

WILDERNESS

(ἐρήμω)

Wilderness, wasteland, desert.

“Pastor, I’m, going through a really dry patch. Nothing is bearing fruit in my life. Is there anything wrong?” I’d love to say to you that God teaches us and builds character when things are going well, but that would be misleading because most often God trains us and builds character in the dry, parched times. Therefore, we will probably all have wilderness experiences. Take heart, when Christ was led into the wilderness it was not the work of Satan, but the work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). And what was good for the Lord Jesus must be good for us! Note, we can all choose to make our desert times “spiritual break-through” times, or not. We can react angrily against them and blame God for treating us so unfairly, or we can use that negative experience and allow it to become a positive or true spiritual experience.

Every 'wilderness experience' is the outworking of God's blessing. If the Holy Spirit is involved, you can be sure that everything is going to work together for your good. It's all about growth! And part of growing may well be a greater awareness of spiritual matters, and learning to have a more disciplined life. Jesus demonstrated this when He was led into the wilderness to be tempted (Luke 4:1-13). Therefore, the 'wilderness experience' includes an active fight against evil. Part of our 'growing up spiritually' is learning to fight against evil forces by the power of God's word. Jesus used the "sword of the Spirit" effectively and He was able to resist everything the devil threw at Him. You can do the same!

When you are in the desert God takes away your normal ability to manage your life, and He leads you into an intensive time of purification, transformation, and training. To many, this feels like spiritual boot-camp. But don't become discouraged, it is the Holy Spirit helping you to get ready for greater things. In your wilderness, the Holy Spirit transforms you from the inside out. Everything gets "shaken" by the Lord, and only whatever remains, will be what is part of His new plan for your life.

What can you learn from a 'wilderness experience'?

- You'll learn that God is good all the time, even when it doesn't feel like it
- You'll learn that even if God never used you again, you must still trust Him (Like Job, *“even though He slay me, yet will I trust Him”*)
- You'll learn that grumbling and complaining just gives in to the devil
- You'll learn to be content in whatever circumstances you find yourself

Many Christians are going through a 'wilderness experience' right now. I believe it is time for the Bride (the Church) to make herself ready. Revelation 19:7 says, *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready.”* So let's get ready for the greatest move of God the world has ever known.