


3 WEEKS

WELCOME THE WILDERNESS





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SMALL GROUP STUDY**Kicking it off:**

Share a time when you got hopelessly lost.

Big Idea:

God ALWAYS uses the wilderness to prepare us for something that's coming later.

Key Scriptures:

Exodus 14:10-12

"As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

Exodus 16:1-3

"The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came

to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

Exodus 13:17-18

"When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt ready for battle."

Discussion:

1. At times in our lives we will find ourselves in the wilderness; a place of darkness, wandering,

WELCOME THE WILDERNESS

- uncertainty. Of the few different wilderness scenarios – seasons of waiting, isolation, depression, loss, apathy, or simply feeling lost, identify a wilderness experience you've had and share it with your group.
2. What may have changed externally in your life to make you feel lost internally?
 3. One of the best stories in the Bible that can help us navigate through our own wilderness experiences is to look at the Israelites as they were rescued by God from the Egyptians, and led by Moses into the wilderness. Read the Exodus 14 and Exodus 16 passages and discuss what you observe about the Israelites.
 4. Certainly things were not easy for the Israelites in the wilderness; what challenges or temptations to grumble against God have you had in your own wilderness experience(s)?
 5. Read Exodus 13:17-18. This passage reveals that God had a purpose and a preparation for the Israelites to have their desert experience- that was to prepare them for battle. Looking back on your past wilderness experience(s), what do you believe God was equipping or preparing you for?
 6. If you are currently in a wilderness time, how might He be preparing you for something ahead?
 7. There is always beauty in the wilderness. How have you seen that to be true? How might that encourage you if you are currently encountering a wilderness experience?
 8. How can you welcome the wilderness now?

Wrapping It Up:

God is not just the God of the mountaintop, He is also the God of the valley and the wilderness. Pray for one another to be strengthened and encouraged in your own wilderness experiences.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our brothers and sisters in India and our Mission India partners as they continue to battle the pandemic and the toll it's taking in that country.

Memory Verse:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."
James 1:2



THE

TESTING OF

YOUR FAITH

PRODUCES

PERSEVERANCE



THE TEMPTATION

WEEK 2

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

Share about a time that you were the hungriest you have ever been. What weakness did you experience in the midst of your hunger?

Big Idea:

You and I are more prone to temptation in the wilderness.

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 4:1-11

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest

point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."

Discussion:

1. One of peculiar things about the wilderness is that it ultimately exposes what's inside of us. Whatever we've been good at masking, suddenly becomes more difficult to hide and more apparent in your life. How have you observed this in

O F J E S U S

your own life?

2. Read Matthew 4:1-11 about Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Discuss the three temptations of pleasure, pride and power that He faced, and how He combatted those temptations.
3. Of these three temptations, toward which are you most vulnerable?
4. Share about a specific temptation you faced in a dark time.
5. How might you follow Jesus' example in combatting your own temptations and respond to Satan's lies with God's truth?
6. What's one tangible step you can take to do that?

Wrapping It Up:

Is anyone in your life aware of your wilderness, either past or current? Have you ever talked about your temptation? (If not, consider sharing with your group or one trusted person in your life.)

Prayer Focus:

Pray for Skill School next week as hundreds of elementary aged kids are on our campus gaining skills, having fun, and learning about Jesus.

Memory Verse:

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

1 Corinthians 10:13

G O D

I S

F A I T H F U L

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Kicking it off:

What are some of your favorite moments that you've captured on photo or video?

Big Idea:

The best way to navigate the wilderness is to remember God's faithfulness in the past.

Key Scriptures:

Joshua 4:1-7

"When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight." So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, 5 and said to them, "Go

over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."

Lamentations 3:19-23

"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Discussion:

1. We're all prone to forget moments of light in our lives. But remembering

T O R E M E M B E R

moments of light in our lives is important because the wilderness is dark. And when we can't see what's ahead of us, we tend to doubt. Read Joshua 4:1-7. God eventually delivered the people of Israel into the Promised Land as they crossed the Jordan. Discuss how God helped them to remember that joyous moment of light.

2. Each of you share with your group a particular blessing from God where He made Himself known to you "in the light."
3. How can those times of light illuminate God's faithfulness into what you might be facing today? Or future wilderness experiences?
4. Read Lamentations 3:19-23. Share about a time you were in the dark and found yourself doubting or forgetting what God had done in the light. What struggles did you face in the midst of that?

5. How might this passage encourage you of God's faithfulness when you face the darkness?

Wrapping It Up:

What is something you might need to memorialize for the future so you don't forget God's faithfulness? How might you do that? (i.e. journaling, song, memory box, picture, Scripture)

Prayer Focus:

Pray for our students as they head out on their summer trips. Ask God to reveal Himself to them in tangible ways and for lives to be transformed.

Memory Verse:

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22-23

LOVE

NOTES:

NOTES:

Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
 - Take time to prepare.
 - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
 - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
 - Ephesians 4:1-3
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
 - What is the purpose of our group?
 - What is the vision for our group?
 - What are your expectations?
 - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
 - What are some things we value as a group?
 - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?
Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
 - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
 - Encouraging and challenging one another
 - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

Group Agreement

OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: _____

OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes _____
- Childcare _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____
- Date we will review this agreement again _____
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study _____



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