



The Journey
Week of 02.03.13

On Your Mark: Wilderness

by Michael Maybee

Mark's gospel contains the briefest of accounts of Jesus' wilderness experience. Nowhere in the Bible do we get much information about the wilderness itself. What was this wilderness? What did it signify? Why did the Holy Spirit of God lead Jesus into the wilderness? I believe that the wilderness was for Jesus, a time of testing (proving), encounter, and renewal. That is what my wilderness times have been.

Jesus' wilderness testing was not to determine if He was up to the task ahead, it was to prove He was worthy to do for us what we could not do for ourselves, that is to lead a sinless life that would be adequate payment for our sin. My wilderness times have always begun with less certainty of outcome, and have been more testing and less proving. Jesus encountered in the wilderness Satan, the enemy of God and of our souls; angels who attended Him; and temptations common to mankind, but at a level and intensity few of us may ever endure. Thankfully, my wilderness experiences never included the opportunity to rule the world. Jesus' time in the wilderness renewed Him and was the launching pad for His earthly ministry. I am grateful that I can say much the same of my wilderness experiences.

Those who know me personally or through my ramblings in *The Journey* know that I love wilderness adventure. I am blessed to have scaled fourteen thousand foot peaks in Colorado, hiked the Grand Canyon, and rafted some pretty wild rivers in my time. Often those experiences were times of testing, encounter (including one bear a little too close for comfort), and spiritual renewal. However, my greatest growth has come not from those, but from wilderness experiences of another sort entirely. The wilderness times from which I have grown the most may be all too familiar for many of you. I mean the wilderness of failed relationships, the loss of a job, the untimely death of loved ones, the loss of an unborn child, and children that put themselves and their family through terrible trials. All these wildernesses and more have I known.

These wilderness experiences tested my faith and my resolve to follow Jesus. Many times in the wilderness I encountered God in a new and unique way when I turned toward Him. And in the end, when I relied on Him instead of on myself or other things, I came away with a renewed sense of identity, of who I am in Christ.

You may find yourself in the midst of a wilderness right now. You may feel like crying out to God, "What have I done wrong? Why are you allowing this?" His answer just might be, "You did nothing wrong. I believe in you and through this experience I want to make more of you. I am preparing you to serve me in ways you never could without this time in the wilderness."

"In fact, nothing increases your strength and your character like the wilderness does."

~ Ron Hutchcraft

(You are encouraged to use the SOAP – Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer Method for a guide. Click [here](#) to read more about developing your devotional life. Click [here](#) for an example SOAP journal entry. If you don't own a Bible, pick up "The Story of God" Bible available for free at the Welcome Center in our atrium.)

Week's Overview: The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. God never does anything without purpose. We often cannot see that purpose, especially when in the midst of our own wilderness. If we know God—His character, His love, His trustworthiness—it helps us get through. If we don't know Him well or at all going in, we will likely know Him better at the end.

monday 2.04

Read: [Mark 1:12-13](#), [Matthew 14:13](#), [Mark 1:35](#), [Mark 1:45](#), [Luke 4:42](#), [Luke 5:16](#)

Study: we see a pattern here. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, a lonely and solitary place in order to prepare Him for His earthly ministry. Jesus must have liked what He found there because withdrawing to a solitary, lonely place for prayer appears to have been His common practice.

Personal: how comfortable are you with solitude? What do you find there that you like and/or dislike?

tuesday 2.05

Read: [Deuteronomy 1:19-33 \(focus v. 30, 31\)](#), [Deuteronomy 8:1-5](#)

Study: Moses is near the end of his life and in two separate speeches briefly describes how God rescued, lead, defended, and provided for the Israelites as they journeyed from captivity and slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness, to the threshold of the Promised Land. Moses reminds them that as a human father disciplines (teaches, instructs, trains, admonishes) his children, God disciplines His.

Personal: through what wilderness has "...God carried you, as a father carries his son [or daughter]?" How has He used a wilderness experience to discipline you (train you for service)? How do you think He wants you to use that training and discipline?

wednesday 2.06

Read: [Genesis 16:1-10](#), [Genesis 21:14-18](#), [Exodus 3:1-6](#)

Study: the desert or wilderness can be a place of encounter and promise. Hagar twice encounters the angel of the Lord as she wanders in the desert. Both times she receives promises concerning her life and the life of her son. Moses encountered God Himself in the burning bush. What made that place on Mount Horeb holy ground? Why do you think God chose those wilderness places to reveal His power?

Personal: Hagar and Moses encountered Holiness in unexpected places and times. In what places, times, and ways have you unexpectedly encountered God's holiness and power?

thursday 2.07

Read: [Isaiah 43:19-21](#), [Colossians 3:12](#), [1 Peter 2:9](#)

Study: God promises to transform the wilderness for and give drink to His chosen people. Scripture reveals that we are His chosen people if we accept His Son.

Personal: how has God transformed a wilderness for you? If you are still waiting for that transformation, how do these verses affect you? How has He given you a “drink” or in some way provided for or refreshed you in your personal wilderness?

friday-sunday 2.08-2.10

Read: [Isaiah 49:8-13](#), [Psalm 63:1](#), [Matthew 5:6](#)

Study: Isaiah prophesied about a time of God’s favor, when the barren places and the deserts—the wilderness—will be no problem for His covenant people. The Psalmist declares his thirst for God, and Jesus promises that we who hunger and thirst for Him and His righteousness will be satisfied.

Personal: how has God comforted you or shown you compassion when you needed it? How earnestly would you say you seek God? Pray that God will take you into a wilderness time if that is what you need to give you a hunger and thirst for Him and His righteousness.

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grow (resources to help you in your study)

- **Sunday’s Sermon:** Click [here](#) for podcast, or [video](#)
- **Sarah Leimer’s blog:** Click [here](#)
- **book:** [The One Year Book of Hope](#) by Nancy Guthrie
- **book:** [Streams in the Desert](#) Daily Devotional
- **book:** [Believing God](#) by Beth Moore
- **click [here](#) for more resources** – this will link you back to the journey’s main page.
- **connect:** click [here](#) to go to Heartland’s Facebook page
- **mobile connections:** download the free Heartland app for your iPhone or Android device and access our resources virtually anywhere

go (action steps)

- **prayer?** Please send us an email by clicking [here](#)
- **care?** Do you need to talk with someone? Please call us at 913.341.5820 ext. 330
- **go**—Sign up to serve: email Lisa Zulke by clicking [here](#)
- **grow**—Join a small group, a 1:1 spiritual mentorship, or find about the many other [ways to grow](#)
- **give**—click [here](#) to make an online gift to Heartland and learn how you can set up recurring gifts