

## **Why the Wilderness?**

I often wonder why the Israelites had journeyed through the wilderness (**the desert**) when they exited Egypt to get to the promise land. Why the Holy Spirit led Jesus in the wilderness after he was baptised by John. Why Jesus often withdrew from the crowds and went into the wilderness to pray? There must be more to this wilderness reference if it is mention so often. What is the significance of this period, or this place called “**the wilderness**”?

When we hear that we are in a wilderness period in our lives, we dread and despise it. We think this must be the end, we cannot possibly live through this!! It is punishment for things we have done and it is unbearable. It can way us down just thinking of it. If you have experience it, you know it is not a pleasant time in the natural and it can be awful, painful and very uncomfortable. You feel hopeless and abandoned and have no one to turn too. When you are in it, you just want out and want the period to be over with already. However, if we spend all our time focusing on how awful and terrible the experience of the wilderness is, we will miss out on what God has in store for us. We will end up in the wilderness for 40 years complaining and whining and might never even enter the promised land the Lord has given to each of us just like the Israelites when they exited Egypt.

***Deut 8:2 - Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these 40 years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. For all these 40 years your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't blister or swell. Think about it: just as a parent disciplines a child, the Lord your God disciplines you for your own good. So, obey the commands of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and fearing him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with the fountains and springs that gush out in the valleys and hills.***

Why is the wilderness period necessary for believers in Christ? Note that not everything about this time is bad. We need to look beyond the unpleasantness of this place and look to our God for growth to take place. So, there definitely must be purpose for this experience in our lives. It is a time of humbling, testing, teaching and yes, discipline from the Lord. It is a time to get alone with the Lord and not resist him, instead we must allow the Holy Spirit to work in us. It is only then that the Holy Spirit can move and work in us, if we are willing and allow him access to do only what he can do. We reach the end of our selves, the end to our dead works and find ourselves in a place where we totally depend on the Lord and in his works alone. We start to learn how to die to our flesh.

Choose to learn and step out fast. Don't waste away in this period. Step into your promise land by journeying through it together with the Lord. Only then do we overcome.

A few things to remember in this time:

- This is when we get to a point when we stop looking to man to help us and realise that they cannot help us. We are to solely depend on the Lord and in him alone.
- You will realise that it is only you and the Lord and no one else.
- When all you have is just the Lord, remember that this is all that you need to get through.
- When despite of the situation and in desperation all we can say is: BUT GOD!
- When we reach the end of ourselves, that is when it is no longer I, but Christ in me.

And this is when we only depend on him as our source out of this wilderness that we see what our God does for us in return.

- He makes a pathway in the wilderness. He will take you from dryness to provision when it is just you and him.
- He provides us with Manna (**His word**). Feed on his word, that is the only food that will sustain you and help you grow from strength to strength in this journey through.
- He provides water in the desert (**Living waters**). Jesus is the living water. You can drink freely and you will not be thirsty.
- He gives refreshment to our soul. He gives of himself for he is the word and the living water.
- When credit goes to no other but God. That is when you can say it was only because of my God that I made it through. Not by human strength or provision but knowing it was only because of him.

Don't waste your wilderness experience. We should all learn from the example of Jesus and not wonder around aimlessly in this wilderness. The Israelites did not learn – instead they murmured and muttered and complained throughout this journey. This caused them not to enter the promised land the Lord had given them as their inheritance.

***Exo 20:1 – I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.***

Our God wants to set us free. We all have our own Egypt that he wants to take us out of. Journey with him and allow him to work in us so that he can work through us. However, you must do it only with him. He himself is the provision. Trust him, trust that he is in full control. Let go of the reigns completely and allow him to be Lord God in your life.

***Isa 43: 19,20 – For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. The wild animals in the field will thank me, the jackals and owls, too, for giving them water in the desert. Yes, I will make rivers in the dry wasteland, so my chosen people will be refreshed.***

Don't waste your time in the wilderness. 40 days or 40 years? – It is your choice! Choose well.