

What Joseph's Story Teaches Us About This Powerful Role of Holy Spirit

Who is a more faithful comrade in the wilderness than the Holy Spirit? Whose friendship is more valuable during troubled times than the most wonderful, kind, loyal, and awesome confidante in the Universe? When taking stock of your resources, remember this most precious, personal gift of His presence and fellowship. The living God, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, is going before you, walking beside you, guarding behind you, resting upon you and dwelling within you. What more do you need?

The greater our revelation of the Holy Spirit's presence, the greater our comfort. And the greater our comfort, the less the wilderness feels like a wilderness. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit will inoculate us from all pain and suffering. Instead, it means the depth of the Holy Spirit's comfort enables us, not only to maintain our joy and character in the wilderness, but also to flourish there in Christ more than ever.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing. ... Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame man shall leap as a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For in the wilderness waters shall break out and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes" (Is. 35:1-2a, 5-7).

How can we have a "wilderness" so colorful, alive, and

exhilarating? Through the comforting, transforming presence of the Holy Spirit. This is what makes the wilderness totally worth the trouble. It gives us the opportunity to experience the Holy Spirit's comfort on a level we would never have experienced otherwise. Nothing is more valuable than the awareness of the ever-present God. If you have entered a wilderness, determine you will use this as an occasion to discover more about the magnificent reality of the Holy Spirit.

The young patriarch, Joseph, faced many difficulties as God trained him for royalty, including his unjust imprisonment in Egypt before his rise to power. At that precise part of the story, however, the narrator makes a comment that is striking for its simplicity and magnitude. "But the Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:21).

The story already mentioned God's presence with Joseph several times. That's what made him successful in Potiphar's house. Yet now that Joseph's situation changed from his master's house to the jailhouse, his spiritual position remained the same. Just as God was before, so is He now "with Joseph" even in prison. The radical change of circumstances did not mean that God had left Joseph. He was still with His chosen vessel, directing Joseph's steps and forging his character.

But here's the secret. The Lord was not "with" Joseph merely in the physical sense while remaining detached emotionally. No, the Lord was with Joseph in the fullest sense of the word. He was experiencing the trial and suffering right along with His faithful servant. The Holy Spirit enclosed himself within Joseph's sufferings so they could go through the wilderness together, companions in the emotions and pressures of the experience.

This is how "the Spirit helps our weaknesses" (Rom. 8:26a). He is groaning with us when we "groan within ourselves" (Rom. 8:23). His presence is not shallow and technical, but

deep and intimate. The Spirit experiences our wilderness from inside us, embedded in our unique personality and perspective. Thus we can immerse ourselves in Him as He is within us. He is the one who assisted Jesus through the wilderness. He knows how to suffer the desert while fully understanding God's will and how we should pray. He knows our thoughts, weaknesses, strengths and ways of responding to pressure. Thus He knows exactly how to help us. He is our divine strength and knows how to walk us through.

So when you assess your resources, take stock of the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit. Realize that God Himself is with you, making His fullness available to you. You are not alone. Let the Spirit's peace and strength become yours. Let His comfort soothe you, even when there is no earthly source of consolation. Then your desert will become a sanctuary, your wilderness the garden of God. {eo2}

This Bible study has been taken from Daniel Kolenda's booklet Surviving Your Wilderness and is for those who want to discover God's way for conquering their wilderness times.