

Into
the
wilderness



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!

Wilderness: The Experience – VICTIM to HERO

Jonah Chapter 2

Into the Wilderness: HERO or VICTIM - Trauma as a Tool for Transformation!

- All true saints go through a wilderness (traumatic) experience in their life; some more than others and nobody would choose it and we all want to avoid it or run from it.
- The experience of every great traveler on the spiritual path, is that the wilderness (trauma) is a place through which we must travel in order to reach a place of greater intimacy with God.
- In the wilderness we question everything we ever learned - How can a loving God allow this to happen to me? Have I been fooling myself all these years? Does God really exist? Why doesn't He show Himself, and take some kind of action, and mount a rescue mission?
- **Soul searching and "self examination" are the things that takes place in the wilderness.**

Into the Wilderness: Trauma Transformation!

- Probably the two most significant miracles that occur in our hearts in the wilderness are these:
 1. The realization that “God loves us unconditionally” - every believer eventually discovers the reality of God’s love in the desert.
 2. We experience “God’s gracious provision of Christ and Christ alone” - As everything else in our life is stripped away, we see Christ! And the more “we feast of the Living Word” the hungrier we become, and the more we want to know Him in deeper ways.
- Another lesson we learn is to give up our illusion of a God that will make life easy for us - a god that will do what we want Him to do - a god of our own liking and making.

Into the Wilderness: Embrace the Suck!

- The 16th century Spanish mystic “St. John of the Cross,” writes in his notable work *The Dark Night of the Soul* - “Souls begin to enter into this dark night when God draws them out from being beginners.”

Five Things a Boy Needs to Learn to Become a Man

- Life is hard.
 - You are not that important.
 - Life is not all about you.
 - You are not in control.
 - You are going to die.
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- By the way, there are “*no religious crutches*” for us to lean on in the desert; “*no religious activities*” in which to hide our true condition. The truth is, we do not need religion; we need to “*know Christ intimately*” - and intimacy only happens when we are completely alone with Him in the wilderness, where there is nobody else to turn to except Him.

Into the Wilderness: Embrace the Suck!

There are 10 stop points on the journey to wholeness (Christian maturity) *from George Barna's book Maximum Faith*

1. Ignorance of the concept or existence of sin.
2. An awareness and indifference to sin.
3. Concerned about the implications of personal sin.
4. A decision to confess sin and ask Jesus Christ to be savior. *It is worth noting that about 2/3rd of American "Christians" are stuck in one of these four stops.*
5. A commitment to faith activities (aka Churchianity) - Another quarter of Americans are at this stop. *This means that nearly **90 percent of Americans are stuck at one of the first five stops and are not experiencing the other five stops that bring maturity.***
- 6. A prolonged period of spiritual discontent. (Wilderness experience)**
7. An experience of personal brokenness. **(3%)**
8. A decision to surrender and submit fully to God. **(1%)**
9. Enjoying a profound intimacy with the love for God. **(0.5%)**
10. Experiencing a profound compassion and love for humanity. **(0.5%)**

It is worth noting that only a very small percentage find themselves in these last four stops. In general, Christians in America are not experiencing what God intends for them. Put another way, mostly what we have today is another religion called Churchianity – it is not the God of the Bible, it is not the God revealed in and through the Living Word, His son Jesus Christ!

Into the Wilderness: Embrace the Suck!

Four Observations about the Wilderness:

1. God always takes care of His people in the wilderness.
2. If you remain in the wilderness, you will eventually die relationally.
3. The wilderness has but 1 goal: to sift us, reduce us, and strip us down to Christ alone – religious detox!
4. The wilderness is a symbol of “new beginnings”

Every believer eventually discovers the reality of God's love in the desert in the desert.

ACTION: Journal this!

1. What are the most hurtful and damaging experiences/relationships of your life?
2. What did you learn about handling negative emotions in your family?
3. What has most helped you to heal from past hurts? Have you healed?