



Why the Wilderness?

- Focus** A “wilderness experience” can be described as a season marked by disappointment, frustration, suffering or challenge. God always has a specific purpose for each of our wilderness experiences.
- Open** What is your favorite summertime tradition?
- Read** Every believer will at some time find themselves in difficult circumstances that cause them to ask God, “Why?!” But the wilderness is not a curse to rebuke. If you see it as that, you need to change your perspective. So, why the wilderness?
1. *Crutches are killed in the wilderness.* The wilderness is a place of testing—a place of opportunity with the goal of success. In the wilderness, we learn to set aside every “Plan B”—every scheme or thing we turn to when we think He isn’t coming through. We learn to look to God alone for all that we need.
 2. *Appetites are altered in the wilderness.* An appetite is a godly craving *in you* that can easily turn into a deadly weapon *against you* if you don’t control it. The devil will use your appetite as his angle against you unless it’s submitted to God. The wilderness can cause us to crave Him over everything else.
 3. *Preparations are made in the wilderness.* The wilderness is not barren; it’s the womb of your most expedient development. But preparation takes time. While God is preparing you for the Promised Land, He’s also preparing the Promised Land for you. You can’t graduate to the Promised Land until you win in the wilderness.

The wilderness is the place of our greatest transition. God doesn’t drop us off and hope we’ll figure it out; He will lead us *through* it if we’ll let Him.

Talk

1. God first delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, then led them through the wilderness to get Egypt “out” of them.
 - a. What kind of things is God working to get *out* of us by leading us through the wilderness?
 - b. Why is it so important that we be free of the “residue” of Egypt?
2. *God tests; the devil tempts.* What’s the difference between testing and tempting? Why is it important to understand the difference, especially relating to our wilderness experiences?
3. How does our perspective of the wilderness alter the way we experience it?
4.
 - a. What is a “crutch” and why must all crutches be removed from our lives?
 - b. What crutches do you recognize that you have turned to in the past?
5.
 - a. Why can the Enemy use our own appetites against us so effectively?
 - b. What appetite has been the most difficult for you to keep submitted to God? Why do you think that is?
6. What does John 14:2–3 and Ephesians 3:20–21 tell us about God’s heart for us even while we’re in the womb of the wilderness?

Live

1. What “crutches” currently exist in your life? What do you hear God saying to you about them today?
2. Do you really believe that God is working to do “*exceedingly abundantly more than you can ask or think*” through your wilderness? Why or why not?

Pray

Take a few minutes to submit your heart to God and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. If you recognize that you’re holding on to crutches or that you need to submit an appetite to Him, talk to Him about those things now. Ask Him to help you believe that He is actively working to prepare both your heart and your future in an “exceedingly abundant” way. Thank God that He has *not* abandoned you, but is leading you by His Spirit day by day.