

July 2020



## Don't Despise the Wilderness

My good friend, David, was going through a dry time. He was in the wilderness.

When you're in the wilderness, you find it hard to hear from God. You may sit before Him in silence, waiting for a word, but it doesn't come. You wonder what you should be doing, but there is no clear voice from God telling you what to do. There is only silence.

Your spirit feels dry. You crave water. If only you could find a stream in your wilderness experience. If you could find that stream, you would plunge in head-first. You would immerse yourself in the cooling waters. But you look and you look and you find no water.

David was sitting across the table from me in a coffee house in Coon Rapids, Minnesota, where I lived at the time. We met there often to encourage one another and to share what God was telling us. But David's face was expressionless. He had nothing exciting to say. He made a comment about the wilderness he was going through and wondered when it would end.

When your friend is hurting, you want to help. Probably nothing you can say is going to encourage him, but you feel you have to say something.

"Nothing grows on the mountain," I said. "It all grows in the valley."

That got a reaction. An angry one!

"If one more person tells me that, I'm going to smack him!" he retorted.

"Yeah . . . well, I feel for you. I've been there," I was thinking, because I didn't dare

say anything at that point.

Everyone has wilderness experiences, but why?

**"Why?" everyone asks.**

**To rest.**

**Duh! To rest!**

Don't make everything so complicated. God leads you into the wilderness to rest.

When I was doing outreach events, I was continually dealing with my supporters. "How many events can you do in a year?" I was asked this question many times and it put tremendous pressure on me. I could see the wheels turning in their head. I was thinking there was a magic number and if my answer hit on that number, they would support me, but if they thought I wasn't doing enough, they would put their money into another ministry. This is a frustration every ministry faces.



The Billy Graham organization did one major event a year and they had hundreds of people on staff. I had one half-time assistant. Why did they think I could do a whole bunch of events every year? A friend of mine who also ran a ministry to youth ventured to put a measuring stick out there. He said if one person was working on the event, it would take him an entire year to put it together.

In the end, the lack of support by the church put me in a deep hole. I lost nearly everything . . . my house, my farmland, some people very close to me.

A friend of mine was an event producer at Billy Graham. Once, when I reached him on the phone, he was in a terrible state of depression. "I go through this after every event," he said.

It shouldn't be a mystery. James Dobson once said, "For every emotional high, there is a corresponding emotional low. You can't avoid it. It is the way we are made."

After producing an event, I was on the road in northern Minnesota, returning from meetings with pastors. I was exhausted, and had been for many days, so I took some back roads and drove slowly, an exercise that seemed to help my state of mind. I came upon a nice grove of trees by the side of the road and decided to pull over. Then I grabbed my Bible and went into the grove to sit under a tree with God.

That day God made something very clear to me that I will never forget.

My Bible opened to Psalm 1. In verse 3, I read these words:

"He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season . . . "

All of a sudden God was speaking to me. The tree yields its fruit once a year. Six months out of the year, it is dormant. All of its leaves fall off and it looks like it is dead. All of the activity during that time is in the roots, far below the surface.

**What in the world is the tree doing?**

**It is resting. Duh . . . It is resting.**

If God designed the tree to rest for six months out of the year, getting ready to produce fruit again in the Spring of the year, are people any different? Don't people also need a period of rest?

There are at least two people I can think of we would call "heroes of the faith," who died prematurely because they would not rest. Apparently, their passion for the lost was so great that it consumed them. John Hyde, was a great prayer warrior who wore grooves in the marble floor where he spent hours every day in prayer. Some accounts say he died of starvation. He fasted so much that he died of starvation from too much fasting.

Father Daniel Nash was Charles Finney's chief intercessor. He would pray so hard that his clothes were soaked in sweat in the sub-zero temperatures of winter. His passion for the lost and efforts in intercession literally wore him out and broke his health. He died in his early 50's.

Why does God lead us into the wilderness? To rest. He cares about our health and our spiritual condition. We are not machines. We are not meant to "go, go, go!" That is a terrible problem with our culture today. People are continually caught up in activity. They never stop. How in the world do they

ever hear the voice of God? I would think they would have great concern about the direction of their lives. If you are constantly in perpetual motion and never hear the voice of God, aren't you concerned about what you are doing, where you are going, if you are finding God's plan for your life?

I am convinced that many lives are wasted because they have never stopped long enough to find out what God wanted them to do.

Today, I stumbled across an incredible passage of scripture in Exodus. Israel had just come out of Egypt and God was looking out for them. He was looking out for their physical, emotional and spiritual condition. They could have been defeated right away and turned back, but God detoured them to save them from overwhelming discouragement.

*But when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt." But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness . . . "*

*Exodus 13: 17,18 (ESV)*

The Israelites weren't ready for war. They needed some rest first, so God led them by way of the wilderness.

Everyone has a wilderness experience at some time or other. The wilderness is a healthy and necessary part of the Christian life.

**Don't Despise  
the Wilderness.**

In His Service,

*George and Lorraine  
Halama*

George and Lorraine Halama

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