

## Led Into the Wilderness

Sometimes, we can be led, by God, into the wilderness. It's a strange concept, it's confusing, it's even confronting, but it's a reality.

I wish I could tell you that as God leads you, that you will never face anything difficult, that He would always lead you away from every hurt or pain, but the truth is that sometimes God leads us into the wilderness.

### *Important Note*

Now just to clarify, **God does not lead you into the wilderness to make you suffer, He doesn't LEAVE you in the wilderness.**

God loves you so it's not in His character to harm you or even want to harm you, God has a plan for you, but sometimes, to achieve that plan, to accomplish His purposes, to be who God has created you to be, you need to be led into, and **ultimately through**, the wilderness.

### *How do you survive the wilderness?*

*Luke 4:1*

*4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted<sup>[a]</sup> by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.*

Have you ever tried to go on a diet? Whenever I've tried to go on a diet, and I'll definitely need to again after COVID, you know what the hardest part is? The hardest part of a diet for me is that I like to eat. And the whole point of a diet is to not eat, or to eat less, or at the very least, to eat less of the things you want to eat.

It's difficult because you are tempted by the very thing that you want but you should not have. If I didn't want it, it wouldn't really be a temptation. If my diet was that I wasn't allowed to eat raw carrots and you're waving this carrot in my face, it's fine. I don't want the carrot, I have no desire for the carrot, and if you say that I cannot eat the carrot, it's fine. It's not a temptation.

But if you put a delicious medium rare 9+ wagyu scotch fillet steak in front of me and say that I'm not allowed to eat it, I'm going to struggle.

The reason that I am tempted is because it is something that I want. It's not a temptation if you don't like it or if you don't want it, it's only a temptation if it's something that you want.

This scripture in Luke 4 shows us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil.

Before we move on, it's important to note that **the Holy Spirit did not lead Jesus into temptation, nor was it God's will for Jesus to be tempted.**

*James 1:13*

*When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;*

God was not tempting Jesus. He didn't want Jesus to fall into sin, He wasn't urging Jesus to give up. God doesn't tempt anyone. God didn't tempt Jesus, God doesn't tempt you.

The temptation or opportunity to sin does not come from God.

*Matt 6:13*

*<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,<sup>[a]</sup>  
but deliver us from the evil one.<sup>[b]</sup>*

This scripture clearly tells us that when we pray, we ask God to lead us **NOT** into temptation, but to lead us away from it, and for God to deliver us from the evil one.

So what does that mean? It means that temptation comes from the evil one. It's important to note that Jesus puts these two statements together.

**God not leading us into temptation is God delivering us from the evil one.**

In other words, the devil is evil enough on his own, he has enough ill will towards us to bring temptation and accusation and hurt and pain into our lives. God isn't doing any of that, the devil's doing more than enough.

The scripture clearly tells us that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

Jesus didn't miss God, He wasn't far from God, He was FULL of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness. Jesus was in the perfect will of God. He had just been baptised, the Holy Spirit comes upon Him, the Father declares that He is well pleased, He tells everyone to listen to Jesus, Jesus is in prime position to serve God and to do God's perfect will.

Jesus has taken every step of obedience, He hasn't allowed sin to enter into His life, He hasn't made any unwise decisions, He doesn't have a bad attitude or bad character, there are no issues in His life that need to be dealt with.

He is full of the Holy Spirit, so He isn't far from God, I mean, He IS God, but He is ALSO full of the Holy Spirit, and yet, in spite of all of these things – the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness.

And maybe you're thinking, "yeah, but that's Jesus. Jesus is different. He's on another level."

Moses, being led by God in the form of a pillar of fire and a cloud, was led into the wilderness.

David, while running for his life from Saul, inquiring of God, was led into the wilderness.

I think that Jesus is in good human company. This wasn't one of those 'only the Son of God' things, in fact most of Jesus' life is not an 'only the Son of God', most of Jesus' life, bar perhaps His birth and dying on the cross to take upon Himself the sins of the world, is an example for us to follow, He didn't live a life that was meant to be observed, He lived a life that was meant to be followed. That's why Jesus has followers and not spectators.

Sometimes, the Holy spirit leads you into the wilderness. And while it's not pleasant and it might not make sense and we ourselves would never choose to do it, God can still lead us through it. It's not the devil leading us into it, it's not even our mistakes or our own choices necessarily, and while there are consequences to our actions, there are times when you are fully obeying God, sensitive and full of the Holy Spirit, and He leads you into the wilderness. You didn't cause it, the devil didn't cause it, but for whatever reason, God leads you into it.

*The question is "why?"*

Why would the Holy Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness? Why would the Holy Spirit allow Jesus to be tempted? Why would the Holy Spirit lead us into a place that has no life, that is barren, that is farthest thing from what we perceive as success and victory?

The truth is that the only way to the Promised Land is through the wilderness.

The only way to be who God has called you to be, accomplish what God has called you to accomplish, to grow in how He has called you to grow, to overcome something, is to go through the wilderness.

Everyone's wilderness looks different. But usually, it's waiting for some kind of breakthrough. A breakthrough in your finances, in your health, in your job, in your ministry, in your relationships, in your family, in your mind. The wilderness is that place that is barren, where there seems to be no life and no hope, not even a sign of life.

For Jesus, it would've been a literal desert. A place that cannot sustain life, let alone grow life. It's hot and dry, so it's uncomfortable; there are no resources available so He was hungry and lacking food; there are no people, so He was alone.

And sometimes, when we're in a situation where there seems to be no signs of life, or where the things that are alive are dying, where hope seems to be vanishing, where we're lacking and leaking resources, where we feel alone – we start to really question God. We start to have doubts.

1 Cor 10:13

*<sup>13</sup> No temptation<sup>[d]</sup> has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted<sup>[d]</sup> beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted,<sup>[e]</sup> he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

Temptation is common to mankind. Jesus, being fully man and fully God, was tempted just like we all have been. Heb 4:15 tells us that Jesus has been tempted in EVERY WAY, just as we are. Temptation is common to all mankind, including Jesus.

**The Holy Spirit didn't lead Jesus to be tempted, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. And the reason the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness was so that Jesus could fast, dedicate His life to God, and be ready for the ministry that He was about to start. It was a bold and faith filled step of obedience and dedication to God.**

Sometimes we just need to remember that we followed God into the wilderness. We didn't do this to ourselves, but we followed God here. We took a step of faith or obedience, we listened to the Holy Spirit, we were actually doing what God told us to do.

We initiated this entire season of our lives because we were dedicating our lives to Him, it was a risk, it was a step of faith, it was scary and it was a challenge, but we did it because we wanted God's will for our lives to be done.

**You followed God into the wilderness which means that God is in the wilderness with you.**

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit when He was led into the wilderness, which means that He was full of the Holy Spirit WHILE He was in the wilderness.

You made a decision because you were following God, well God is STILL leading you. He's STILL with you. He's STILL got you in the palm of His hands. Just because you are in the wilderness, it doesn't mean you are without God.

Jesus was in the wilderness to commit His life to God, but the devil saw this as an opportune time to tempt Him. The devil's always looking for an opportunity to corrupt and to disrupt God's plan. In fact, after Jesus was tempted, we see that the devil left to wait for another opportune time. The devil comes when you're either the most vulnerable or when He sees you as a threat.

Dedicating your life to God, seeking God, setting time aside for God, prioritising God, recommitting your life to God is when the devil strikes, that's when the devil sees an opportunity to attack. That's when he sees you becoming a threat.

He knows that you're already in the wilderness preparing yourself, being obedient, doing whatever it takes, and that's when he seizes the opportunity to tempt you.

Temptation isn't a special privilege for the select few, God does not need to lead you to temptation for you to encounter temptation. You WILL encounter temptation. Every person on the planet will face temptation.

The devil tempted Jesus with what He wanted in the wilderness. Not something He didn't want, something that was appealing. The devil doesn't tempt you with things that you don't want. He doesn't tempt you with debt, but he might tempt you with a shortcut to being rich in gambling. He won't tempt you with a failed marriage, but he might tempt you with an opportunity to be unfaithful.

See the devil makes it look like he can solve all your problems. He tempts you with easy solutions.

In the middle of the wilderness, in the middle of the temptation, Jesus was still led by the Holy Spirit. **God does not tempt you, but He leads you** through the temptation, so even in the wilderness, even when you're tempted, God is still leading you.

Sometimes in the middle of the wilderness, it can be easy to start to doubt God because of how difficult it is. And the devil sees this is as an opportune time to tempt you.

The temptations are real:

*The devil tempts Jesus to miraculously turn stones into bread (Luke 4:3; Matt 4:3)*

A promise to an end of suffering, to feel better. Jesus hadn't eaten in a long time and He was lacking food and the devil offered an end to that suffering.

We can be tempted to end the suffering, to find a way to just make the pain stop. A dishonest way to gain finances, or instead of holding on to integrity, finding a way to feel temporarily emotionally fulfilled.

The temptation always sounds good, it's always something that eases the pain, that soothes the soul, but it's not always the right thing to do. It could be relying on a sinful habit, it could be finding solace in the wrong people or in the wrong environment. The temptation to ease the pain, to fill that feeling of lack, is real. But I love how Jesus responds – The word of God was His food. In other words, anything that you feel like you lack, God can provide it. Maybe you won't get it right now, but God will provide it, God WILL leave you fulfilled.

*The devil shows Jesus the kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5; Matt 4:8)*

The power to change everything, a shortcut to fulfilling His mission. Jesus sees a shortcut. He was there to save the world, but the devil could just relent and give it to him. The cost? Worship the devil.

The temptation for a shortcut is real. The shortcut to get it done your way, not God's way. Get it done in an easier and quicker way so that you don't have to keep on doing it.

Just quit your job instead of waiting for the breakthrough. Just get a divorce and marry someone else. Just change your uni course instead of seeing it through.

But if God has led you into that space, if God has led you into that job, that relationship, that situation, then you can trust in Him, you can keep on doing it. God's plan is still happening, it's still in operation, God's still with you and God is still in control.

Jesus tells the devil, "Worship the Lord your God only." He won't make any decision that dethrones God. He won't do anything that would not honour and glorify God. **And He would never place anyone or anything in God's position.**

### *Jumping from the temple (Luke 4:9; Matt 4:5)*

Testing God just to make sure that God is still really in it.

It's easy to want to test God. Of course, God is with you, keep seeking Him, keep asking Him, keep talking and listening to Him. But don't test Him. The temptation was to find certainty and to be sure. It was to get rid of that faith element and to just know for certain. It's purposely making a mistake or purposely doing something to see if God's really there.

It's like if you're struggling at work but God's called you to work there, so you purposely make mistakes to see if you'll get fired. It's like if your marriage is difficult so you purposely get into arguments or make things difficult to see if God can REALLY salvage the relationship.

Don't test God. You can trust Him, you don't need to test Him.

### *Led through the wilderness*

These are all reasons that we can feel like God is not in the wilderness. But the bible tells us that the Holy Spirit led Him there. The Holy Spirit was leading Jesus, even though He was in the wilderness.

The good news is that Jesus went through the wilderness, He didn't stay in the wilderness.

This entire account is also given in Matthew 4, but in Matthew 5, which means that His wilderness experience was still recent, Jesus begins to teach. And He starts teaching things like,

*<sup>4</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek (quietly suffering, being imposed on),  
for they will inherit the earth.*

*<sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.*

<sup>8</sup> *Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.*

<sup>10</sup> *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

And it might come across like Jesus is just teaching and preaching to His disciples, but it goes beyond just a great message, Jesus is teaching from experience.

He knows what it means to be poor in spirit, He knows what it means to be meek, to quietly suffer, He knows what it means to have hunger, both physically and for righteousness, He knows what it means to be pure in heart.

But He also knows the rewards that come from those things. He knows that while the wilderness brings many challenges, there is also hope on the other side.

In Matt 4, the account of Jesus' wilderness experience, it says in verse 11 that after the devil left Him, angels came and attended Him.

At the end of the wilderness experience, Jesus was ministered to, He was restored, He was brought back to health.

At the end of the wilderness, we can look forward to a time of healing and restoration. It's not that God isn't with you in the wilderness, of course He is, He led you there, He is always with you, He will never leave you nor forsake you, but at the end of the wilderness is the Promised Land. After six days of work, there is a day of rest. The wilderness will end, and when it ends, you will find restoration.

*1 Peter 5:10*

<sup>10</sup> *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

So when the Holy Spirit leads you into the wilderness, you can trust God that He is still with you, that He is still leading you, and that He will restore you and make you strong.

I want to encourage you that when the Holy Spirit leads you into the wilderness, He's still with you, and when the devil tempts you, you can overcome it. God has an incredible plan and purpose for your life. He's with you, He loves you, and He will see you through. Stay connected to Him, stay the course, persevere, and trust God because He has plans to prosper you.