

7 Hidden Blessings of a Wilderness Season

A good friend of mine is going through a difficult season. He lost his job several months ago, his severance has run out and many of his calls to prospective employers are ignored. And even though he has money in the bank and food on the table, anxiety about the future sometimes robs him of sleep. At times it feels like God is ignoring his calls, too.

“You are in an uncomfortable wilderness season,” I told my friend today. “But don’t forget that God is in the wilderness.”

All the great heroes of faith passed through a wilderness. Abraham wandered there for years while he waited for God’s promise. Moses was prepared for leadership in the dry Sinai desert. David hid from Saul in a wilderness—yet he wrote most of his psalms in those desolate places. And Jesus faced His biggest confrontation with Satan in a wilderness.

The wilderness is God’s training ground—and no one who wants to grow spiritually can avoid it. It’s a place of rigorous discipline and painful delay, and yet once we pass through it we find answered prayers and indescribable blessings. In the wilderness we are formed and shaped and hammered and chiseled. Our pride is shattered, and our faith is tested by fire.

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Do you find yourself in the middle of a spiritual desert? Is your faith being stretched and tested so intensely that you feel like fainting? I’ve known that feeling, and so have all the saints who were led by God to endure the fiery furnace. The wilderness isn’t fun, and we don’t choose it willingly. Yet when God leads us there, it offers us unexpected benefits.

Here are seven of them:

– **Your hunger for God will intensify.** Psalm 63:1b (NASB) says, “My soul thirsts for you, my flesh yearns for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” Palm tree roots are known to spread 100 feet from the base of the tree because they seek scarce water in the desert. When you are going through a dry time, remember that your roots are extending outward. Spiritual thirst causes spiritual growth!

– **You will experience supernatural joy.** David composed songs in a dreary cave, and Paul and Silas sang hymns in a prison. Isaiah 35:1-2 says, “The wilderness and the desert will be glad; and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; Like the crocus it will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.” We don’t associate hot, dry places with exuberant praise. But when we go through times of testing, and our flesh is crucified, we discover that true joy isn’t based on circumstances.

– **You will hear the Lord’s voice more clearly.** Moses didn’t see the burning bush in the busy streets of Egypt; he had to go to the wilderness of Midian. There he saw God’s holy flame and heard His voice. When you are in a literal desert, stars are more visible, the sounds of nature are more vibrant and distracting noises are tuned out. Hosea 2:14 says, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly to her.” This is the greatest blessing of the desert—God speaks there!

– **You will experience His love in a new way.** How will you ever know God is a miracle-worker if you are never in a crisis? How will you ever know God cares for you if He doesn’t put you in an impossible situation? Sometimes He leads us into the valley of the shadow of death so He can prepare a table for us there. Hosea 13:5 says, “I cared for you in the wilderness, in the land of drought.” Look for the evidence of His love instead of complaining about the heat.

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– He will reveal new things to you. Did you know there are certain flowers that only grow in the desert? If we stayed in the same green pastures all the time, our understanding of God would be limited. Sometimes He leads us to dry places so we can experience more of Him. Isaiah 43:19 says, “Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.”

– You will grow spiritually so you can help others. Without the testing of the wilderness we would be like spoiled children. God invites us to the school of the Spirit, where we learn to overcome selfishness and embrace maturity. Many Christians don’t want to enroll in this school; they only want the benefits of Christian faith without the discipline. But Hebrews 12:11 beckons us to grow up: “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

– You will be more like Jesus. Deuteronomy 8:2 says, “And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, in order to humble you, putting you to the test, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.” Time spent in the wilderness isn’t wasted. God uses the dry times to adjust our bad attitudes, form godly character and develop our trust in Him.

If you find yourself in a wilderness season, don’t be afraid. God is there. The process may be slow, and you may feel uncomfortable, but when you get to the other side you will thank Him for the way He taught you, trained you and transformed you.

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