stick. **28** Then God gave speech to the donkey. She said to Balaam: "What have I ever done to you that you have beat me these three times?" **29** Balaam said, "Because you've been playing games with me! If I had a sword I would have killed you by now." **30** The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your trusty donkey on whom you've ridden for years right up until now? Have I ever done anything like this to you before? Have I?" He said, "No." **31** Then God helped Balaam see what was going on: He saw God's angel blocking the way, brandishing a sword. Balaam fell to the ground, his face in the dirt. **32** God's angel said to him: "Why have you beaten your poor donkey these three times? I have come here to block your way because you're getting way ahead of yourself. **33** The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she hadn't, I would have killed you by this time, but not the donkey. I would have let her off." **34** Balaam said to God's angel, "I have sinned. I had no idea you were standing in the road blocking my way. If you don't like what I'm doing, I'll head back." **35** But God's angel said to Balaam, "Go ahead and go with them. But only say what I tell you to say - absolutely no other word." And so Balaam continued to go with Balak's nobles. **36** When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him in the Moabite town that was on the banks of the Arnon, right on the boundary of his land. **37** Balak said to Balaam, "Didn't I send an urgent message for help? Why didn't you come when I called? Do you think I can't pay you enough?" **38** Balaam said to Balak, "Well, I'm here now. But I can't tell you just anything. I can speak only words that God gives me - no others."

Nehemiah 13:1-3 - 1 Also on that same day there was a reading from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. It was found written there that no Ammonite or Moabite was permitted to enter the congregation of God, **2** because they hadn't welcomed the People of Israel with food and drink; they even hired Balaam to work against them by cursing them, but our God turned the curse into a blessing. **3** When they heard the reading of The Revelation, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.

Galatians 3:10-14 - 10 And that means that anyone who tries to live by his own effort, independent of God, is doomed to failure. Scripture backs this up: "Utterly cursed is every person who fails to carry out every detail written in the Book of the law." **11** The obvious impossibility of carrying out such a moral program should make it plain that no one can sustain a relationship with God that way. The person who lives in right relationship with God does it by embracing what God arranges for him. Doing things for God is the opposite of entering into what God does for you. Habakkuk had it right: "The person who believes God, is set right by God - and that's the real life." **12** Rule-keeping does not naturally evolve into living by faith, but only perpetuates itself in more and more rule-keeping, a fact observed in Scripture: "The one who does these things [rule-keeping] continues to live by them." **13** Christ redeemed us from that self-defeating, cursed life by absorbing it completely into himself. Do you remember the Scripture that says, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"? That is what happened when Jesus was nailed to the Cross: He became a curse, and at the same time dissolved the curse. **14** And now, because of that, the air is cleared and we can see that Abraham's blessing is present and available for non-Jews, too. We are all able to receive God's life, his Spirit, in and with us by believing - just the way Abraham received it.

II Peter 2:15-16 - 15 They've left the main road and are directionless, having taken the way of Balaam, son of Beor, the prophet who turned profiteer, a connoisseur of evil. **16** But Balaam was stopped in his wayward tracks: A dumb animal spoke in a human voice and prevented the prophet's craziness.

Isaiah 55:1-3 - 1 "Hey there! All who are thirsty, come to the water! Are you penniless? Come anyway - buy and eat! Come, buy your drinks, buy wine and milk. Buy without money - everything's free! **2** Why do you spend your money on junk food, your hard-earned cash on cotton candy? Listen to me, listen well: Eat only the best, fill yourself with only the finest. **3** Pay attention, come close now, listen carefully to my life-giving, life-nourishing words. I'm making a lasting covenant commitment with you, the same that I made with David: sure, solid, enduring love.

Hebrews 4:12 - 12 God means what he says. What he says goes. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, laying us open to listen and obey.

"Word Of God Speak" by MercyMe

I'm finding myself at a loss for words
And the funny thing is it's okay
The last thing I need is to be heard
But to hear what You would say
[CHORUS]
Word of God speak
Would You pour down like rain
Washing my eyes to see
Your majesty
To be still and know
That You're in this place

Please let me stay and rest
In Your holiness
Word of God speak
I'm finding myself in the midst of You
Beyond the music, beyond the noise
All that I need is to be with You
And in the quiet hear Your voice
[REPEAT CHORUS 2x]
I'm finding myself at a loss for words
And the funny thing is it's okay

Philip K. Hardin, M.A., M.Div.

Director of Business & Professional Outreach, Intl. - Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist, Licensed Professional Counselor, and Certified Life Coach
563 Johnson Avenue - Fairhope, Alabama 36532
Phone: 601-925-0707

Email: phil@bpointl.org

Webpage: www.bpointl.org