



Living in the WILDERNESS

JUDITH MACNUTT

Living in the wilderness is living in a place of God's love—does that sound like a paradox? Can we experience His love and goodness when we can't find our way?

When we come to faith in Christ, the love of the Holy Spirit renews our mind and moves us into our new identity in Him. Sadly, many of us as children gained our identity from the opinions and harsh words of others. Some of us, by God's grace, have allowed God to define our identity and purpose. There are times when we resist the Holy Spirit and do not live out of our true self in Christ. When the Holy Spirit nudges us to confess our sins, or to surrender our lives in order to transform us, we resist and do not want to change.

Most of us, by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, journey into another season of life: the wilderness. This may be a place of darkness and confusion, but it is for our spiritual benefit.

THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

In the biblical story of the Exodus, when Moses led the people of Israel out of captivity and wandered 40 years, it was a wilderness experience. When Moses was a young man, he didn't know his identity or his earthly inheritance. He was raised as an Egyptian; he had to learn about his Jewish roots and his connection to the family of God. Soon after he did, he was cast out of the country that was familiar to him.

In the wilderness, Moses had an encounter with God, and in meeting with God his identity and purpose was established. As we walked with God, he found the ability to obey Him, to perform signs and wonders, and to become the leader God used to lead the people of Israel out of bondage.

The purpose of that biblical journey was transformation. However, the generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt were resistant to change; they were not permitted to enter the Promised Land.



They wandered in the desert for 40 years until the next generation was raised up.

The story of the nation of Israel coming out of Egypt and into the Promised Land is a model for us, both in terms of our humanity and our spirituality. In the same way, we cannot find out who we are and what our purpose is until we come to God. In the wilderness we meet God in a deeper way and this difficult journey is meant to teach us the wisdom of God. The wilderness is a refining fire.

JESUS IN THE WILDERNESS

Jesus Himself had to go through a wilderness experience—not for 40 years but for 40 days. In his younger years he “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. (Luke 2:52). God was

moving him into his identity. Then, after receiving the Holy Spirit at the River Jordan, he was drawn into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit.

It was the love of God that drew Jesus into a time of suffering; it is the same love that draws us into the wilderness experience. Jesus was not afraid of it and we shouldn't be either. He comes into our darkest experiences with us. He prayed, *"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am."* (John 17: 24)

YOU AND I IN THE WILDERNESS

After we have been trained by it, God begins to transform our suffering.

Living through a season of darkness and exile, we have the opportunity redefine who we are and whose we are. We gain wisdom and we are transformed. It is what I call Sacred Wounding. God takes our wounding, our fears, and transforms them. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives He transforms our thinking, our spirit, and our faith. When He promises to renew our minds, it means there should be something different about us every day!

Some of us who have gone through the dark times are not transformed; we fall deeper into bitterness. This is because we are not spiritually "hungry." Spiritual hunger is a gift from the Holy Spirit. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst (for God) for they shall be satisfied.* (Matthew 5:6)

Some of us, in an unexplainable way, enjoy the attention and pity we receive in that place and we don't want to leave. We assimilate; we get comfortable where we are! As a therapist, one of the saddest things I have seen is when people get comfortable in their dysfunction. When we get comfortable in our pain, we deny and excuse it by simply saying that God isn't working.

Where is your place of wilderness? Where is the place where you feel alone and you can't hear God's voice? Where does it feel He has abandoned you?

All of us have a little place in our lives like this. It might be a son or daughter, a husband, a wife, a friend, a job, or our health. We may be in a dark place of depression, fear or anxiety.

We say to ourselves: *If God really loved me, He would do something about it. If He really cared about me, He would*

relieve this suffering. I have prayed and prayed. Why is God allowing this? Why is God not healing? Why did God let that happen? The enemy can take hold of our unanswerable questions in the midst of suffering and make us miserable. We are disillusioned and disappointed in God to find out life is not easy. God Himself has led you into the wilderness; don't think it's the enemy. God wants you to depend on Him, to lean on Him. In these times, it is God's will that we keep journeying in our pain and suffering until we come through it and are transformed, delivered and given life.

Because of Your great compassion You did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold Your manna from their mouths, and You gave them water for their thirst.

—Nehemiah 9:19-20

THIS IS GOD SPEAKING

"Therefore, I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards (vineyards signify blessings), and will make the Valley of Achor (Valley of Troubles) a door of hope. There she will respond as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. (Egypt represents bondage) "In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'"

—Hosea 2:14-16 NIV

It is the Lord who feeds us, heals us, guides us and loves us in the wilderness. He provided the people of Israel the cloud, the pillar of fire, and manna in the desert. He provided Jesus an angel at the end of the 40 days in the wilderness. He provides everything we need. **God is saying, *On the other side of the wilderness experience I will bring you to a place of great hope and blessing.***

The words of Psalm 119 (Passion Translation) are woven into this prayer:

PRAYER IN THE DARKNESS

Lord, I'm fading away. I'm discouraged and lying in the dust; revive me by Your word, just like You promised You would. I've

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Aug 25-26

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Sep 19-Oct 1

SHP® Level 2 (on campus)

Sep 29-Oct 1

Renew and Review Online

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SHP® Online Level 3

Oct 17-29

SHP® Level 3 (on campus)

Oct 27-29

Renew and Review Online

Nov 8-11

Internship (on campus)

Nov 15-19

Journey to Healing (on campus)

Nov 17-19

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Nov 28-Dec 10

SHP® Level 4 (on campus)

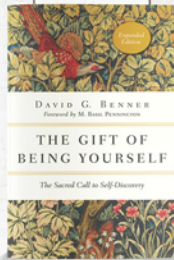
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poured out my life before You, and You've always been there for me. My life's strength melts away with grief and sadness; come strengthen me and encourage me with Your words. (Psalm 119:25-26, 28)

My heart seeks You even more in this dark valley. Your nearness is promised for the brokenhearted. My heart is Yours, and Yours to mend.

Thank You, Papa God, that I am not in my circumstances this day, for truly, I am in You. Love me tenderly so I can go on, for I delight in Your life-giving truth. My soul feels dry and shriveled, useless and forgotten, but I will never forget Your living truth. I've learned that there is nothing perfect in this imperfect world except Your words, for they bring such freedom into my life.

Lord Jesus, don't let me live a life not poured out. Don't let me live a life that misses the purpose for which I was sent from Your Presence. May I return to You, God, in Your right timing after I have completed all You have given me to do. I look to You for the strength and courage needed today.

Lord Jesus, strengthen my inner being by the promises of Your Word. May Your words be manna to me each and every day. Lift me up and I will be safe. Empower me to live every moment in the light of Your ways. Rescue me from the oppression of the ungodly. Let Your face shine brightly on me, Your loving daughter/son. Let me hear Your promise of blessing over my life, break me free from all unholy oppressors, in Jesus' name.

I'm going to trust what You've said, not what I see.

I'm going to trust who You are, not who I am.

I'm going to trust when I can't see tomorrow.

When all falls around me, You light the way.

You are God above all.

Amen. ✨



JUDITH MACNUTT is a licensed psychotherapist, author, teacher, conference speaker, co-founder and president of CHM.

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dream

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God placed a dream on the hearts of Francis and Judith, and it has become the dream of the whole CHM family. Our dream is to build a healing place where people can come to receive prayer and training, now and for generations to come.

Thanks to the support of so many who have come to realize God's purpose for CHM, we successfully raised enough to purchase land in Jacksonville, FL. This land is dedicated to our new healing center that will become a visible sign of God's love for His people, and a "city of refuge" for all those in need.

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