

Joining Jesus in the wilderness



“The **WILDERNESS** is not for us to see how strong we are,
but for us to see how **STRONG HE** IS.”



"Joining Jesus in the Wilderness"

A Study of Luke 4:1-15

Copyright © 2006 Waukesha Bible Church
Published by Torn Veil Publications
Reigning Grace is the Theology of Waukesha Bible Church

Waukesha Bible Church
S53 W24079 Glendale Road
Waukesha, Wisconsin 53189
www.waukeshabible.org

All rights reserved. No part of this booklet may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means-electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise-except for brief quotations for the purpose of review or comment, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Preface

Since 1951 Waukesha Bible Church (WBC) has ministered to the Waukesha community. WBC is a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based Ministry. As a fellowship we are convinced that God is honored in the careful handling of His Word and in the acknowledgment that His Son, Jesus Christ, is enough for this life and in the life that is to come. We are equally convinced that God has entrusted us with this message. It is a message of life and not death; of freedom, not bondage. We wish to take this message to the ends of the earth until worshippers from every tribe, tongue, people and nation have been gathered to honor God.

A Word of Introduction

Local Churches have received from God a sacred trust. This trust is a mission. This mission is defined for us in Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and 2 Timothy 2:2. This same mission is pictured for us by the early church in the activity of the apostle Paul beginning in Acts 13:1. The mission is to duplicate herself in the lives of others. Church health is not defined by numerical size or budgetary well-being, but by the degree to which they are intentionally engaging in the reproducing of local churches. Churches birth churches. God's safeguard against doctrinal defect and pastoral apathy is through the strengthening and establishing of local churches.

What is the Purpose of this Study?

The intent of all study is to ask the hard questions and to seek Biblical answers. Parroting standard answers without learning the truth first hand will produce an anemic faith. May it please our heavenly Father to open our eyes to the magnitude of His grace so that we might understand all that we are in His Son and all that He is for us.

A word about Torn Veil Publications

Torn Veil Publications (TVP) is the distributing arm of WBC and exists to shout the supremacy of God in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of Scripture and to share Him with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. It is all designed as part of the WBC vision to spread a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based message to others.



Preparing For The Journey Into The Wilderness

Most relationships are things that we take for granted. We simply assume it will always be there so we do not work at cultivating them. The same is true of our relationship with God; often we take it for granted and forget to cultivate it. This short study seeks to place the emphasis on our relationship with God by examining the way Jesus celebrates His relationship with His Father during His time in the wilderness.

I am reminded of the couple who began dating and always sat tight against each other even when they were in the car. Once they got married and as the years passed the distance between them grew. After many years while taking a trip in their car the husband was driving and the wife was sitting in the passenger seat. She was lamenting the fact that they were no longer snuggled up against each other when driving and the husband's response was, "I didn't move."

This is no less true when we think of our relationship with God. God has not moved in His relationship to us, but perhaps we have moved from keeping Him first and foremost in our mind's eyes. The most important relationship you have is the one you have with God. Although nothing can destroy it, you can be ignoring it and thus not fully enjoy everything that is yours in Christ right now.

The wilderness we are about to enter into is a wilderness of our own choosing. God works in us so that we willingly go to the desert. **It is not the wilderness of sin or its consequences.** It is a wilderness that God is leading us to journey in.

Some would place such activity as we are about to consider as a spiritual discipline. What is a spiritual discipline?

"Spiritual disciplines help to keep our [focus on God]. But no discipline is able to create or start one's relationship with God. Nothing we do can do that; Christ did it already. No discipline can earn us heavenly brownie points, because there are no such brownie points to earn. No discipline gives us even the briefest moment of escape

A Study in Luke 4:1-15

from our broken nature. No discipline can make us more valuable as persons, or make us inherently more of a leader. Your life may go smoother because of it, but it may get much rougher, and neither is really the point of it." <http://www.spirithome.com/spirdisc.html>

How are we to view our wilderness moments? During our present study I would like us to join Jesus in the wilderness. I am going to use the religious calendar of the "Christian" church at large to guide us in our thinking during our journey into the grace of God.

Although we are not accustomed to following a religious calendar, the religious calendar marks March 1st as Ash Wednesday. This begins a time called Lent. Lent is a 40 day period culminating with Easter. It has historically been set aside by the church at large to prepare the people of God to enter into the sufferings of Jesus Christ in preparation for Easter Sunday. Traditionally, Lent is a season of grief that necessarily ends with a great celebration of Easter. It is known in Eastern Orthodox circles as the season of "Bright Sadness." For those of us who grew up in certain religious systems Lent was always marked by something that we would give up and then give over to God as an expression of our love for the Lord.

Somewhere along the way the entire idea of Lent became very much man centered and was looked upon as a means of earning favor or meriting salvation from God. Such thinking twists something that can be good into something that becomes damnable. It is not *what is done*, but *why it is done* that can make it spiritually tragic.

Yet is there an idea inside of such religious expressions that can assist us in our pursuit of Christ? I do believe so. By considering this present study it is my prayer that our awareness of God in our lives will be heightened.

As we approach the Passion Week of Christ I would like us to think about preparing ourselves for it. This preparation is **first** through **mind-renewal**. We must reflect on truth; the truth about Christ and His redemptive activity. **Secondly**, this preparation requires transferring this truth into our daily life expressions. We must think of tangible activities that we can engage in for the purpose of seeing Jesus as enough.

We must see the cross and His resurrection as life altering, guiding us in our daily decision making. Does Jesus matter? I want us to embrace Paul's thought when he said in Philippians 3:10, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

It is my prayer that during this time in our study God would grant to us a vision of His Son that would bring hope, healing, and wholeness to those areas

in our lives where sin has gained a foothold and where its wounds and scars are controlling and destroying relationships.

I would like us to consider the wilderness temptation of Jesus Christ. There are questions we will attempt to answer: “Why the wilderness? What is the wilderness?” Initially there are three observations about the wilderness.

- **The wilderness stands as a time of preparation.**

Its intent was to show who He was. It was a provoking, a challenge, and an accusation. Was He whom He claimed to be? The confrontation was intentional and direct. It is placed at the beginning of his ministry to probe the nature of the one sent.

“Jesus shows before his ministry begins that his trust and obedience are in his Father.”
(Baker Commentary on the Bible, “Luke,” Thomas R. Schreiner, 810)

- **The wilderness is a time of separation.**

The wilderness allows us to strip away the secondary and see once more the primary. It allows the power of the cross and the sufficiency of the Trinity to power their way back into our lives. Although the wilderness is a time of difficulty it can also be a gateway into the blessing of God that has been secured for His people in the indwelling Holy Spirit and the cross work. The wilderness provides a platform for the power of the cross to beam its way into our daily lives.

But we are to be forewarned.

- **The wilderness is also a time of temptation.**

The wilderness shows us what we are. Our weakness comes to the surface, but it is during this time that we must not lose sight of Paul’s triumphant declaration in 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

⁹ “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:9,10).

It is while we are weak that we can begin to see the power of God. So let us begin this journey in preparation for our Lord’s Passion Week and powerful resurrection. Let us ask Him to show us more clearly who He is, what He has done, and who we now are in Him.

The purpose of the wilderness is not for us to see how strong we are, but for us to see how strong He is. The wilderness is not about us, but about Him. We would be amiss if we thought that Jesus in the wilderness was a bad thing. His removal from comfort was a good thing. The temptation He faced at the hands of the devil was orchestrated by God. We cannot forget that it was the Holy Spirit that led Him into the wilderness. God is in our deserts.

God is in
our
deserts.

Before we consider joining Jesus in the wilderness it is important that we note seven fundamental truths concerning our relationship with God in Christ.

Seven Fundamental Truths to Prepare for the Wilderness

No matter why we chose the wilderness or how pitiful our performance might be in the wilderness there are seven fundamental truths that must be held as we prepare ourselves to journey with Jesus in the wilderness.

1. We are not working from deficiency, but from abundance.

The purpose of the wilderness is to remove clutter and increase clarity. It is not to gain what is lacking, but to reflect on what has been provided.

“the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

“and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority” (Col. 2:10).

The purpose of the wilderness is to remove clutter and increase clarity. It is not to gain what is lacking, but to reflect on what has been provided.

2. We can never undo by our actions what God has done through His.

“therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit” (John 19:30).

The wilderness is for our enjoyment. Whether we go into the wilderness or not or once entering in we fail, we can never undo what God has done.

3. What we receive by grace, we cannot maintain by works.

“are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3)

The wilderness does not secure or sustain. The wilderness celebrates and commemorates. It reflects on what God has done, is doing, and will do.

4. Our greatest strength is our weakness, and our greatest boast is His cross.

“and He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

The wilderness is a reminder that all we need in life we already have in Christ.

5. We are not working for our victory; we are working from His.

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

The wilderness is a time to reflect on the magnitude of His cross-work in behalf of His people. The wilderness allows us to see that it has been and always will be about Him.

6. Position changes performance, but performance can never alter one’s position.

¹⁷ “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. ¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

It is because of His cross-work and resurrection that we can invite the wilderness as a time when we might see Him with greater clarity.

7. What we once were in Adam, we no longer are, but still have.

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry” (Col. 3:5).

A Study in Luke 4:1-15

The wilderness can remind us that our greatest enemy this side of heaven is always within us. Consider the language of James 1:13-15.

¹³ “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But **each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.** ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (James 1:13-15).

Let us go to the wilderness with Jesus and see it as a time of preparation, separation, and potential temptation. But let us enter the wilderness knowing that our relationship with God is settled.



Why the Wilderness? The Wilderness is a Place of Solitude

So, why should I consider the wilderness? One purpose of the wilderness is to separate ourselves from life's routines and focus more quantitatively and qualitatively on who Christ is, what He has done, and who we are in Him.

We are inundated by circumstances that pull us away from Christ. What do I see as the dangerous conformities (inside and outside the church) that lead us away from new life? Consider with me the following information:

- 1 out of 3 marriages fail.
- 70% are living paycheck to paycheck (Source: Wall Street Journal)
- Average American spends \$1.22 for every dollar they earn. (Myvesta.org, Inc)
- 95% argue about money related topics on a regular basis
- We are consumed with worry over our marriages, relationships, health issues, death, money, international and national conflict, and employment.
- We are controlled by what others might think of us if they knew the truth.

There are many easy or common patterns that seduce us and grab our attention and distract our appetites.

We are always trying to look better than we are. For whatever reason we have allowed the TV and modern advertisement to sell us a lie as to what constitutes normal and live with huge amounts of clutter and debt. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is an American saying, but it has never been an American ideal. We have always been more interested in getting ahead of the Joneses than in trying to match them.

All of these concerns rob us of our joy. How do we make our lives easier? How can we restore the joy that is ours in Christ? I believe a means to that end is by joining Jesus in the wilderness.

Yet we are still troubled by the idea of slowing down. Is a place of solitude necessary? Consider with me the DC Comic book hero Superman.

The Fortress of Solitude is the occasional headquarters of Superman in DC Comics. It lies deep in the core of a mountainside in the desolate Arctic wastes.

“Whenever Superman wants to get away from it all,” notes *Action Comics* Number 261, “he retires to his secret sanctuary, the Fortress of Solitude, the most glamorous hideaway in the entire universe!”

In Superman's words,

This is the one place where I can relax and work undisturbed! No one suspects its existence, and no one can penetrate the solid rock out of which it is hewn!

Why do we think we are exempt from needing a “Fortress of Solitude?”

With all of this in mind, let us consider the wilderness as it is depicted in Luke 4:1-15.

There are two primary movements inside of our Lord's wilderness. **First**, there is the nature of the wilderness. And **second**, there is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. There is a sense in which the one must precede the other. The nature of the wilderness provides the platform for the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Sitting still to listen and look for God is contrary to our spiritual upbringing.

This study seeks to focus on the idea of solitude.

While a teacher I have been noted to say to my students when taking a test, “You have plenty of time, just hurry up!”

You and I have all the time we need, but have created levels of involvement that rob us of our ability to quiet our hearts before God. The internal noise is deafening.

Sitting still to listen and look for God is contrary to our spiritual upbringing. We have bought into the devil's lie that our value is found in what we do, not in what we are. We do not see worship as a valid expression of the Christian life and believe it is better to burn out for Jesus rather than rust out for the devil. When in reality both extremes are invalid expressions of the Christian life.

There are certain qualities about the wilderness that lend themselves to spiritual reflection. I would like to begin by noting the first of several qualities, solitude.

The wilderness is a place of solitude

The first thing I would like us to consider about the wilderness is solitude. Seeking solitude is . . .

"[The] practice . . . of seeking times of silence in our lives. It's hard to hear the Spirit with all the noise around us. So, many Christians have learned to take some small part of each day and set it aside for silence. This means shutting off the beeper, turning off the TV and radio, taking the phone off the hook, and closing the door. Or, it means walking off to the beach or garden or mountain, as Jesus Himself did, and not doing anything but leaving yourself open to the Lord."
<http://www.spirithome.com/spirquie.html#quiet>

It is a time where we seek to quiet the noise that is around us and in us so that we might hear more clearly the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and see more clearly Jesus Christ in and through general and special revelation.

Although we see the negativity of the wilderness, what it represents is something that is highly positive. I am only considering the idea as it is present in Luke's Gospel, but Jesus often separated Himself from others in order that He might give Himself (for a season) to intentional communion with His Father.

Read the following references:

"When day came, Jesus left and **went to a secluded place**; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them" (Luke 4:42). (Mark 1:35 tells us that He went to pray.)

"But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (Luke 5:16).

"It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12).

"When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida" (Luke 9:10).

"Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray" (Luke 9:28).

"On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him" (Luke 9:37).

"Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet" (Luke 21:37).

"And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him" (Luke 22:39).

The wilderness in these passages is a place of solitude. Jesus is often seen separating Himself from His daily surroundings in order to have a more determined time of personal intimacy with His heavenly Father.

In considering solitude there is both a negative and a positive aspect.

Solitude negatively considered

Sometimes the greatest temptations come when you are all alone and in the absence of accountability and discovery. No one is there to expose your secret sin. It is during this time that we might make our greatest compromises and give up the greatest fights.

Solitude can be a negative action if not used properly. However, the positives to solitude far outweigh the potential negative.

Solitude positively considered

There are extremes to solitude, but there is also a healthy expression of solitude that can promote spiritual development.

Because we have been conditioned to perform we struggle with the idea that resting is a spiritual discipline. Yet resting, or being, is far more significant to the Christian life than doing and working.

There can be at least three immediate consequences to solitude.

1. Solitude provides the opportunity to listen

Remember as a child when you would lie down in a grassy field and simply have the wind blow over your body and move the grass in rhythmic movements of God's doing? Remember the witness of God in creation? Creation testifies to the greatness of God.

When we step back and separate ourselves from the clanging clutter of our misguided lives we can hear God. And do you want to know what He is saying? The voice says, "I am here and I will never leave you or forsake you." The whisper continues, "I am enough in this life and in the life to come and it is time to rest in me."

In 1 Samuel chapter 3, Samuel said to God, "Speak, for Your servant is listening." The question for me is not "is God speaking," but rather "Am I listening?"

ILLUSTRATION:

The story is told of a man who decided to become a monk, so he signed up with a monastery that took its vows of silence seriously. The head monk told him he could not speak a single word for 5 years. However, after 5 years, he would be permitted to speak two (and only two) words.

After 5 years, the head monk called him in and said, "You are now permitted to speak your two words, so choose them carefully and speak what's on your mind. But remember: only two words. The monk said, "Food bad!"

The head monk reminded him he could not speak another word until his next 5 years was reached. In his 10th year, the head monk summoned him and told him it was time for his two words, so he should choose them carefully. The monk said, "Bed hard!"

The head monk again reminded him of his vows to remain absolutely silent for the next 5 years. At the end of those 5 years, he was again sent for and given the opportunity to speak his two words. The monk said, "I QUIT!"

The head monk looked up and said, "Well I'm not surprised. All you've done since you've been here is complain!"

Solitude can create the opportunity for silence and in our silence we create the platform to listen.

Throughout the Bible the audience is often called upon to hear God. The idea behind hearing is to listen intelligently, to obey what is heard.

Solitude can create
the opportunity for
silence and in silence
we create the platform
to listen.

Listening in the Old Testament

The occurrence of the word is too numerous to examine every reference in the Old Testament, but by looking at just the Psalms and the book of Proverbs we can get a sense of the word as it refers to the idea of listening.

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD"
(Ps. 24:11).

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house" (Ps. 45:10).

"Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world" (Ps. 49:1).

"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God" (Ps. 50:7).

A Study in Luke 4:1-15

“Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul” (Ps. 66:16).

“Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me” (Ps. 81:8).

“Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee” (Ps. 143:8).

“A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels” (Prov. 1:5).

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother” (Prov. 1:8).

“But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil” (Prov. 1:33).

“Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding” (Prov. 4:1).

“Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many” (Prov. 4:10).

“Hear me now therefore, O ye children, and depart not from the words of my mouth” (Prov. 5:7).

Listening in the New Testament

The New Testament counterpart is equally prolific. I would like to note the idea as found in Mark 4:3 and 19. Jesus calls His audience to “listen” to what He is about to say. Verse 19, in addressing the problem of a soil type, states it in the following words:

“but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

Notice the items listed,

- the worries of the world, and
- the deceitfulness of riches, and
- the desires for other things

It is these things that “enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

Because of these things entering in, we are not listening and thus the Word of God is unfruitful in our lives. By entering into the wilderness with Jesus we are seeking to intentionally “listen” to Him in order that “the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things” would be silenced and that we would more carefully be hearing what the Holy Spirit is saying through “the written Word of God, creation, and our conscience.” I put those three in their proper and primary order.

How important is it to be listening?

Sam, a dispatcher for a national moving company in Philadelphia, gave Mike, a new driver, an assignment to go to Portsmouth to make a household goods delivery. When Mike arrived in Portsmouth, he called Sam for further instructions. As Sam gave Mike the necessary information, Mike got a strange feeling that something wasn't quite right. Mike asked Sam for the complete address, which was Maple Street in Portsmouth, Virginia. Well, Mike was in Portsmouth, but it was Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Mike was ten hours away from where he was supposed to be. He had traveled north in the wrong direction.

In his haste, Mike didn't listen to all the information that Sam gave him, and Sam neglected to get accurate acknowledgment from Mike stating that he understood the instructions.
<http://www.itstime.com/apr2000.htm>

May God help us to use our solitude in order to listen to and for His voice in and through His revelation.

The second immediate consequence to solitude is . . .

2. Solitude provides the opportunity to slow down

There are several passages of Scripture that speak of this intentional quieting for the purpose of communing with God.

- In Exodus 14:13 God calls His people to stop trying to figure out their own deliverance and start resting in His.

“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever” (Exod. 14:13).

- God will do what He wants with what is His. Because this is true, we must be still and know that He is God.

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth” (Ps. 46:10).

- Because God is in control, we need not worry about the prosperity of the wicked.

“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass” (Ps. 37:7).

- Our resting in Him is an affirmation that we can’t, but Jesus can.

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him” (Ps. 62:5).

The tragedy of our present pace is that we believe we are making great progress but are unaware that we are in a freefall and we do not even know it.

Solitude allows us to slow down. The tragedy of our present pace is that we believe we are making great progress but are unaware that we are in a freefall and we do not even know it. We need to slow down.

The third immediate consequence to solitude is . . .

3. Solitude provides the opportunity to think

“Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah” (Ps. 4:4).

In the book of Psalms we find the word “Selah” used in 71 verses. Selah is often left un-translated, but it carries the idea of pause or to reflect.

Thomas A. Edison said, “The best thinking has been done in solitude.”

Henry Scougal notes how a means of begetting a holy and divine temper of spirit is through. . .

“a deep and serious consideration of the truths of our religion, and that both as to the certainty and importance of them.” He goes on to say, “Our thoughts must dwell upon them, till we be both convinced of them, and deeply affected with them.” (*The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, 118,119)

“The detachment from the confusion all around us is in order to have a richer attachment to God. Christian meditation leads us to the inner wholeness necessary to give ourselves to God freely.” Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 2nd ed. (Harper, 1988), p.21

Consider with me Luke 10:38-42.

This is one of the most pointed passages in the Word of God as it relates to working versus worshipping. Pagan theology works for God believing that through such efforts God is pleased and thus dispenses favor proportionate to the amount of effort exerted. There can be no rest for there is no finish.

It is a tragedy that has visited and continues to visit the world of Christendom. We have so skewed God and biblical worship that many of us side with Martha and view Mary as having a free loading non-productive welfare state faith.

Yet the passage is intentional. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His word (v. 39). She had a listening grace. Martha's distraction is set against Mary's ease of presence. Martha wrestled and Mary rested. The word distracted in verse 40 speaks of dragging a burden, of being twisted by anxiety. Our Lord notes this in verse 41 when he comments on Martha being worried and bothered. Martha's struggle manifested itself in her face and body language. Her statements to our Lord communicate the idea that she pounced on Him (v. 40). She charged Him with wrong doing. Her agitation blinded her to the inappropriateness of her actions. There is a danger in serving our Lord from a motive that lacks purity. *If we serve for merit, we have gained nothing. If we serve from love, we lose nothing.*

Our Lord's response to Martha overflows with compassion. Can you not hear it, "Martha, Martha." There is deep tenderness in His voice. He speaks her name, "Martha, Martha." She perhaps thought that through her actions God would love her more or be more approving of this willing and humble servant. Yet, God's love for and approval of either one was not rooted in their actions, but His grace. He did not accept them because of their actions, but because of His. He did not approve of them because of their actions, but because of His.

If we serve for merit,
we have gained nothing.
If we serve from love,
we lose nothing.

Our Lord establishes precedence in this small and short paragraph. "Only one thing is necessary." Only one thing, not these ten things, but this one thing. How many times do we find ourselves overextended spiritually, financially, physically, and emotionally? How many times do we find ourselves trying to live 26 hour days? How many times do we clutter the simplicity of Christianity with rituals and laws?

Yet, how many times have we laid hold of "this one thing?" When was the last time we simply sat at the feet of Jesus? Sat and listened to Him? What Martha did was not bad, but it was only good and her good took the place of the best. And because the good had replaced the best, the good became the eternal enemy of the best.

There is hidden within the text an interesting thought:

In verse 39 the Greek text suggests that Martha also was prone to sit at the feet of Jesus. Martha was a Mary but became distracted by the good and robbed herself of the best. Many of us have started well but because of “the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter[ing] in, [the Word is choked], and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

Many of us started out like Mary and through time have ended up like Martha. Perhaps today God will grant to us the ability to enter with Jesus into the wilderness and find our place of solitude.

APPLICATION:

I am inviting us to join Jesus in the wilderness. I would invite you during this week to seek opportunities for solitude in order that . . .

1. You might find time to listen to and for God through His revelation.
2. You might find time to slow down and see God in and through His revelation.
3. You might find time to think on who God is, what He has done, and who you now are in His Son.
4. I would also encourage each of us to set aside a period of time each day, if for only 15 minutes, where we seek to quiet all of the voices in order to hear and see Him. This might be simply going outside and sitting alone with nothing around you that is creating noise.
5. I will suggest that we set aside specific time to read the Word of God, to pray, perhaps to fast from food and/or other items that would be of a secondary nature like hours spent in front of the TV or computer that are not work related. But even here, work must fit into its proper place. Being a workaholic is not a virtue. Anytime we have the appendage “-aholic” attached to a word, we are running from something. Perhaps this time can be used to restore and strengthen relationships that are either fractured or have been weakened.
6. We must somehow create intentional pockets of time where we remove ourselves from the distractions around us both externally and internally.
7. May it please God the Holy Spirit to provide for us a clearer vision of God and His work in us and through us to those around us.



Why the Wilderness?

The Wilderness is a Place of Deprivation

We are a culture that is satiated by the abundance of things. We consistently over eat, over spend, and over commit. We have sensory overload and are glutted with the good, but woefully undernourished by the best.

Why the greed for food and gluttonous patterns of eating? What fear drives us to hoard and to consume in quantities that propel us to spiritual lethargy? If drunkenness is wrong and sexual promiscuity is wrong, and substance abuse and dependency is wrong, then why is gluttony spiritually acceptable? Living in the land of plenty does have disadvantages.

Everything we do services self. **We have time for everything, but nothing gets done. We are always over eating but are Bible starved. We are always over committing, but have no time for church or ministry. We are always over spending, but have nothing to give to the mission of Christ in and through His church.** We have become so enamored by the good that we have lost our way as it relates to the best. We are still in that freefall where we have deceived ourselves in believing everything is okay when in reality we are blind to Christ.

Why do we fear the fast? Are we like the impoverished child who, when given an endless supply of food, gobbles it down as if tomorrow it will not be there?

The Bible often speaks of fasting. The Hebrew word used for fasting. . .

"conveys the explicit meaning 'to abstain from food' and thus occurs regularly as a technical religious term." (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, Eugene H. Merrill, "Fast, Fasting," 245)

"[However] there's nothing magical about fasting. It's just one way of telling God that your priority at that moment is to be alone with him, sorting out whatever is necessary, and you have canceled the meal, party, concert, or whatever else you had planned to do in order to fulfill that priority." Your Father Loves You by James Packer, (Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986), page for June 14

To fast is to refuse the good in order to pursue the best. It is not simply saying no to the flesh (from which we are always running) but from the weights of life that would chain us to the temporal. It is only as we simplify our lives and live singularly focused on Him and His kingdom that we are freed from the temporal and are able to take flight into the eternal.

The wilderness provides us the opportunity to say no to the good in order to realign ourselves with what is best. How you live is not the point. The issue is your motive in why you live.

Jesus fasted for 40 days, but why? His motive was not to acquire something He was lacking but rather to enjoy something He possessed. Going without, fasting, has the power to heighten our awareness of who God is, what He has done, and who we are in Him. There is clarity in fasting. Ears once stopped are unlocked. Eyes once blinded are opened.

Most commentaries speak little of our Lord fasting. Why did He fast? What was His intent? What was He hoping to gain or secure through the fast? Why would I fast? Our lives are drowning in a sea of the unimportant.

To fast is to
refuse the good
in order to
pursue the best.

The purpose of the wilderness has several aspects. One of the aspects to the wilderness was to remove the “clutter” and to focus more intentionally on God and His purposes. In principle, the same reasons as to why Jesus went into the wilderness are the same reasons as to why we should go into the wilderness.

The conclusion we will come to is best stated by Eugene Merrill when he notes,

“The purpose of fasting . . . suggests a self-denial that opens one to God and to the immaterial aspects of life. Inasmuch as food and drink typify life in the flesh and all its demands and satisfactions, their absence or rejection speaks to the reality of a higher dimension, one in which the things of the spirit predominate. The theology of fasting, then, is a theology of priorities in which believers are given the opportunity to express themselves in an undivided and intensive devotion to the Lord and to the concerns of the spiritual life.” (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, Eugene H. Merrill, “Fast, Fasting,” 246)

Richard Foster comments in *Celebration of Discipline*:

“Fasting must forever center on God. It must be God-initiated and God-ordained...Fasting reminds us that we are sustained by ‘every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’ (Matt. 4:4)...Therefore, in experiences of fasting we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting!”

It is for this reason that we are seeking to join Jesus in the wilderness.

Deprivation negatively considered

The devil attacked at the most favorable time. The devil attacks us at our weakest points, yet Paul tells us that we are to glory in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

Deprivation positively considered

Let us consider the idea of fasting. Fasting simply speaks of self-restraint. Fasting seeks to make time for God. Deprivation can be used to eliminate the clutter in one's life.

When Jesus went into the wilderness was His intent to fast? Or was His fast a result of His intense focus on the Father? I believe both reasons can exist as occasioning a fast. I would like us to consider the biblical revelation as it relates to fasting and see where it will lead us. We will categorize our study around the two larger bodies of revelation; the Old and New Testaments.

Fasting in the Old Testament

There are four companions to fasting that appear to summarize fasting in the Old Testament.

1. Fasting often accompanies a spirit of contrition

Fasting and repentance are often coupled together. It was/is an expression of earnestness in turning to the Lord (1 Sam. 7:6). The fast was to assist in hearing God (Jud. 20:26). Jonah's message of judgment was met by the people of Nineveh with fasting (Jonah 3:5). Joel is often cited as a man who calls for fasting as an expression of repentance and pursuit (Joel 1:14; 2:12, 15). Tremendous remorse over personal and national sin was often accompanied by a period of fasting. The grief could be so great that the thought of food leaves the individual.

The Psalms speak of fasting as an expression of humility (Pss. 35:13; 69:10; 109:24).

2. Fasting often accompanies a spirit of petition

When David's child born from adultery was dying, he fasted in order to save the child's life (2 Sam. 12:16; 21-23). Daniel is noted as a man who fasted (Dan. 9:3). His fasting is coupled with contrition and petition.

3. Fasting often accompanies a spirit of desperation

When the nation of Judah faced destruction at the hands of her enemies, Jehoshaphat proclaimed a national fast in order to beseech God for His intervention in their behalf (2 Chron. 20:3).

When Ezra the priest brought back a remnant of people after the Babylonian Captivity, he proclaimed a fast in order to beseech God for His intervention in their behalf (Ezra 8:21, 23). During this same period of time Nehemiah and his contemporaries issued a fast in order to beseech God for His intervention in their behalf (Neh. 1:4, 9:1). The same happened in the days of Esther (Esther 4:3, 4:16, 9:31) when the people of God were on the brink of annihilation.

4. Fasting often accompanies a spirit of compassion

Isaiah 58 provides fasting as not simply the absence of comfort but the opportunity for good. Fasting in Isaiah is only found in chapter 58. Here it is claimed. . .

"that if fasting was to be of value, it must be accompanied by compassion and a concern for social justice." (The Oxford Companion to the Bible, John N. Suggit, "Fasting," 225)

Fasting in the New Testament

In the New Testament there are two distinct aspects; the people who fasted and the pattern for fasting.

The people who fasted

- Jesus fasted for up to 40 days and nights (Matt. 4:2).
- Paul fasted (Acts 9:9).
- The early church fasted (Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23).

² "While they were ministering to the Lord and **fasting**, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' ³ Then, when they had **fasted** and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3).

"When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with **fasting**, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23).

Fasting was a part of the early church's expression of singularity as it related to God (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 7:5). It appears to be a common practice and a part

of the Christian's relationship with God. It was/is a means of hearing God's voice (Acts 13:2, 3).

Although fasting has certain objective standards its value is measured subjectively and individually. Fasting is not controlled by duration or severity. Fasting has as its only standard a pursuit of God.

The issue with fasting is not one of duration or even severity, but of motive. We need to be creative in our desire for intimacy with God. The idea of fasting seems only to spotlight food, but going without in other areas is equally important. Restricting our gratification of self is important because without even knowing it our servants become our masters. Technology has subtly crept in and taken over. We are information junkies whose eyes are plastered to the TV screen and our ears hear nothing but the empty chatter on cell phones. Fasting enables us to cut off the demons of distraction and enables us to open ourselves up to the clarion call of God to and for His people.

The issue with fasting is not one of duration or even severity, but of motive.

Unless and until we check our overindulgence we will continue to live in a land of spiritual famine and drought, but its impact is often left unseen and untreated. God calls us to taste and see that He is good. And perhaps one of the means whereby this will take place is when we put the gift back into the servant role and see that God is more pleasing and satisfying than anything created.

The pattern for fasting

1. A pattern of privacy (Matt. 6:16-18)

Here we can answer the question "**How should I fast?**"

- I should fast **quietly** (You should carry out your normal daily routines).
- I should fast **privately** (No one should know. There should be no public fanfare).
- I should fast **intentionally** (There is a reason as to why you would fast. This also answers the question, "When should I fast?").

I repeat, "The issue with fasting is not one of duration or even severity, but of motive." Sometimes fasting is intentional for the purpose of clearing the eye of faith to see farther than it previously has. Sometimes fasting is consequential in that while in the quest for Christ food is forgotten. Either way, food takes its rightful place as servant and ceases to be our master.

If we say "I will eat and/or drink nothing but ____ for ____ days," we set ourselves up for spiritual failure. By stating a duration and degree we make

those two items the focus, whereas by setting Christ as the object of our hunt food takes its place and its absence becomes secondary. Issues of duration and severity must be left to the moment and not be legislated by the individual or some “book” on fasting.

Thus, there is no set length as to what constitutes a biblical fast. A fast could be 12 hours, 24 hours, days, weeks, or perhaps more than a month. The length of fast is controlled by what God chooses to do in you and through you to those around you.

Although the nation of Israel was often called to national fasts and at times the early church fasted, there is still a private aspect to the fast that is to be just that, private. Often we want people to know we are fasting because it sounds so “spiritual.” But to seek such recognition is to violate the motive as to why you would fast in the first place.

2. A pattern of prayerfulness (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 7:5)

Fasting was a means of beseeching God for His intervention in their behalf (Matt. 17:21; Mark 9:29). Fasting, like prayer, is one of those activities that God has chosen to work through in the accomplishing of His purpose. I cannot explain fasting any more than I can explain prayer only in so far that it is something I should be engaging in on a regular basis. And both find meaningful exercise **only as it expresses itself as a fruit of the Spirit.**

Fasting is not simply a spiritual discipline or exercise. Fasting is one of the means God has chosen to accomplish His end. Not to fast is to miss one of the blessings God has for His people in the working out of His will in and through them.

3. A pattern of personal piety

Fasting was an expression of religious intensity and piety (Luke 2:37; 18:12; Acts 14:23). This same idea is seen in Acts 9:9 where the apostle Paul went three days neither eating nor drinking immediately following his encounter with Christ. Fasting is a work of the Holy Spirit in and through His people. To say spiritual people fast is the same as saying spiritual people pray or read their Bible or exhibit self-control. It is simply a fruit of the Holy Spirit that He is working in and through His people.

I believe fasting is something that God may lead individuals or a church family to participate in. It is not something that is to be legislated, mandatory, or regulated, but it is something that is to be encouraged.

"Without exception [fasting] has to do with a sense of need and dependence, of [wretched] helplessness in the face of actual or anticipated calamity." (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, Eugene H. Merrill, "Fast, Fasting," 246)

Fasting, like prayer, is not so much an expression of my determination or discipline, but rather of my desperation. I need God and an expression of that need is fasting.

Fasting, like prayer, is not so much an expression of my determination or discipline, but rather of my desperation.

In conclusion, let us consider two practical questions as it relates to fasting.

APPLICATION:

What are the wrong reasons for a fast?

1. In order to lose weight. You might fast to lose weight, but this is not a biblical fast.
2. In order to work more at the "job."
3. In order to show God how serious you are.
4. In order to show others how much you love God.
5. In order to manipulate God into giving you what you want.

Why consider fasting?

1. In order to express worship of God.
2. In order to cleanse your body and soul of the clutter that detracts and distracts you from God.
3. In order to spend time to pray and meditate on who God is, what He has done, and who you are in Him.
4. In order to reconcile strained relationships on a horizontal level.
5. In order to reprioritize the importance of your relationship with God.
6. In order to ask God for specific items of concern that burden your spirit.



Why the Wilderness?

The Wilderness is a Place of Temptation

Around my house I have poison ivy. During my first encounter with poison ivy, I still had a man of steel mentality so I would work around the poison ivy and at times I would carelessly weed whack the poison ivy thinking that it did not matter much to me . . . until . . . the day I got poison ivy. Once you get poison ivy your attitude towards it changes significantly. After that time I still got it again, but I am really careful when I am working around poison ivy.

Sin and its forerunner in temptation are like poison ivy. If you are not careful it will snap you and if you think you are immune to it . . . watch out.

The root cause of all temptation and thus all sin is the appeal to abandon trust in Christ. Is He everything He claims to be or do we need more? This is the bottom line. Whether you are elementary age, middle age, or the ancient of days, the devil is using the two platforms of the world and the flesh to undermine your confidence in Christ.

New Testament Illustration:

- “Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me” (2 Tim. 4:9, 10).
- “Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say” (3 John 9).

The root cause of all temptation and thus all sin is the appeal to abandon trust in Christ.

The bottom line is this:

It is because of our Lord’s victory over temptation that we have help in our time of need (Heb. 4:15-17).

The world, the flesh, and the devil are determined to undermine what God is endeavoring to do both in us and through us to those around us. Although their attempts will fail, the onslaught is no less real. The devil uses the world to tantalize us on the platform of our flesh. Our flesh cries out for satisfaction. The act of attack is a temptation. Temptation is the call to compromise and

betray the absolute sufficiency of Christ for His people. It is for this reason that we must consider the wilderness as a place of temptation.

Temptation is the call to compromise and betray the absolute sufficiency of Christ for His people.

The Scripture is inviting us to join Jesus in the wilderness. Going into the wilderness was a common practice and a part of our Lord's regular activity. The wilderness provided for Him a place of solitude and uncluttered communion with His Father. This is what the wilderness can afford us. But the wilderness can also be a place of temptation.

"Luke shows that Christ's fast was complete, not partial. It is certainly not surprising that at the end of forty days of fasting Jesus was hungry. The devil naturally selects this moment as his golden opportunity." (William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, NTC, 233)

There are many aspects to this temptation that are strategic.

Everything preceding this moment described in Luke 4 is an establishment and declaration of His deity. The virgin birth, the forerunner, His baptism, and the genealogy all seek to strike the chord of His status as the only begotten Son of God, God in flesh. Satan is a part of this redemptive drama. His comments are direct, "If you are the Son of God (4:3, 9 ["He is assuming the reality of the condition" - Since])." He is taunting and testing. He is probing like the appendage of a parasitical blood sucker to find its host and drain Him dry.

The imagery is weighty. As the second Adam He will succeed where the first failed.

"Man's fall was brought about when the first Adam, as mankind's representative, yielded to the temptation of the devil. Thus sin began. So now, as Jesus' public ministry was about to begin, it was proper that He, as the last Adam, the representative of all who trust in him, should resist the devil's temptation and render perfect obedience to God. Thus grace would receive an open door." (William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, NTC, 230)

It is while in the wilderness where communion with God was accented that the devil seized his moment to undermine the purposes of the Godhead.

In considering the temptation of Christ there are two introductory thoughts.

The wilderness is a place of temptation (v. 13a [every temptation])

First,

"I believe it is better to view the three solicitations of Satan as three different attempts to get the Savior to commit the one sin of acting independently of God the Father's will for Him." (*Understanding Christian Theology*, 595)

Second, there is a theological debate as to whether or not Jesus could not sin or whether or not He simply chose not to sin although capable of it. I do not believe Jesus could have sinned for the following reasons.

- First, although He is 100% God and 100% man in the union of the two, the ruling nature is His deity.
- Second, although He is 100% man, He did not possess a fallen nature. To be human does not necessitate a fallen nature.
- Third, no matter what God does, it is not sin.

In light of this. . .

"Jesus' temptation is not the same as the self-engendered lusting described in James 1:14-15 – a fact to keep in mind when we question how Jesus could have been perfect and yet truly tempted. The issue, therefore, is not one of allurements to perverted self-gratification but a challenge to act apart from faithful dependence on God." (EBC, "Luke," Walter L. Liefeld, 8:863)

There are two primary ideas I would like us to consider in looking at our Lord's temptation: the platform for temptation and the protection against temptation.

The platform for temptation

What do I see as the dangerous conformities (inside and outside the church) that lead us away from new life?

The Great Wall of China is a gigantic structure which cost an immense amount of money and labor. When it was finished, it appeared impregnable. But the enemy breached it. Not by breaking it down or going around it. They did it by bribing the gatekeepers.

Temptation takes many forms and the most dangerous are the most subtle and innocent appearing. Let us note three platforms that temptation uses.

1. The platform of provision (v. 3, 4)

"In the first temptation the devil tries to convince Jesus to use his status as God's Son to satisfy his own physical desires, instead of trusting in the Father to provide his needs." (Baker Commentary on the Bible, "Luke," Thomas R. Schreiner, 810)

It is an interesting parallel to note how. . .

"it was in the sphere of the appetite that man was first tempted. He lost (Gen. 3)." (William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, NTC, 240)

"Jesus proves by His response that His heart is not divided but that He is dependent on God and obedient to His Word (v. 4)." (EBC, "Luke," Walter L. Liefeld, 8:864)

Is God able to meet me during my greatest needs? What is your greatest need? What do you really need? I think we have become so consumed by the temporal that we fail to realize that this life is only a moment in time. We are not living for this life. We do not need to live, but we do need Him.

What do I need that I do not already have in Him? This is what provides contentment in my want. It causes me to see that the temporal although necessary for this life is not adequate for the next.

If all we have is this life, then we are already dead. Regardless as to what your present "need" is, your greatest need is to know Him and to see that He is enough in this life and in the life to come. Is this answer a cop-out? I recognize that James exhorts us to feed those who hunger as opposed to saying to them, "be fed," but what if we cannot meet their physical needs, are we finished? Is that it?

Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). Peter assures us that silver and gold cannot redeem the soul of man (1 Pet. 1:18). This is still our message today. Jesus said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of" (John 4:32). The Word and work of God sustains us in the midst of our temptations.

What do I need
that I do not
already have
in Him?

Today I am trusting God with my financial needs, but what about when I am faced with financial ruin? Is He still in control? Trusting God does not negate your responsibility to plan and prepare, but you can never allow yourself to think that you are in the driver seat.

2. The platform of power (vv. 5-8)

The devil shows our Lord all the kingdoms of the world.

"All these are vividly displayed to Jesus in *just one* very significant moment! All this wealth is by Satan offered to Christ, all for the price of just one genuflection! If Jesus will but *worship* the devil, he can have it all." (William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, NTC, 235, 236)

"Far more reasonable is the thought that throughout Satan was tempting Jesus by trying to show him how he could reach the crown without suffering the cross." (William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Luke, NTC, 241)

Satan's appeal was to circumvent the cross. Scripture teaches that the Messiah should first suffer and only then "enter his glory" (Luke 24:26). His attempt was to try and prevent Christ's voluntary death for our sins. The implication of this second temptation was that by accepting an immediate kingdom the cross would be avoided.

If what God wants me to have is inevitable, then why not help Him accomplish His purposes? Only God is worthy to be worshipped. What does this mean in real life time? Consider how much time you spend on things other than God. Consider how much money you spend on things other than God. Consider your planning and effort and energy; where is God in all of it. God is the only One worthy of your life strength.

Modern Christianity tends to bend around the world, the flesh, and the devil, but Christian/Christ stands in opposition to those things that seek to rob Him of His glory.

3. The platform of presumption (vv. 9-12)

"I'll just trust God and do nothing." Do not presume to know what God wants. If you jump off the cliff chances are you will fall.

Jesus was tempted in every point just as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). No one else in time has ever been able to say this. You and I have no idea as to the true nature of our Lord's temptation. Yet His temptation far exceeds any force that comes into play in our temptations.

These temptations were unique to His person.

"It is no temptation to us to turn stones into bread or leap from a Temple pinnacle, for the simple reason that it is impossible for us to do such things. These are temptations which could have come only to a man whose powers were unique." (Barclay, Luke, 43).

If a parallel exists between Israel as God's son and our Lord Jesus Christ, then in each one of these temptations our Lord succeeds where the nation of Israel failed. (EBC, "Luke," Walter L. Liefeld, 8:862)

- Israel grumbled against God's provision (Deut. 8:2, 3). Jesus accepts God's provision.
- Israel wanted a kingdom without a cross whereas Jesus refused the kingdom apart from the cross.
- Israel continually put God to the test whereas Jesus completely trusted His heavenly Father.

All temptation is a test to see whether we believe Jesus is enough. When we choose sin we are saying that something is lacking in what God provided. When we see sin for what it is, an attack against God's ability to provide what He has promised, then it will begin to lose its stronghold on us.

John Piper says that sin (lust for example). . .

"gets its power by persuading me to believe that I will be more happy if I follow it. The power of all temptation is the prospect that it will make me happier." Quoted in Putting Your Past Behind You, E. Lutzer, Here's Life, 1990, p. 54.

The purpose of the fight is to enjoy all that He is, has done, and I now am in Him. The purpose of the fight is not to settle for second best when Christ is enough.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers this insightful thought:

"At this moment God is quite unreal to us, he loses all reality, and only desire for the creature is real; the only reality is the devil. Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God, but with forgetfulness of God ... The lust thus aroused envelops the mind and will of man in deepest darkness. The powers of clear discrimination and of decision are taken from us." (Creation and Fall, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

When we see sin for what it is,
an attack against God's ability
to provide what He has
promised,
then it will begin to lose its
stronghold on us.

This leads us to our second idea.

The protection against temptation
(How do I apply this idea to my life?)

Earlier I made reference to my experiences with poison ivy. Before I caught poison ivy I would work around it in short sleeves and short pants. Now I put on long sleeves and long pants with gloves and covered feet. I do whatever is necessary to make sure I do not get tagged. Just as with poison ivy, so also with temptation and sin. We should do everything necessary to protect ourselves from getting tagged by sin.

We fight against temptation by having confidence in the written Word of God as the means through which He ministers to His people sustaining grace.

Three times the devil referenced the Scripture (vv. 3, 7, 9-11) to undermine the purpose of God. If three stands as the number of witness, then there is an intentional stand-off between the devil and the Son of God.

Although the devil does not quote Scripture directly, his appeals are couched in biblical ideas. In each of the occurrences Jesus responds by quoting Scripture: (v. 4) Deuteronomy 8:3, (v. 8) Deuteronomy 6:13, and (v. 12) Psalm 91:11.

Let me suggest five actions that we can take to protect ourselves from temptation's attraction.

1. Don't give place to the devil
(Eph. 4:27 "Neither give place to the devil").

It has been said, "If you give an inch they will take a mile." This is no less true as it relates to temptation.

Many fall prey to the devil's devices because they make provision for him. The same idea is express in Romans 13:14. Do not make provision for him and you stand a better chance of not falling into his traps.

2. Do put on God's armor (Eph. 6:11)

"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

Unfortunately we are not active participants in the battle against evil. Putting on God's armor is to be a daily activity. Unless we put it on we are not actively resisting him. The armor is secured when we keep our eyes on the author and finisher of our faith.

3. Do be on the alert (1 Pet. 5:8)

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

While in the midst of the battle many have fallen asleep. Do not be caught off guard. Stay focused.

4. Do resist him (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9)

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

“Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:9).

The devil, the world, and the flesh are our opponents and we are to resist them at every turn. You can be sure of this: they are fighting and resisting us at every turn.

5. Do practice positional truth (1 John 2:13, 14)

“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father” (1 John 2:13).

You are
always working
from victory,
not for victory.

“I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14).

Victory has already been secured and temptation’s end is already sure. It is simply up to the believer to claim the victory that is his in Christ Jesus the Lord. You are always working from victory, not for victory.

**The wilderness is a place of continuation
(v. 13b [until an opportune time])**

It is the devil’s desire to put you to the test. His mission is to destroy you and your testimony for the Lord. Notice how this idea is brought out in Luke 22:31.

A Study in Luke 4:1-15

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31).

Our Lord said Satan desired to “sift” Peter. He used an agricultural term. The idea is that of sifting wheat or grain. It is our adversary’s desire to bang us around. Revelation 12:10 adds to the thought by noting that he habitually accuses us as a prosecuting attorney before our heavenly Father. John uses a tense and mood that speak of his activity as being relentless. The devil is determined to bring you down. He is a formidable opponent. He will not give up.

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10).

When our Lord was attacked by the devil in the wilderness it says that after Satan’s immediate defeat he left our Lord “for a season.” The phrase “for a season” speaks of a measure of time. Our Lord’s battle with the devil was not final. The devil left, but would return when the opportunity afforded itself to strike again.

We often speak of His temptation in the wilderness as if it was all that He faced. The temptation of Christ did not end in the wilderness; this was only the beginning. Remember the garden and the cross?

We have a mistaken notion that in our pursuit of Christ temptation will lose its grip. It is when you have strung together several days, weeks, months, of tangible victory that you will begin conceding ground in your fight against sin.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here?)

Application for . . . there is an area of temptation and the response

<u>Area</u>	<u>Temptation</u>	<u>Response</u>
• A man	lust	find satisfaction in Christ
• A woman	insecurity	find security in Christ
• Married	frustration	be content in what you have in Christ
• Single	entertainment	seek your joy/pleasure in Christ
• Youth	future goals	make God your goal
• Senior	Loneliness	God will never leave you or forsake you

How to have seven Sundays

Monday	Be content with what you have
Tuesday	Be content with where you are
Wednesday	Be content with who you are
Thursday	Keep putting on the cross-work
Friday	Stay focused on who Christ is
Saturday	Flee to Christ and from temptation



Why the Wilderness?

The Wilderness and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Review:

1st study - **Preparations for entering into the wilderness**

The wilderness does not establish our relationship with Jesus but rather is because of our relationship with Jesus.

The Nature of the Wilderness

2nd study - The wilderness is a place of solitude: listen, slow down, and think.

3rd study - The wilderness is a place of deprivation:

fasting from the secondary in order to focus on the primary.

4th study - The wilderness is a place of temptation: it is while in the wilderness that we can face our greatest temptations.

The Wilderness and the Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

5th study - There is a necessary connectivity between the wilderness and the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Our wilderness experience is a time of soul growth. The wilderness we are being invited into is not a consequence of sin, but a desire to reprioritize our daily activity in order that we might focus more intentionally on Him. Sometimes because of the choices we make we place ourselves in the wilderness, but often it is where God would have us to go. Why would God have us in the wilderness?

Our understanding of the Holy Spirit's activity in us and through us is significant. By being blind to it we fail to appreciate all that is going on around us. Our knowledge of it causes us to rejoice in the work of God in and through His people.

It is during this time that we begin to experience the fullness of what is ours because of the cross. There are four thoughts noted in our passage. All of this is already ours, but often left unnoticed because we have drowned out His voice in the sea of excess.

It is an unfortunate situation in which we find ourselves, but we often are missing the mark.

ILLUSTRATION:

Tommy Bolt is in the World Golf Hall of Fame. He is 90 years old and has a reputation of being gruff. The story is told of when he was playing in Los Angeles and had a caddy with a reputation of constant chatter. Before they teed off, Bolt told him, "Don't say a word to me. And if I ask you something, just answer yes or no."

During the round, Bolt found the ball next to a tree, where he had to hit under a branch, over a lake and onto the green. He got down on his knees and looked through the trees and sized up the shot.

"What do you think?" he asked the caddy. "Five-iron?"

"No, Mr. Bolt," the caddy said.

"What do you mean, not a five-iron?" Bolt snorted.

"Watch this shot."

The caddy rolled his eyes. "No-o-o, Mr. Bolt."

But Bolt hit it and the ball stopped about two feet from the hole. He turned to his caddy, handed him the five-iron and said, "Now what do you think about that? You can talk now."

"Mr. Bolt," the caddy said, "that wasn't your ball." Crossroads, Issue No. 7, pp. 15-16

Like Tommy Bolt we often find ourselves swinging at the wrong ball. Friend, we must join Jesus in the wilderness and we must rediscover the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It was in the wilderness that Jesus proved not only who He is, but how satisfying His relationship to the Father was. There was nothing the devil could do or offer that could be as satisfying as the relationship that existed inside of the Trinity.

As we join Jesus in the wilderness there is an interesting fusion of ideas as it relates to the wilderness and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The question raised is whether or not the ministry of the Holy Spirit was causal to the wilderness or a consequence of the wilderness. As we will see, there would appear to be a blending of the two.

Where are we in the redemptive history?

Although we are considering the ministry of the Holy Spirit as it relates to our Lord Jesus Christ and by principle show its application to us, there is of necessity a distinction needing to be made. Such a distinction is demanded by passages like John 7:37-39 and the upper room discourse found in John 13-16.

³⁷ "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39).

Even though I see what happened in the life of our Lord as being representative, I cannot tell if it is indicative for us. Although the same words are being used to describe the Holy Spirit's activity in the believer I am not sure the meaning is necessarily the same. Thus, in principle I believe we will see our application.

There are four descriptive actions stated in chapters 3 and 4 between our Lord and the Holy Spirit. I do believe a qualifier needs to be made. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not an area that we can really plant our feet on. The ground is squishy. We will try to understand key ideas and hopefully walk away appreciating what the Holy Spirit is doing in and through His people.

Jesus was baptized by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:21, 22)

I believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced by Jesus refers to His theocratic anointing whereby He is identified as the descendent of David to rule and reign over the nation of Israel. This anointing is also an enablement.

"By 'theocratic anointing' is meant a special temporal ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of God's chosen leader(s) to enable his/her function in a mediatorial capacity as God's representative."

<http://seminary.cbs.edu/content/events/nlc/2003/papers/22-Toward%20on%20OT%20Theology.pdf>

This anointing set Him apart as the appointed Messiah. This same idea is present in Luke 4:18.

The Spirit baptism our Lord experienced is theologically different than the Spirit baptism that we encounter as New Testament believers. His functioned in the capacity of a Mediatorial ruler. Our Spirit baptism places us into the

actual body of Christ. The two baptisms are similar in that they both identify and they both enable, but they are theologically distinct.

“for by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

“for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

It is because of the Spirit’s baptism in our lives that we can have a wilderness experience with Jesus Christ. Thus this aspect of the Holy Spirit’s ministry as it relates to our relationship with God is causal in that it creates the relationship.

All New Testament believers enjoy the Spirit’s baptism into the body of Christ.

- 1 Corinthians 12:13 makes no distinctions among believers as to who is or is not baptized by the Spirit.
- It began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 11:15, 16).
- Ephesians 4:5 speaks of only one baptism.

It is because of the Spirit’s baptism in our lives that we can have a wilderness experience with Jesus

As a consequence of our baptism by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ

- We are joined with all New Testament believers into one body (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27).
- We are participating in His death, burial, and resurrection and thus are walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-10).

“What, therefore, does the baptism in the Holy Spirit accomplish in each believer? *It identifies every believer with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.* Every believer is in Christ, and Christ is in every believer. We are in Him, one in Him, united in Him forever.” (Understanding Christian Theology, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 491).

Thus the baptism by the Holy Spirit allows us to enter into a wilderness experience.

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit (v. 1a)

It is because we are filled that we can enter into a wilderness experience with Jesus Christ.

There is often much confusion as it relates to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Are they one-time events? Are they repeatable? Are they conditional or unconditional? Can you lose the baptism

and/or the filling of the Holy Spirit? These are good questions and hopefully we will be able to answer them.

The significance of this idea does not lie in the word “filled” but in what the word communicates. Part of the difficulty with the event is that during this period of time there is a transition taking place as to the nature of the Holy Spirit’s ministry. For example, John the Baptist is described as being “filled with the Holy Spirit” even from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15). When his mother Elizabeth met the Virgin Mary she was immediately “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41). Elizabeth’s filling and that of her husband Zachariah was in conjunction with the gift of prophecy (Luke 1:67). This same idea is seen in Acts 2:4 on the day of Pentecost. Thus there is a filling of the Holy Spirit that preceded certain expressions of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in and through His people (Acts 4:8, 31). These events were (1) repeatable, (2) without imposing conditions, and (3) “God did this as His sovereign act” (Ryrie, Basic Theology, 376).

C.C. Ryrie notes how temporary indwelling. . .

“all [occurred] before the Day of Pentecost. But there are no such examples after the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.” (Basic Theology, 357).

At other times the filling appears to be a constant characteristic of the believer as seen in Acts 6:3, 5; 11:24 and 13:52. Part of our ongoing confusion is whether or not the filling is conditional or unconditional. Is the filling dependent on me or does God simply do this to us?

Ryrie notes the problem of making the filling conditional when he says,

“**Though specific conditions are not mentioned** in these contexts, the normal requirements for Christian growth would be implied conditions for attaining this kind of [Spirit filled] character (Ryrie, Basic Theology, 376).”

But by making the filling conditional an impossibility is created because the conditions being unidentified become subjective and tentative.

Ryrie notes how. . .

“No example of praying for the filling of the Spirit exists in the post-Pentecostal material of the New Testament. So praying, however earnest, is apparently not the way to be filled.” (Ryrie, Basic Theology, 378).

Ryrie concludes by saying it is by yielding to Him that produces filling. Personally, I believe yielding as noted in Romans 6:13 and 12:1, 2 is important but I do not see it as a condition to Spirit filling.

Perhaps the most familiar text as it relates to the filling of the Holy Spirit is found in Ephesians 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." This is the only time Paul wrote of filling (Ryrie, Basic Theology, 376). Having only one verse to build a doctrine on should cause us to be cautious. One verse is enough, but the superstructure we build on it should be carefully constructed.

When we make filling conditioned on human activity, we enter into a pattern of living that can become harmful. Listen carefully to the following two statements:

"When a believer is separated from known personal sin and is totally yielded to the indwelling Spirit, he will be filled with the Spirit." (Understanding Christian Theology, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 494).

The same author concludes with. . .

"Dependence, cleanliness, and yieldedness are necessary to achieve the Spirit-filled life. Such conditions must be met daily. They may be realized for the first time in a post-conversion act of total commitment to the will of God, but they must be reaffirmed daily." (Understanding Christian Theology, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 504).

If this is true, then. . .

"it is possible to be filled with the Spirit on Sunday and not be filled on Monday. Each Christian must ask himself or herself, 'Am I at this moment spiritually clean and submissive to the leadership of the Spirit?'" (Understanding Christian Theology, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 502).

All of this is built around Ephesians 5:18. But I do not see where such thinking comes from in the New Testament. And I find such thinking unfortunate.

Many would agree that the filling is not between full or empty but rather degree or levels of filling. You are filled with the Spirit. The issue is to what degree are you recognizing that filling? Are you aware of the fact that you are filled? I agree more with this idea as to awareness rather than a contrast between filled or empty. Most of us are not even aware of His filling. We simply live our lives in ignorance of it. But if you are a believer, you are filled. Your awareness of it is the fulfillment of Ephesians 5:18.

This filling is not in opposition to indwelling or His permanent residence in His people, but rather an invitation to be sensitive to His working in and through His people. The filling of the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit.

There is, I believe, misunderstanding as it relates to the Holy Spirit and His working in and through His people. I do not believe there is a sharp distinction between the various ideas concerning the Holy Spirit and the various activities that are assigned to Him. For example,

- Walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).
- Led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18).
- Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
- Live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).

Could we as easily place Spirit filling in this listing of the Spirit's activity? What difference would walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit suggest? What difference would being led by and living in the Spirit imply? What is the fruit of the Spirit if not walking in and living in the Spirit? So, I do not believe they are saying things that are significantly different. For the most part they are saying the same thing. What then are we to make of all this?

Believers, because of their position in Christ, walk, are led by, bear the fruit of, and live by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence of their position in Christ they manifest in and through their earthen vessels the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as we are woefully ignorant of the cross-work to us so also are we woefully ignorant of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us and through us to those around us because of the cross-work.

The admonition of Paul in Galatians 5 is to live your position. He could just have easily said, "If you are justified, live sanctified." Or "Let the redeemed live like the redeemed."

I would equally argue that filling and indwelling are similar actions. Those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit are filled with the Holy Spirit. This appears to be what is seen in Romans 8:9 and 11. It is also noted in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Timothy 1:14.

Each and every
one of His
people is filled
with the Spirit.
This is the
result of Spirit
baptism.

"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom. 8:9).

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11).

This is what we enjoy because of the cross. Each and every one of His people is filled with the Spirit. This is a result of Spirit baptism.

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).

“Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you” (2 Tim. 1:14).

I do believe during this period of time, however, that being led by the Holy Spirit is a consequence of His filling and the filling is a result of having been baptized by the Holy Spirit. So, in this way, there is a progression of activity.

The wilderness enables us to see more clearly the work of the Holy Spirit in us, through us, and around us. It is as we listen, slow down, and think that we hear more clearly His voice and see more accurately His activity.

Thus the filling by the Holy Spirit allows us to enter into a wilderness experience. The third activity of the Holy Spirit in the Lord Jesus Christ is found in 4:1.

Jesus was led about by the Holy Spirit (v. 1b)

You and I are led by the Holy Spirit, but we live our lives as if we have no sense of direction or guidance. The wilderness allows us to regain a sense of His presence in our daily lives.

I believe the condition to being led by the Holy Spirit is Spirit filling and the condition to Spirit filling is Spirit baptism.

I believe we have made the Spirit's leading more mysterious than it actually is. Does He lead and do we “feel” His direction? I would argue yes and it is in and through His Word. What does His leading look like in and through His people?

The Spirit's leading looks like the Spirit's fruit. The Spirit's leading looks like the Spirit's gifting. When we are bearing fruit and exercising our giftedness we are revealing His leading.

The Spirit's leading in and through His people looks like “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

The Spirit's leading in and through His people looks like “prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and mercy” (Rom. 12:6-8).

Those who are filled with the Spirit as a consequence of being baptized by the Spirit manifest the fruit of the Spirit and this is what it means to be led of the Spirit.

The wilderness is a place where we sensitize ourselves to the Spirit's ministry in us and through us to those around us. Most of us live our lives calloused to the Spirit's work. We ask God to show Himself mighty in our behalf and He does, but we do not recognize it as such.

Thus the leading by the Holy Spirit allows us to enter into a wilderness experience. And it is in the wilderness where we can be opened to recognizing His work in us and through us to those around us.

Those who are
filled with the Spirit
as a consequence of being
baptized by the Spirit
manifest the
fruit of the Spirit
and this is what it means
to be led of the Spirit.

Jesus was ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 14)

Here is where we see the union of these two ideas of joining Jesus in the wilderness and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The two are not in opposition but rather the two are one and the same; their inter-connectedness is unavoidable.

Trying to separate the wilderness experience from the power of the Holy Spirit is like trying to separate prayer from fasting.

Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. Was this something unique to Him or is this something we the people of God can have? What exactly is meant when it says that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit?"

Jesus comes out of the wilderness and ministers in the power of the Spirit. This word "power" used in 4:14 is used elsewhere in Luke's Gospel fifteen times. It is used to describe the nature of John's preparatory ministry to the coming Messiah (1:17). It is used of the power necessary for the virgin birth (1:35). It identified the authority in which our Lord spoke to the demonic realm (4:36). It is used to describe the power that was present in the healing of the sick (5:17). It is used to speak of the power that our Lord exuded when people touched Him for healing (6:19; 8:46). It is the same power that He gave to His disciples to exercise when they ministered in His behalf (9:1; 10:19). Our Lord was characterized by the powerful works that He did (19:37). Our Lord's coming will be marked by power (21:27). He will reign from power (22:69).

He promises to His disciples a power for ministry that will come after His ascension from heaven and with the coming of the Holy Spirit (24:49).

A sister word to “power” is used in 25 verses in Luke’s Gospel. This word comes from the same “word family” and is often translated by the idea of ability or able-ness.

When Zachariah did not have the ability to speak, he was “powerless” (1:20, 22). God is described as having the ability to raise children for Abraham from stones (3:8). That’s power. Lepers came to Jesus believing He had the ability to heal them of their disease (5:12). The religious leaders challenged our Lord’s power or ability to forgive sins (5:21). Jesus claimed to be able to forgive sins. The disciples were unable to cast out a demon (9:40). No one through worry has the power to add a single hour to his life (12:25, 26).

When the woman came with a spirit of infirmity she had no power to lift herself up. Jesus had power and with His power raised her up from her body of affliction (13:10-13).

When Jesus spoke with the rich young ruler the dialogue left His disciples perplexed and their question of anguish followed, “Who then can be saved?” (18:26). Our Lord’s response shows how only He has the power to save sinners for “With God all things are possible” (18:27).

Perhaps we scoff at believing such power exists, but it does and it is ours. We have allowed ourselves to believe real power is not present and that somehow we are simply to exist in a vacuum of powerless Christianity. But this was not the testimony of the early church.

Consider the documentation provided by the book of Acts.

The early church was promised an endowment of power (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) that would enable them for Christ-exalting, Holy Spirit-empowered ministry. The early church was the means through which the power of God was displayed (3:12). The power was so evident that the religious leaders challenged its source (4:7, 16). Their witness was done with great power (4:33) and the people testified to it (6:8; 8:10, 13). The apostle Paul was also used by God as an instrument through whom special miracles were worked (19:11).

This is the power that is present in our midst. This is the power that is pulling down strongholds. This is the power that breaks the chains of cancelled sin and sets the captive free. This is the power that heals the sick, raises the dead, and brings sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. This is the power that restores relationships and brings light to the depressed. This is the power that silences the voices that haunt us. This is the power that delivers us from the

cares of this world. Oh God cause us to see the power that is present in our midst right now. It is the power that pushes aside the trivial and catapults the eternal. It is the power that cannot be overthrown (5:39). It is through the Word of His grace through which this power flows (20:32).

We have the power, but we do not affirm it or expect it to manifest itself. He is here in our midst. What can I expect Him to do?

- Restore the prodigal.
- Reconcile the alienated.
- Heal the broken.
- Redeem the enslaved.
- Liberate the captive.
- Cleanse the defiled.

It is the Holy Spirit who works
the hope, healing, and wholeness
of God in and through
His people.

It is the Holy Spirit who works the hope, healing, and wholeness of God in and through His people.

What are the dangers of neglecting this area?

We do not live in hope. We do not live with the element of anticipation. This is the truth that liberates us from the chains of despair.

Not only can He do this for the unbelieving, but for the believing as well. God is visiting us with power. Are you ready to affirm it?

The wilderness experience speaks of our relationship with God. The entire Trinity is involved in who we are before Him. This relationship is so satisfying and so sufficient that nothing we have that is created can compare to Him.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here?)

Application for . . . the wilderness and the ministry of the Holy Spirit

How to have 7 Sundays by asking 7 questions

Monday	Am I affirming His baptism of me into the body of Christ?
Tuesday	Am I affirming His filling/controlling of me today?
Wednesday	Am I walking in the Spirit?
Thursday	Do I appreciate His fruit in me and through me to those around me?
Friday	Am I exercising His gifting in me and through me to those around me? Do I affirm His working in and through others?
Saturday	Am I affirming His power on a regular basis?