

ROAD TRIP DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 11

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

4 When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father,[a] the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

7 The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Exodus 3:1-10

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About 12 years ago, I had the privilege of going on a journey with others from our Conference to help with the ongoing recovery efforts in Haiti following the devastating earthquake of 2008. This island truly had a “wilderness” experience!

If you walk with Christ and seek to be conformed to his image, you will likely find yourself faced with a wilderness experience at some point in your life. The wilderness is where water is scarce... where a traveler walks alone in the heat without shade or cold without protection... and where wild animals live. In a spiritual wilderness God feels far away, distant, absent, and unresponsive... faith feels doubtful or uncertain... we feel alone, vulnerable, lost, and unprotected... there is the fear of hopelessness and the unknown... and it's the place where Satan resides.

The people of Haiti have been through storms and they have been separated—from one another, from family and friends in the states, and from the comforts we take for granted each day. Some initially felt they had been abandoned by the government or even by God. When the earthquake hit Haiti in 2008 it was the most devastating natural disaster the country had experienced known history. The entire island was without power and over 3 million residents were facing a crisis of epic proportion. Resources were scarce, and mothers and fathers couldn't provide even the basics for their families—food, water, a safe place to sleep at night. Even prior to the storm nearly half of the island lived below the poverty line and the unemployment rate was three times the national average. After the earthquake, the Haitian people knew what it was like to feel isolated and alone. They had no contact or communication with the outside world. Their wilderness experience stretched on for months; far longer than anyone would have thought possible under the circumstances.

Yet one of the things we learned as we connected with people during the mission trip was that the people of Haiti have come out of the wilderness much stronger than before their journey began.



Consider This...

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Now these people didn't choose the wilderness. They didn't go there as a refuge, like David. They weren't running or trying to escape, like Elijah. They found themselves there unexpectedly, but they found that God was already there waiting to walk through the wilderness with them. We heard countless stories from people about the impact of the storm and the way God protected them. Michèle is a shop owner near the coast who owns a gallery. He slept on the floor of his business with no power for three months. Ana had three feet of water in her home. She had no power or water for months after the storm. She lost every possession she had. Daniel is a small boy who attended our VBS. He built with blocks and then knocked them over as he imitated the winds that destroyed his home and everything around it.

Consider This...

The recurring theme we heard, though, was that God protected them and that their faith is stronger now than ever before. God met them in the wilderness. God appeared to them not in a fiery bush but in the rushing flood waters. And they clung to God as their protection, provision, comfort and hope.

Since 2008, God has used thousands of volunteers to be his instrument of hope and healing in Haiti. Many have responded to a call from God to "go". Throughout our week on mission, we were served and blessed and thanked more times than we could count! The people there were the most gracious and grateful I have ever met. Whenever anyone learned why we were in Haiti, their thanks and appreciation were overwhelming and often tearful. We discovered a passionate people who deeply love God and their neighbor. God used the people of Haiti to reveal himself more fully to our team. We saw him in their kind words, their deep faith, and resilient spirit. They became our burning bush!

One of the worship songs we sang in the evenings when we got together to reflect on the day was Stir A Passion. It's a great song and here is a few of the lyrics.

Stir a passion in my heart, God

Let it overflow, let it overflow

Let it rise, let it rise

Holy fire burn inside

Let it rise, let it rise

All for Jesus

The journey in the wilderness after the earthquake changed the people of Haiti forever. Their faith and hope are more resilient than ever. The experience prepared them physically, emotionally, and spiritually for whatever lies ahead. And these very passionate people are letting the love of God overflow! God used that overflow to stir a passion in our hearts; to ignite a holy fire that I pray continued to burn brightly long after the mission trip ended.



God uses our wilderness experiences to refine us and equip us; to build our faith and our character. God can also use them to give us rest and to reveal Himself to us in a new and powerful way.



Thank you, Father, for being near us in the wilderness; for going before us and meeting us there. Use those times to prepare us for the good work you are calling us to as we seek you with our whole hearts. Stir a passion in us that we might overflow with the evidence of your love, grace and mercy working in our lives and others would be drawn to it. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

If you've ever had a wilderness experience, where have you seen God in the midst of that?

How did God use your wilderness experience to prepare or equip you?



Think of one word to describe your relationship with God in each of the seasons before, during and after your wilderness experience.

Are you in the middle of the wilderness right now? Reach out to someone who can help you through.