

Big Idea

In life, we sometimes we go through the wilderness. How do we experience God's presence when we are going through a wilderness – a dry, barren, bleak place where you feel alone, isolated, confused, hurt, like nobody understands?

- --Your greatest need becomes a gift when it causes you to depend on God.
- --The enemy attacks when we are doing the right thing not the wrong thing. The enemy attacks when we are tired and spiritually depleted.
- --Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is rest and recharge.
- --When God wants to be heard, He often speaks in a whisper. God whispers because He's close. The devil shouts his lies; God whispers His truths. He'll never leave you. He'll carry you. He loves us with an undying love.

Scripture

- **1 Kings 19:3-6**

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life...he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

- **Psalms 23:1-3 (NKJV) and Psalm 23:4 (NLT)**

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

- **Psalms 139: 7-10 (NIV)**

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

Discussion Questions

1. Elijah learned a lot about himself and about the Lord during his time in the wilderness. As you look back at a time when you were experiencing a wilderness, what did you learn about yourself and what did you learn about the Lord? How did He help you get through the wilderness experience?
2. **Psalm 34:18 (NIV)** says, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Think about a crushing experience that you've had and could not have survived without knowing the Lord was close to you. What was that experience like? If you have not yet had the experience of trusting the Lord to get you through such times, have you ever observed this in someone else? How did you know it was the Lord that got that person through the experience?
3. Read the words above from Psalm 23 and Psalm 139. How do either of these verses relate to experiences that you've had in your life?

Prayer Focus

Lord, we know that you are always with us and that you speak to us. Help us to stop, rest in you, and be still so that we can feel you nearby. Help us to take time to meditate on Your Word, and to hear Your still small voice. Teach us how wonderful it is to obey Your Word so that we may experience Your peace and comfort – even in the wilderness.

Next Steps

As we go through the Christmas season, prayerfully consider those around you. Share the hope of the Christ-child with them. If you are experiencing loneliness, ask the Lord to make Himself known to you, and seek out other believers.

Leader Tip

Consider the effect of individuals in scripture who have experienced loneliness and isolation. Be sensitive to and encourage those in your group who may be experiencing loneliness during this season.