

# OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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**SERMON TITLE** Walking in the Wilderness

**SERIES**

**DATE** 9/4/2022

**KEY SCRIPTURE** Various Scriptures

**SYNOPSIS** Seasons of difficulty are used by God to prepare us for what is next.

**HIGHLIGHTS**



## ☞ Walking in the Wilderness

Last week we talked about the city Under Siege and the desperate situation those people faced. Yet, 4 lepers decided to take some steps forward in the hopes that they might live. God magnified their steps and they plundered the enemy. There are times when we face difficulties and feel as though we are under siege. There are times when everything is so tough that it feels as though we are trying to survive in a desert environment, like we are stuck in the wilderness.

David and Moses both had wilderness experiences while on the run living in the desert. God used those experiences to prepare them for the calling he had on their lives. Moses learned the terrain where he would later lead the Israelis out of Egypt. David learned the territory and tactics of the enemy while he was in the wilderness. God has a way of using our troubles to prepare us for the work he has in mind. Just as David and Moses were familiar with the wilderness, God will often allow us to become familiar with a problem so that we'll be able to have victory or lead others to victory in that same area later.

Now, there were a number of others in the Bible who had wilderness experiences. Let's take a look at a few...

Paul was in the wilderness for a time. After his encounter with God on the Damascus road and his healing he went into the desert for three years. You find that in Galatians 1:17-18. While there, he was being prepared for ministry. That was when he received revelation from Christ. Galatians 1:11-12.

John the Baptist was in the desert. He also heard from God while there. Luke 3:2 tells us that the word of God came to John in the desert.

☞ **One important thing that happens in the wilderness is that God teaches us things we wouldn't learn elsewhere.** In particular, some who have experienced profound loss have found this to be true. They have come to know God in a way they never would have otherwise.

Sometimes we think we know God, but when faced with the empty dryness of the wilderness we really come to know him, if we hang on!

Job 42:5

My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

Jesus, himself was in the wilderness. Matthew 4:1 actually says that he was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted 40 days and nights... the enemy tempted him... he answered with Scripture... then he began his ministry... he started preaching and healing right after his wilderness experience.

☞ Again, we see how **the wilderness time was a time of preparation.** We need to remember that! When in those dry seasons, remember, God is preparing you for what's next.



With Jesus, it's interesting to note that the Spirit led him into the wilderness *and* the Devil tempted him there.

Here's a mystery... the wilderness is sometimes designed by God to prepare us and sometimes it's used by the enemy to try to ruin us. It's that old question, **"Is this trouble from the enemy or is it testing and training from the Lord?"**

☞ I think **the key is not about trying to figure out which it is, but rather in maintaining our character and continuing to trust God, no matter what we face...**

Jesus did it... he held to the Scriptures and kept his faith. David and Moses did too.

☞ **Philippians 4:11-13**

**I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.** **12** I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **13** I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Job 13:15

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him;

Now, the Israelites were also in the wilderness for a time and **they had terrible attitudes...**

Exodus 15:22-24

...For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. **23** When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter...**24** So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

Only 3 days after crossing the Red Sea miraculously!!!

Exodus 16:2-3

In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. **3** The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Exodus 17:1-3

... They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2** So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?" **3** But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

Then, being tired of waiting in the wilderness, they created their own false gods!



Exodus 32:1

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

**Ultimately, they stopped believing and trusting God and decided to try to make it on their own.** Sometimes, we tend to do the same thing. You may know of someone who gave up on God while waiting in a wilderness place; and then turned to something else... Money; alcohol; drugs; improper relationships; a twisted gospel; etc...

☞ **Don't let frustration turn into unbelief.**

God responded very sternly in this case, but they still grumbled later on... In Numbers 11, God was angry and fire from the Lord burned up some of the camp. But just a few verses later in the same chapter, the people complained again! And, they were actually complaining about God's provision. He gave them manna from heaven, but they were sick of it and griped over it. Their grumbling seemed to have no end.

Numbers 14:1-4 (*after the spies report about Canaan*)

That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. **2** All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! **3** Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" **4** And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

**They were ready to go back to life before God.** Have you ever thought about that? When things are especially tough, do you ever think, "It was easier before I became a Christian?"

☞ **Don't give up on God.**

At this point with Israel, God was ready to be done with them. They only survived because Moses intervened for them. Be careful about grumbling when things aren't going your way! It's one thing to ask questions and express concerns; it's quite another to lose faith and become angry with God! The Israelites set the supreme example of **what not to do while you're in the wilderness!**

Now, let's look at Elijah. After taking on 450 of Baal's prophets he is on the run from Jezebel and ends up in the desert. This is found in **1 Kings 19**. After winding up in the desert he expresses what most of us feel...

1 Kings 19:4

..."**I have had enough, Lord,**" he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."

Self-pity! Feeling sorry for himself...



1 Kings 19:10

"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

☞ Here's the epitome of self-pity... **"I'm the only one..." The wilderness can make us feel as though we are all alone.**

However, it was shortly after this that Elijah was at Mount Horeb and he heard from God in that quiet voice. In that quiet voice, God told him, **"You're not really alone."**

He complained that he felt all alone. But it was on Horeb that God revealed he wasn't alone. Here's the irony. Horeb means solitude. He felt alone, but wasn't. Once he was actually alone, with only God, then he heard from the Lord.

☞ **Once we stop complaining and whining with self-pity and just get quiet, we can finally hear from God.**

Hearing from God is key, and yet it's good to have others along with us in this walk with the Lord. We need each other. Paul learned how to be content in all circumstances, but still said... "it was good of you to share in my troubles." Philippians 4:14.

☞ **This is what the Church is great for... helping each other!** Hebrews 10:24-25 says we are to spur one another on and encourage each other as we keep on meeting together. When is the last time you made a special effort to encourage someone? Let them know what you appreciate about them; let them know you are praying for them; let them know you value them!

**Table Talk: Let's take the next two minutes and do exactly that. Encourage each other!**

☞ **Start Timer.**

☞ **Here's a good reminder for us all: the wilderness is not the end.**

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

...Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. **17** ☞ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us **an eternal glory that far outweighs** them all. **18** So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

God uses the wilderness to prepare us for the future. We must hang on and continue to trust him! Don't grumble and complain! Perhaps, you feel as though you are walking in a wilderness. Maybe everything seems to be going wrong; you can't get ahead; you feel all alone.

God reminds you today, you are not alone; this wilderness is not the end; he is preparing you for what is next. So, hang in there; keep the faith; encourage each other, and remember, eternity surpasses it all.