

Learn From Me - In the Wilderness

Today we begin a new series called Learn From Me where we'll look at the things Jesus did in His time on the earth and figure out what the lesson is that we should take from it to become more like Him.

This comes from:

Matthew 11:28-29 (NKJV)

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Has anyone here ever found themselves in the wilderness? I'm not talking about sitting in the woods waiting on a buck to come by or searching for mushrooms. I'm talking about a spiritual or emotional wilderness.

Physical wilderness can be fun, peaceful, restful for some. But a spiritual or emotional wilderness is lonely, desolate, uninhabited. It's the kind of place where you feel deserted by others and left in the wild....a deserted wasteland.....

We all experience this place at some point.

Many of you know my story and for the first probably half dozen years of walking with Jesus, I had NO idea what the wilderness was like. Kristi would try to explain it and I just didn't get it, couldn't relate, couldn't really help....but then there was a day.....a day where I looked up and didn't know how it happened.....I was all alone, hopeless, clueless.

Only there's a trick to the wilderness....it's a place where we believe we are all alone. But the born again believer in Jesus Christ is NEVER alone. The Holy Spirit is IN US.

The number one tactic of the enemy is to make us feel or believe that we have been isolated. But there's a catch....we're not! He is with us, and He has already overcome the wilderness....

Luke 4:1-13 (NKJV)

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.
3 And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' "

5 Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

9 Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' 11 and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

12 And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.' "

13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

This is an amazing account we read. The very first thing we see after Jesus' baptism and remember how awesome that was!

Some of you have experienced something like that....this great encounter with God. One that feels good, you got the goosebumps, a revelation, touched by the power of God, you just know God Almighty did something in your life.....only to find yourself almost immediately in the wilderness.....UGH!

Luke 4:1-2 (NKJV)

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

Who led Jesus into the wilderness? The Holy Spirit. There are times in our lives where God actually leads us into the wilderness.....maybe more often than we think....

Do you believe that God is good? Do you believe God always wants what's best for you? I hope so, otherwise I'm not so sure He's good.... Say "God is good"

If you believe that, then you have to believe that when a good God leads you into the wilderness, then it's good for you. Say "It's good for me". I didn't say it's fun.....I said it's good for you.

This is a place of testing. A place of learning.

Do you know Job? Do you know that satan approached God and God actually asked satan if he had considered His servant Job. God gave satan permission to test Job with basically one rule, you can't lay a hand on him.

Was Job a person of faith? YES. In fact God says that Job is "blameless and upright, fears God and shuns evil." Satan comes back with "well you are protecting him and blessing him." God says "test him"

If you keep reading, Job, a man of faith, a child of God, was led into the wilderness by God. We read later on where Job says in chapter 42:

Job 42:5 (NKJV)

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You.

Job's faith was increased. His sensitivity to the Spirit, His view of God, His hope....all increased BECAUSE of the time in the wilderness. I had heard.....now I see! It was for His good!

God may lead you to that place but He does not leave you. You may feel alone and people may abandon you, but the Lord your God never will!

As Jesus was in this wilderness, He was tempted for 40 days, by the devil, and He ate nothing and He was hungry!

Don't you sometimes find the things in the bible a little silly? Really God, hungry? After 40 days of no food....of course He was hungry!

This is really a key to the rest of this text. Jesus was physically in a weakened state. That's what the devil saw.....weak Jesus. What an opportune time!

Luke 4:3-4 (NKJV)

And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."

4 But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' "

IF You are the Son of God....don't miss it here, this is not a question of whether Jesus is the Son of God.....the devil knows that He is. This can properly be translated "SINCE You are the Son of God"

This is an identity attack....But it's not a prove you are who the Father said you are.....it's more subtle....it's more like "since you are so powerful, you should be able to do X"

The last thing we saw about Jesus was the Father speaking "You are my beloved Son, in You I am well pleased". So satan hits Him with the weakness....if you are so powerful....turn the stone to bread.

How harmless....I mean, you ARE hungry....This is the green screen trick. Satan offers a way out of the wilderness by appealing to your weakness....

If you are so powerful child of God, then you would be able to overcome this, you shouldn't feel like this. God wouldn't want you in this situation. Look at yourself. What are others going to think? You are supposed to be a Christian walking in victory.....

Here, I have a way out.....

When we are in the wilderness and in a weakened state, satan sees us and offers a way out.....He appeals to your weakness....But it's only smoke and mirrors. It's a green screen.

If you take the way out, the picture behind you looks good, it's been edited to appear better than it really is. It can look like whatever you imagine for that temporary moment. But at the end of the day, you look around and nothing has changed. It wasn't a way out....you were duped. Now you feel worse.

Learn from Jesus: "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

Sure He quoted scripture.....that's good. But the bigger point is that Jesus KNEW that no temporary way out would be enough, they wouldn't last.....God is the way out....the truth of His Word, who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.....

Like Job.....now I see you with my eyes.....When God becomes bigger than your problems....in YOUR eyes.....that's the way out! Don't believe there is any other way!

Luke 4:5-8 (NKJV)

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

8 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

Appealing to Jesus' weakness didn't work so next satan appeals to His desires. Why did Jesus come? To save people. To be their Lord. To fulfill the divine plan.

Was it an easy road? NO. It was going to be 3 years of hard work. A 3 year battle. It was going to come down to a gruesome beating and 6 hours nailed to a cross.

Satan says “Here.....you can have it all right now.” He offers a shortcut. He appeals to Jesus’ desire to save and rule over the people. “You don’t have to go through all of that, You can have it today”

It’s a shortcut.....shortcuts are fools gold. This is why the lotto is a poor man’s tax. People are fooled into thinking they have a chance....”someone has to win!” OK....the odds for the Powerball and Mega Millions are about 300 MILLION to one. It’s a shortcut.....to happiness!

No it’s a shortcut to bypass hard work and patience and responsibility and most winners end up broke and alone. It’s a trick!

When you are in the wilderness.....all you want to do is get out! Whatever it is that you think will get you out, I can assure you that satan will offer you a shortcut to that thing.....One of the most common shortcuts out is QUIT! If it’s going to be hard.....QUIT!

Quit on your responsibility, quit on your marriage, quit on your friends, quit on your church, quit on your faith.....and when we take those shortcuts, we bow before satan and he tells us that everything will be better now....only the real problem didn’t change....YOU

Learn from Jesus: “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

No matter what I desire, no matter how I feel, I will wait on the Lord. I will worship while I wait. I will serve while I wait. But no matter what, I’ll wait because I know He is the way out....there is no other, there are no shortcuts....they all come at a price!

Luke 4:9-12 (NKJV)

Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ 11 and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ”

12 And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ”

If satan can’t appeal to your weakness and he can’t appeal to your desires, he will question your trust in Jesus.

If you are the Son of God, test Him! He said He’d protect you....let’s see! You won’t get hurt.

Have you ever heard that voice in the wilderness? This is like a “force your way out” method. Make it happen.

It's testing God.

If you really trust Him. Do something to force His hand. Do something where God will HAVE TO act to bail you out.

He said He'd never leave you. He said He is your protector, redeemer, deliverer, that He hears your prayers, that He knows every hair on your head, let's see if that's all true.

Do you believe Him?

There are two goals of satan here:

1. Get you to act on something stupid.....sin
2. Cause you to doubt....damage or destroy trust in God

Learn from Jesus: "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

This is powerful.....to tempt is to prove, to put to proof God's character and power.

Hold up church.....hear this point above all else....YOU do not prove God's character and power.....HE DOES.

He is faithful.....He is always on time.....His plan is perfect and it's for your good. It's not up to you to prove that.....it's up to Him.

Jesus NEVER fails. Jesus NEVER fails. We fail.....and if we fail and He doesn't.....then WHO should prove His character and power? One who fails (me, you) or one who never fails (Jesus)

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Christ. He will remind you and He will convince you that Jesus is who He said He is and that He will show up and He will flex His muscles because He is ALL powerful. Tempted and tried in every way....yet overcame them all!

Luke 4:13 (NKJV)

Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

You will get through the wilderness....you can fight off the weakness, the desires, the questioning God.....and by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will come out on the other side of it all a stronger person. Having grown in your faith.

And you are going to need it, because the battle is not over....but praise be to Jesus who has already won the war!