

Thank You for hearing my cries and seeing my struggles.
But You also know the help or resources I need that You
alone can provide. Help me to trust You as I wait, but I ask
You to provide
..... I know what my heart needs
most is to find joy, comfort, and strength in Your presence
and promises, so draw near and reveal Yourself to me.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Genesis 16:1–16 and 21:8–21. What do you think Hagar likely felt, thought, and experienced in her two wilderness experiences?
2. Why should it encourage us that God sees and hears us when we walk through the desert?
3. Have you ever walked through hardship, sorrow, a dry season, discouragement, or some difficulty that deepened your relationship with God or expanded your view of Him? Explain.
4. Of the key truths highlighted in Hagar's story, which do you most need to remember or respond to in this season? Why?
5. As you experience the wilderness, how can you intentionally look for how God is working and deepen your friendship with Him?

those in Christ, we know that no wilderness will be wasted and no person is too far gone to be used by God.

Discussion Questions

1. When you think about Moses' life in Midian and some of what he likely felt, thought, and experienced, what resonates with your own life or experiences?
2. What are ways we see God's wise providence over the course of Moses' life?
3. Can you think of a time in your life—maybe a season of waiting or a trial—where God was preparing and shaping you for something to come?
4. Why is God's revelation of Himself an essential part of how God prepares us and shapes us?
5. What truths from this chapter encouraged or convicted you, offered hope, or provided needed perspective? Are there specific things you might need to believe, do, or pray as a response?
6. Are there ways you sense God might be using the wilderness to train, prepare, shape, or grow you?

delivered, led, taught, provided for, or helped you. You can begin each line by adding something like, "I will sing to the LORD, for He . . ." or "I will praise God because He . . ." and then include a line of remembrance.

Example: "I will sing to the LORD, for He led us when we felt confused at a dead end."

I will praise God because
.....

RECORD how you would answer this sentence (maybe in a few different scenarios).

Because God is I know He will lead me in
.....

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways God proved Himself to Israel in Exodus 13–14, both in where He led them and how He then delivered them?
2. When was a time you experienced God leading you on a longer route or a desert road in life? What are ways you experienced His presence, saw His hand at work, learned to trust Him, tasted His faithfulness, or grew in faith through the path He led you on?
3. Why is God's continual presence what we need most in the wilderness?

4. What is a situation or scenario you're in today where it's hard for you to understand what God might be doing or where He's leading you? Was there a specific truth or idea from this chapter that encouraged you in your current circumstances?
5. How can you better trust in and rest in God's good and wise leading of you in light of who He is and how He leads His people?

RESPOND by taking a few minutes to write down a few specific and realistic ways you can do each of the following things to know God more and grow in your faith in this season.

1. Trust God to provide for the gaps in your life.
2. Strengthen your faith as it's stretched.
3. Embrace your daily dependence on God.
4. Feed on the Bread of Life.

REMEMBER that God promised enough manna, daily bread, or daily grace for what you're going through right now. Begin each day with a prayer asking God for what you will need in that day. As you face trials, troubles, and temptations throughout each day, turn to God in prayer, asking for what you need in that specific scenario, and then live by faith believing He will help you.

Discussion Questions

1. What might God have been teaching Israel (and us) in a *daily* collection of manna?
2. Living by faith in this way (continually or daily) isn't easy. What makes it hard to trust God for the things we need or even want in our life when we don't see any potential answers on the way?
3. Read Matthew 6:11, 25–34. How do Jesus' words help us trust God with our needs rather than looking elsewhere for help?

4. What is one area of weakness, a need, or a “gap” in your life where you feel completely dependent on God? How can you trust God to provide in this gap?
5. What is a time or situation in the past where God provided for you or helped you?
6. How can you experience Jesus as your daily manna or the daily bread your heart needs the most?
7. What stood out, encouraged you, challenged you, or is a truth to take with you from this chapter?

mercy, patience, and grace given in the gospel. Spend time in the Word and prayer, cultivating your desires for God and feasting your heart on His glory and grace.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think we are especially susceptible to temptation and idolatry in the wilderness?
2. Why is it so important to understand the root idols underneath the fruit of our words, thoughts, emotions, and actions?
3. Why is it a good and gracious thing for God to expose our sin and idols? What are right ways to then respond when God reveals our idols to us?
4. Israel carried some of their sinful patterns, old habits, and idolatrous practices with them out of Egypt. What might be some habits, patterns, practices, or idols that you sometimes still struggle with or have carried with you? How can you repent of them and better fight them?
5. If idolatry is fundamentally a worship issue, how can you cultivate greater worship of God and delight in God as a means of resisting temptation and idolatry?
6. What do you most need to remember or do in light of this chapter?

Discussion Questions

1. What encourages, challenges, or comforts you most from David's story in the wilderness?
2. What are ways we sometimes drift from God when life is hard? What are symptoms or signs of drifting or drying out that you notice in your own life when it happens?
3. Can you recall any times when sorrows, struggles, or stresses deepened your prayer life? Why do you think pain often makes our time in prayer more meaningful?
4. Most of us have the gut reaction of grumbling in trials rather than giving thanks. What could you do to cultivate a more consistent response of gratitude in all things?
5. What are a couple of reasons you can give thanks to God today?
6. How can you draw near and run to God as your refuge through a specific trial in life right now?
7. What is at least one practical thing you can apply, do different, or remember from this chapter?

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways did God provide for, protect, and preserve Elijah in 1 Kings 17–19?
2. How might Elijah have drawn on God’s past faithfulness to help him in his trials in 1 Kings 19?
3. When you’re disappointed, discouraged, or in despair, what are common lies or half-truths that you believe or rehearse?
4. What are some things Elijah’s story emphasizes about God and how He relates to His people?
5. What are ways believers can walk with one another through discouragement, grief, or depression?
6. How can we let our future give us hope, endurance, and encouragement in the present?

Discussion Questions

1. Why does it matter that Jesus was really tempted, like us, in the desert? How does this make Him a sympathetic High Priest for us (Heb. 2:14–18; 4:14–16)?
2. Why is it essential that Jesus never sinned?
3. What are ways we can follow Jesus' example of using the Bible to fight temptation? Why is this a good way to resist sin?
4. Jesus never sinned but He did grow weary, get worn out, and need to retreat into the wilderness for times of refreshment in prayer with the Father. Why do we also need to get alone with God?
5. How do you set aside distractions—internal or external—to find refreshment with God? What are some things you do, whether prayer, Bible reading, meditation, journaling, etc.?
6. Why is it encouraging to know that this wilderness existence will not last forever? How can you draw hope from or find endurance in light of what awaits you?



40 DAYS IN THE DESERT BIBLE READING PLAN

Each passage in this reading plan relates to some aspect of life as God's people in the wilderness. As you see how God leads and refreshes His people there, it should offer hope for ways God might be working in your own wilderness situations.

In addition to the daily **reading**, take time for a **responsive prayer** and a moment for **reflection**. Consider one or two things this passage taught you about who God is or how God uses the wilderness to shape and sustain His people. Reflect on what God might want to teach, encourage, correct, or reveal to you. Then pause to pray some of these truths back to God in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, lament, or asking God to provide for your needs.

Day Text

1. Gen. 16:1–16; 21:15–21
2. Ex. 2:23–3:22
3. Ex. 13:1–22
4. Ex. 14:1–15:21; Pss. 66:5–6; 106:7–12
5. Ex. 15:22–16:36; Matt. 6:9–15
6. John 6:1–59
7. Ex. 17:1–16; Ps. 114:7–8; John 7:37–39

8. Ex. 18:1–27
9. Ex. 19:1–20:21
10. Ex. 32
11. Ex. 33:12–23; 40:34–38; Num. 9:15–10:36
12. Num. 6:22–27; Ps. 121
13. Num. 11:1–35
14. Num. 13–14
15. Num. 21:4–9; John 3:9–21
16. Num. 29:12–40; Lev. 23:1–2, 34–43; John 7:1–39; 8:12–38
17. Deut. 4:1–40
18. Deut. 7:1–26
19. Deut. 8:1–20
20. Deut. 9:1–10:22
21. Pss. 78:12–55; 105:39–45; 107:1–16, 33–38
22. 1 Sam. 21:1–15; Ps. 56
23. 1 Sam. 22:1–23; Ps. 57
24. 1 Sam. 23:1–29; Ps. 54
25. 2 Sam. 15:1–37; Ps. 3
26. 2 Sam. 16:1–23; Ps. 91
27. 2 Sam. 17:1–29; Ps. 63
28. 2 Sam. 19:8–15; Ps. 18
29. 1 Kings 17:1–24
30. 1 Kings 18:1–46
31. 1 Kings 19:1–21
32. Hosea 2:14–23
33. Isa. 35:1–10; 41:8–20; 43:1–2, 19–21
34. Isa. 40:1–11; Mark 1:1–11
35. Pss. 23; 77:19–20; 78:52–53; 80:1; Isa. 63:11–14;
Ezek. 34:11–31; John 10:1–18
36. Matt. 4:1–11
37. Matt. 14:13; Mark 1:35; 6:31–32; Luke 5:16
38. Acts 9:1–25; Gal. 1:11–24
39. Heb. 3:1–4:16
40. Rev. 21:1–22:5



NOTES

Introduction: Welcome to the Wilderness

1. The Hebrew word *midbar* (OT) and Greek word *erēmos* (NT) are the two most frequently used words in the Bible for wilderness or desert.
2. Eugene Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (HarperCollins, 1997), 72.

Chapter 1: A Faith Formed and a Friend Found (Hagar)

3. Charles Spurgeon, *The Spurgeon Study Bible: Notes* (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 21.
4. Iain M. Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise and Reality: The Gospel According to Abraham*, ed. Tremper Longman III and J. Alan Groves (P&R Publishing, 1999), 70.
5. God's call to Hagar to return doesn't mean this will be the case in every scenario, nor does it mean we must stay in harmful circumstances. God will provide for and bless Hagar and Ishmael through Abraham's household.

Chapter 2: God's Training Camp in the Desert (Moses)

6. Philip Graham Ryken, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*, Preaching the Word, series ed. R. Kent Hughes (Crossway, 2015), 80.
7. Mark Vroegop, "Who Made You Judge Over Us?," September 23, 2012, <https://www.yourchurch.com/sermon/who-made-you-judge-over-us/>.

Chapter 3: Trust God's Winding Way Through the Wilderness (Israel)

8. Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow* (Counterpoint, 2000), 66.
9. This is seen in how God's presence guarantees to Moses success against Pharaoh (Ex. 3:12). Conversely, in Numbers 14, Israel will be defeated when God does not go with them because of their disobedience.
10. Waiting plays some part of most wilderness stories. It will show up again in the stories of Moses, David, and Elijah.

Chapter 4: Receive God's Daily Bread for Your Daily Burdens (Israel)

11. Exodus 16 focuses on Israel's hunger but it's bookended with two stories related to a lack of water and thirst (Ex. 15:22–27; 17:1–7).
12. Erik Raymond, *Chasing Contentment: Trusting God in a Discontented Age* (Crossway, 2017), 27.
13. Betsy Childs Howard, "You Can't Buy Manna from Costco," The Gospel Coalition, May 27, 2016, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/you-cant-buy-manna-at-costco/>.

Chapter 5: Don't Fall for the Desert Mirage (Israel)

14. Quoted in Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R Publishing, 2009), 215–16. I heard this story from Pastor Scott Luck who used part of it as a sermon illustration on sin in Psalm 63.
15. Israel won't leave Mt. Sinai until Numbers 10:11–12.
16. This incident of temptation and idolatry in the desert is repeated throughout the book of Numbers as Israel faces a trial or temptation and they respond with ingratitude, discontentment, and unbelief toward God.
17. Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (Dutton, 2009), xix–xx.
18. C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Harper Trophy, 1952), 109.

Chapter 6: Worship in the Wilderness (David)

19. See Psalm 52.
20. See Psalms 34 and 56.
21. See Psalms 54 and 57 where David hides from Saul, and Psalms 63 and 142 for general cave psalms written in the wilderness.
22. There is debate about whether the superscriptions are inspired or not, but most theologically conservative scholars agree they can be viewed as a reliable history and help us with interpretation. See Peter Gentry, "Are the Superscriptions in the Psalms Part of Scripture?," Logos, July 22, 2021, https://www.logos.com/grow/bsm-superscriptions-in-psalms/?srsltid=AfmBOoo_hm266kOoeCeFcrWAvMz7dr8g6c2Oyj-O21tzWh9xGIQ8NlxP.
23. There are other psalms lacking an explicitly stated connection to the wilderness but the subject matter picks up wilderness themes, especially David's famous Psalm 23. Another example is Psalm 41, which many scholars think David wrote after fleeing from his son and being betrayed by his friend, Ahithophel. Or Psalm 18, which describes deliverance from Saul.
24. Eugene Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (HarperOne, 1997), 78.
25. For an excellent book on lament, see Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Crossway, 2019).

Chapter 7: God's Goodness in Drought and Despair (Elijah)

26. See C. H. Spurgeon, *The Autobiography of C. H. Spurgeon, Volume 2: The Full Harvest* (Banner of Truth, 1973); and Arnold A. Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A Biography* (Banner of Truth, 1987).
27. Charles Ray, "The Life of Susannah Spurgeon," in *Morning Devotions by Susannah Spurgeon: Free Grace and Dying Love* (Banner of Truth, 2006), 166.
28. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 207.
29. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 196–97.
30. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 197.
31. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, 195.
32. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Encouragement for the Depressed* (Crossway, 2020), 12–13.
33. Richard Blackaby, *Living Out of the Overflow: Serving Out of Your Intimacy with God* (Blackaby Ministries International, 2017), 48.
34. Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Kings*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Iain M. Duguid, and Philip Graham Ryken, Reformed Expository Commentary (P&R Publishing, 2011), 531.
35. Ryken, *1 Kings*, 535.

Chapter 8: Victory In and Over the Wilderness (Jesus)

36. Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2010), 131.
37. Kyle Strobel, *Formed for the Glory of God: Learning from the Spiritual Practices of Jonathan Edwards* (InterVarsity Press, 2013), 158.
38. See Ulrich W. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness* (Wipf & Stock, 1963).
39. When you read the description of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation 21–22, notice how the river of life (Rev. 22:1) flows out from God's throne into the streets and land, flooding it with blessing and glory. The river brings forth fruit on the tree of life for its inhabitants and its leaves provide healing to the nations (Rev. 22:2). See also Gen. 2:10; Ezek. 47:1; Zech. 14:8; Ps. 46:4; John 7:38; Rev. 21:6; 22:17.
40. C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (Harper Trophy, 1956), 196.
41. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 210.
42. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 210–11.

Conclusion: Trusting the Good Shepherd in My Wilderness

43. Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 2nd ed. (InterVarsity Press, 2000), 43.