

Sermon Study Guide

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Sermon: Trusting in God's Provision

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Tell a story about a time when you followed GPS, a map, or someone's personal directions to reach a destination. How well did it go? Any mishaps?
2. If you had been the Israelites in the wilderness, what food would have tempted you?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Pastor Ashwin said, 'Spiritually speaking, the wilderness is a happening place.' Who were some biblical characters who spent time in the 'wilderness'? What encounters with God did they experience? What impact did the 'wilderness' have on their lives?
2. How do the words 'Providence' and 'Wilderness' relate? In what ways does one word help define the other? (Refer to Romans 8:28)
3. Wilderness' is a common metaphor in Scripture to describe a season of testing and trial. What were the life lessons that the Israelites learned during their 40 years of wandering? (The manna story is told in Exodus 16.)
4. What was God's purpose in taking Jesus to the wilderness? (Matt 4:1-4) What was Jesus saying to the tempter by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3? How does Hebrews 4:15 give further understanding for the necessity and value of Jesus' temptation?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. 'The temptation in the wilderness is always to short circuit the whole process and do it your way, take matters into your own hands and stop relying on God.' (Pastor Ashwin)
What wilderness are you in right now? How has this message given you new courage?
2. How will Deut 8:3 and Romans 8:28 guide you in this time? How can the group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT *reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).*

References:

Andre Couch

<https://www.google.ca/search?q=Andre+Couch+Through+it+all&oq=Andre+Couch+Through+it+all&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.4823j1j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

George Mueller <https://www.georgemuller.org/>

THE WORD (NIV)

Exodus 16:4-5

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

Deuteronomy 8:1-5, 16

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. ²Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. ⁵Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you. . . . ¹⁶He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you.

Romans 8:28

²⁸And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Sermon Study Summary

The wilderness is a common metaphor in the Bible to describe a season of testing and trial. It is a part of the Christian experience. It is a place where God shapes us and prepares us for what He is planning to do next in our life. While it seems a barren wasteland, the wilderness is where God often reveals Himself to us. Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus each had profound encounters there. Israel travelled forty years in the desert learning the lesson that God is reliable and completely trustworthy. There God taught them faith lessons that they would grow in the very area they had failed in – trust (Deut 8:1-5).

The word 'providence' is not often used in the Bible but it is exemplified throughout. Divine Providence is the governance of God by which He directs all things in the universe. It means that He is actively involved in His creation and guides them to fulfill His purposes, be it the universe or individual lives. It helps us to see our problems within the framework of God's purposes (Rom 8:28). All things don't work together for good randomly. God circumvents what may be an adverse event and turns it around to bring something good out of it (Deut 8:16).

Something good was going to come out of the Israelites' time in the wilderness. Christians can be confident that no matter the opposition or trials in life that are experienced, they ultimately contribute to a greater, grander purpose God has for our lives. Often these lessons learned in the wilderness are about trusting God. Moses reiterated these lessons to the next generation (Deut 8:2). God traveled with them all through this forty-year journey by way of a pillar of cloud and fire and led them from place to place. The Israelites weren't tasked to find the Promised Land – they were only to follow the Lord's leading. In this way there was no purposeless wandering. It was a time of intentional spiritual formation. God was teaching His people by testing them to trust Him and to humble them. Trust and humility are gifts from God. The wilderness is like a spiritual stress test that shows the true condition of one's heart. It is not that God is seeking to know what is there – He knows! But he wants us to know what is in our heart.

Humility and trust were God's lessons for the Israelites (Deut 8:3). They were not simply to look out for God's provision but for God Himself. He was the source of their physical and spiritual sustenance. God made them to hunger and then provided for their need (Ex 16:4-5) and did so by giving them just what they needed (the manna) each day. Why? So that they would trust in Him rather than in the wrong things. Every morning the Israelites looked to God for food. Every night they knew that there was nothing in the pantry. The volume of food that God provided each day for some 2 million Israelites was massive. Moreover, their clothes did not wear out (Deut 8:4) for the whole forty-year journey. Every day God was faithful to them even though oftentimes the Israelites failed miserably.

God's character has not changed. In the middle of your wilderness God wants to prove to you that He is reliable and trustworthy and well able to meet all your needs. Andre Crouch wrote in one song 'If I never had a problem I wouldn't know that He could solve them.' Jesus is our example. He too was humbled and tested for forty days (Matt 4:1-4). The enemy was tempting Jesus to act independently of God. Jesus' quoting Deut 8:3 implied that He knew that His Father would provide for Him. In the same way in our times of testing in the wilderness hold on to God by faith knowing that He is good. Nothing honors God more than our trust. George Mueller lived a life of humble trust in God and helped over 10,000 orphans without asking for support. In the same way, are you willing to trust Him fully?