

“BE-ing Spirit-led Into The Wilderness”

Matthew 4:1b

August 25, 2024

INTRO: *How would you respond if you were offered:*

- An all expenses paid, pre-purchased pilgrimage.
- The offer is for you & all of your family & friends.
- All bills will be paid. You'll all be 100% covered.
- No responsibilities will be missed or left undone.
- New privileges & responsibilities will be shared.
- Your gifted excursion will be an *“Amazing Race”* type of *“adventure of a lifetime”* & simultaneously *a lifetime of adventure!*

○ **To any & all who would accept the offer...**

- Welcome to the wilderness.
- Welcome to an adventuresome life in Christ.
- *Welcome to a missional journey with Jesus*

This sin-full world IS biblical wilderness.

- JDP

○ To all who declined: ***SORRY, you can't decline.***

- **Welcome to the wilderness... you're in it!**

○ The real question for all of us is simply this:

- What are you doing in the wilderness?

*Doing what Jesus did
is always a good place to start.*

- JDP

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Gospel of Matthew: mMm (*miracle MESSIAH mission*)
- Jesus is the surprising & even shocking CHRIST!
- John the Baptist is a strangely fitting “*forerunner*”
- Christianity is now **miraculously inaugurated...**
- Christ has been *heavenly affirmed & coronated!*
- The TRINITY has been seen, heard, & confirmed...
- **IMMEDIATELY...** God *revealed** spiritual warfare!
- Last we read... **Jesus was being Spirit-led.**
 - Much like Moses in Exodus 24:12

BIG IDEA:

This world is a wild wilderness!

It is **NOT** a wishy-washy waiting-room.

No. Instead, it is divinely-designed to be your war-time work-station and witness-refining worship-center!

PREVIEW: 1). **DEFINE** 2). **DESCRIBE** 3). **DEPLOY**

TEXT:

[Matthew 4:1b](#)

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit **into the wilderness** to be tempted by the devil.*

T/S:

Then... Jesus was led up... by the Spirit...

A.S.K. = Always Submitting in Koinonia

- **A** = Always
- **S** = Submit/Surrender
- **K** = Koinonia connections

Similarly, with our *Come And See Christianity:*

- 1st **DEFINE** *(Reality)*
- 2nd **DESCRIBE** *(Restoration)*
- 3rd **DEPLOY** *(Reproducers)*

I. **DEFINE** Wilderness

A. **PLACE**

- a. Geography
- b. Environment
- c. Set of Conditions

The biblical wilderness is a time, place, experience of "trial." Said trial/wilderness experience will be defined by its context...

TESTING vs. TEMPTING.

B. **PRINCIPLE**

a. The reality(s) of uncertainty & challenge...

Every wilderness is a war
and every war is a wilderness.

- JDP

b. The opposite of abundance & easy...

c. Think of wilderness as *unknown & difficult*.

C. PURPOSE

a. To TRY... TEST... &/or TEMPT...

The wilderness is where BOTH the Devil's
tempting AND God's divine testing
are DESIGNED to take place.

- JDP

Some souls will have victory over Satan's
tempting in the wilderness.

At the same time, others will fail God's
wilderness testing.

*Wilderness is any & all hard places where
trials take place (be they test or temptation).*

*Thus, **this world is a wild wilderness.***

We ALL live in the wilderness!

- JDP

b. To Oppose, Impose, & Expose

Our comfortable, complacency-breeding
country club lives are very dangerous...
zeal-dulling, wilderness environments!

-JDP

c. To Inform, Inspect, & Inspire

Quote: A “wilderness experience” is usually thought of as a tough time in which a believer endures discomfort and trials. The pleasant things of life are unable to be enjoyed, or they may be absent altogether, and one feels a lack of encouragement. A “wilderness experience” is often a time of intensified temptation and spiritual attack... Having a “wilderness experience” is not necessarily a sign that a believer is sinning; rather, it is a time of God-ordained testing. - GotQuestions.org

d. To Engage, Equip, & Empower

Wilderness realities AND metaphors are always missional... God intends your wilderness time to be challenging, humbling, revealing, strengthening, & ultimately, growing you into greater Christlikeness & Christ-like perseverance.

-JDP

e. To prep for our Miracle, MESSIAH, & Mission

- i. *KNOW*
- ii. *GROW*
- iii. *GO!*
 1. *Find the Lost*
 2. *Grow the Found*
 3. *Make Multiplying Disciples*

f. To Refocus, Refine, & Refresh

Isaiah 40:9-13

*Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" 10Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 11He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. 12Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? 13***Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD,**
or what man shows him his counsel?

(NOW read Acts 1:8... like it were your FIRST time!)

T/S: *Every wilderness place
has a wilderness purpose & people.*

- JDP

II. DESCRIBE Wilderness

A. **BIBLICALLY** (consider & revisit these samples...)

1. The first & every other step outside of Eden...
2. Noah's ark-building hours, days, years, decades
3. Abraham's waiting & mountain climbing days...
4. *Every prophet's life-long mission & ministry*
5. Daniel trying times with the **liars** and lions...
6. The biblical list is near endless...
 - Read Hebrews 11...
 - BE like John the Baptist...
 - BE like the brothers in Acts...
 - Think of Stephen's 30 min. sermon
 - Think of Paul's 3 days of blindness
 - Think of John's exile to Patmos...
 - *Consider 3 highlighted examples:*

B. **MISSIONALLY**

1. Moses, Messiah, & the mess @ Mt. Sinai...
 - The Exodus account... ch.16-25
 - Out of Egypt to meet God in the wilderness
 - See the "IMMEDIATELY" principle...
 - The "Wilderness of Sin"
 - From triumphs to trials...
 - From manna to messed-up!
 - See character vs. consequences reveal!
2. Jesus Christ & His tests on The Sea of Galilee
 - *"Get in the boat boys... go to the other side"*
 - Big storms often reveal shallow faith... - JDP
 - Scared guys get rebuked by awoken Christ.
 - FAILED boating test in the wilderness!

- *“It’s Me, Peter... come out to Me...”*
 - IMMEDIATELY Peter walked out to Him.
 - IMMEDIATELY *Peter walked on water!*
 - IMMEDIATELY Peter PASSED the test!
 - BUT... then He stopped abiding
 - Then, Peter stopped trusting Christ
 - Then, Peter began to sink...
 - *IMMEDIATELY after passing Peter failed!*

Lesson to learn: Our greatest trials (test and/or temptations) will often immediately follow our most momentous victories... so NEVER let your guard down when it comes to BEing Spirit-led.

3. Christ’s coming to His cross...

- Contrast Christ to Adam #1
- Contrast Christ to Peter
- Contrast Christ to you, me, & everyone else.
 - **Led by The Spirit... changes everything!**
 - **Think long & hard about this reality...**

C. PERSONALLY

Wilderness experience is, by biblical definition (per God’s sovereignty, providence, foreknowledge, and goodness) absolutely required/essential for every legitimate child of God! Our wilderness time & experience is where & how we are transformed and refined by the loving grace of Almighty God! Our wilderness experiences are like the coal’s heat &

pressure that transforms it into the highly valued diamond... the caterpillar's hidden and seemingly wasted time in the transforming cocoon... like the water's uncomfortably hot times, those times that literally reach rolling & destabilizing boiling points... boiling points that transform turbulent waters into empowering steam... steam that will be capable of moving and sustaining a locomotive, a train... And note the power of 1 degree... one degree off the mark is to miss the mark... at the same time, 1 degree of added obedience could be, like the difference between 211 degrees & 212 degrees with water... 1 additional degree of faithful obedience could take your life from the turbulent, terribly uncomfortable, and seemingly messy hot water... into a missionally transformed force, a Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led instrument of strategic "steam," ready to be used by the Locomotive that is our LORD... His name is Jesus! - JDP

*Think of wilderness challenges as God's chisel on your life.
We are like Michael Angelo's starting block of marble...
& the Lord's sovereign will & loving providence unite
...in His appointed & anointed... Spirit-led times
of refinement... for us... in **HIS** wilderness!* - JDP

Our wilderness is our battlefield...
on the Potter's wheel!

- JDP

CRITICAL APPLICATION:

When you realize that every wilderness time begins with a biblical fork in the road... a dividing between the broad road that leads to destruction, (a road of hell-sent temptation...) and the narrow road, (a blood-bought, cross-centered path) that leads to Christ.... you'll begin to see the wilderness in a whole new way.

Biblical wilderness is where & when our witness is OPPOSED, IMPOSED, & EXPOSED! It's in each wilderness opportunity that our fruits reveal our roots... This is why the real and healthy family of God welcomes the wilderness and worships well in it!

By contrast, look & listen carefully... to how our God and His Word speak about cross-avoiding, shallow, lukewarm, part-time, superficial, hypocritical, deceptive, divisive, self-righteous, pride-filled, perverse, lying, cowardice, unfaithful, disobedient, professing followers of Christ... They are oxymoronic, children of the devil, who will be driven away from Christ, by Christ, into eternal damnation, where there will be a never-ending weeping and gnashing of teeth.

With this Christlike passion & biblical perspective, let us look upon each acre of God's wild wilderness with new, Father-pleasing, Spirit-led pursuits in focus!

What will BE your witness in THIS wilderness?

Biblical Truth/truth...

Champion or Compromise

Biblical Love...

Supernatural or Superficial

Biblical Gospel...	<i>Truth in love or ear-tickling</i>
Biblical faith & repentance...	<i>Love & obey or just feelings</i>
Biblical church & koinonia...	<i>True Church or just church</i>
Biblical family (church & home)...	<i>HIS blood or your blood</i>
Biblical failure & success...	<i>Missional or mechanical</i>
Biblical authority & submission	<i>LORD-ship or negotiations</i>
Biblical authenticity & transparency...	<i>Real or fake/phony</i>
Biblical reality & skepticism...	<i>Yes Lord! or Maybe/No Lord.</i>
Biblical unity & mission...	<i>John 17 oneness or Laodicea</i>
Biblical diversity (within unity)	<i>Beautiful family or all clones</i>
Biblical orthodoxy & orthopraxy	<i>Real-deal or playing games</i>
Biblical integrity & consistency	<i>No matter what! or Only if..</i>
Biblical responsibility & accountability	<i>Per the Word or NOT</i>
Biblical sexuality & culture...	<i>Per the Designer or destroyer</i>
Biblical clarity & simplicity...	<i>Truth in love or miss the mark</i>
Biblical purity & perseverance	<i>Holy & healing or part-time</i>
Biblical abiding & obeying...	<i>True root & fruit or "nothing"</i>
Biblical walking & talking...	<i>Living-faith or dead-faith</i>
Biblical aroma & ambassadorship	<i>Thru the cross or over it</i>
Biblical grace & glory...	<i>mMm or eternal damnation</i>

T/S: Remember: wilderness is a metaphor of contrasts.

Cunning wolves love the classic wilderness... they eat well in the wilderness. Ironically, Christlike worshippers also love the wilderness... the “contrasting” wilderness....

SO... the question is... what kind of wilderness are you in, tempting or testing? (Keep in mind, both types tend to be time-consuming & trying.

- JDP

D. GLOBALLY

1. Again, the whole world is a wilderness...

Our global wilderness is a forest of compromise, rancid rationalization, spiritual cowardice, utter corruption, and perverse erasing of all God honoring, biblical standards.... and this is troubling truth that is first found in the mirror, then out in the marketplace and across all the mission-fields of this world.

- JDP

2. Covid was a recent global wilderness time...

3. ***The coming chaos/corruption will be worse!***

T/S: Test-taking is wilderness time...
and wilderness times are for test taking!

- JDP

III. DEPLOY into Wilderness

*You don't need the perfect conditions to start...
Starting IS the perfect condition! - Anonymous*

Remember our ultimate (sinful) context...
The end of Eden was the start of the wilderness...

One man's wilderness is another man's Promised Land!

- JDP

(cf. Joshua, Caleb, and the 10 other sinful spies...)

What would you wear if I told you we were going:

- **Swimming?** Answer: a bathing suit.
- **Skiing?** Answer: all warm, winter clothing.
- **Into the Wilderness?** Answer: ***The full armor of God is our only trusted wilderness wardrobe!***

- JDP

******* *Wilderness times are God's spiritual incubators, green houses, classrooms, emergency rooms, strengthening-gyms, apprenticeships, boot camps, construction sites, battlefields, funeral homes, and biblical proving grounds.* - JDP

Keep in mind, EVERY martyr that has ever died for Christ, did so, they died... in a wilderness.

BUT... with that being said, **the key question to ask about the wilderness is NOT, did they die in the wilderness, but rather, did they win in the wilderness....**

John the Baptist **WON** when his head was presented on a platter at the sinner's party.

Stephen **WON** when they stoned him to death in Acts 7, **WHILE** he was actively preaching Christ **IN** the wilderness of Jerusalem.

The same could and **SHOULD** be said for every famous **AND** nameless martyr in Hebrews 11... throughout church history (**Tertullian**)...

- **The Moravians who asked to be let in to live inside the lepers colony.**
- **William Carey's eternity impacting plodding...**
- **Those who would pack their coffins and head to the mission field.**
- **Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, & their team... who died at the end of spear, while leaving their loaded guns in their holsters...**

ALL right up to today and home-grown by the grace of God in our humble, Acts 1:8 **BRIDGE** family...

- See Elder **Rob's** job sites & radical transformation.
- See Elder **Doug's** mud-outs & work with Gideons.
- See Elder **Jeff's** Whitsit ministry & willingness to Go!
- See **Moses'** serving & growing servant leaders...

- See Sunil's pouring in & pouring out across Asia...
- See Pastor Fredrick's 26, 70 & 220 diverse disciples
- See Christine's living and lasting biblical fruit...
- See Deborah's heart for her mom & our children.
- See the Gilliom's incredibly inspirational legacy...
- See Ellen's missional zeal reaching out from VT...
- See the Tonya's devotion to God's global light...
- See the Gonzales' commitment to truth in love...
- See our sprawling family of Holy Spirit-unified, ambassadors of God's Word, will, and ways... BEing spread across the continents of Africa, Asia, and America... Take a look across Uganda, Kenya, and the Congo... take a look around India's south, central, northeast, and border with Bangladesh! Go underground in China and see our countless #'s of brothers and sisters that were/are being touched from the farthest northwest city, to one of the farthest northeast cities, and everywhere in-between... As for here in the U.S... talk to Miss Evon in North Carolina, Lee and Heather in Georgia, and most recently, by God's grace, Crystal in Indiana.

Beware the assassin's path...

When in the wilderness, stay away from all wide gates...

- JDP

Don't wobble in or into the wilderness.

- JDP

Beware & stay away from the biblical sin and betrayal that come with the spiritual drug dealers, hidden snipers, vipers, and wolves... Watch out for the deceptive quicksand, fake friends, and phony family – all of which can take you down.

-JDP

We need to see Christ's call to the cross as man's deepest walk through this world's wilderness...

- See the Great Commandments & Commission
- Read Luke 9:23/14:27 anew in its proper context

*** Christ is The Light of the world and wilderness!

*** The Church is the light of the world for wilderness

*** Psalm 119:105... The Word is our wilderness light!

REVIEW:

This world is a wild wilderness!

It is **NOT** a wishy-washy waiting-room.

No. Instead, it is divinely-designed to be your **war-time work-station** and **witness-refining worship-center!**

CLOSE:

Let's remember the ultimate purpose of God's wilderness...

The wilderness is where trials take place,
decisions are made, and hearts are revealed
and/or refined...

***Truth is a wilderness of contrast in this corrupt and
deceptive world (a divine oasis)! - JDP***

Love... TRUE love, is a wilderness of contrast
in & to this perverted, love-less world! - JDP

***"Love the LORD your God with ALL your heart, soul, mind,
and strength... Then, go do whatever you want!" - Augustine***

Compassionate-confrontation is another
wilderness of contrasting truth in love today...

Similarly...

***Unwavering, Christ-like courage is a wilderness
of contrast in this world...***

Ultimately, the TRUE Gospel, complete with its theological and applicable essentials, is today, a wilderness of contrasting Light... in (and to) a dark, dying, and deeply deceived, Devil-led world.

- JDP

*In the end, take this probing truth to heart...
your worship determines & reveals your wilderness.*

- JDP

The psalmist's instruction is helpful here:

“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4).

This is stated elsewhere in Matthew:

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness”; “he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”; and “love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”
(6:33; 16:24; 22:37).

Proverbs 3:5-6

At the beginning of this year, I asked some loved ones to take this principle and proverb to heart with me... by BEing Spirit-led & heading due-north, in line with Christ, biblically and missionally, no matter what!

FINALLY:

- We need to ALWAYS remember... ALL areas of ALL wilderness... are ALL God's wilderness!
- Let me say it in an even more encouraging way: *As children of The King... as co-heirs with Christ, every true Christian could and should think of our times in the wilderness like picnics in our family's back yard.*

The prodigal account is a wilderness story... See the younger brother's wilderness of the pig pen AND the older brother's wilderness of the front porch! And in BOTH cases, see the Father's loving, yet unwavering and uncompromised invitation to confess, repent, and come into the heart of the home.

– JDP

MOREOVER: Here's a closing thought that will bring you to an up-lifting point of preparedness for our next time...

- The Devil did not LURE Jesus in to trick Him. No. The Spirit LED Jesus in to begin His TRIUMPH and the process of "crushing the serpent's head" – as promised way back in Genesis 3:15... IMMEDIATELY after the 1st Adam failed his test. THIS wilderness account is very, VERY Good News!
- This is the first step of our Lord's promised victory lap!
- This is the first reflection of the enemy's eternal funeral!

PRAYER

STUDY NOTES:

New International Version

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

New Living Translation

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil.

English Standard Version

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Berean Standard Bible

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Berean Literal Bible

Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.

King James Bible

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

New King James Version

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

New American Standard Bible

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

NASB 1995

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

NASB 1977

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Legacy Standard Bible

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Amplified Bible

Then Jesus was led by the [Holy] Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Christian Standard Bible

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Holman Christian Standard Bible

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.

NIV Application Commentary:

AFTER HIS BAPTISM Jesus enters his ministry as the Spirit-anointed and Father-confirmed messianic deliverer.

But his beginning as deliverer is as incongruous as was his appearance for baptism.

Instead of initiating a public reformation, he goes to the desert to fast!

But this will be more than a place of spiritual retreat. The desert is the place of the first showdown between competing kingdoms and their rulers, between two figures who lay claim to the hearts and souls of men and women. Rather than retreat, Jesus now advances the kingdom of God.

[The Setting of the Temptations \(4:1-2\)](#)

JESUS' MINISTRY BEGINS in the desert, probably once again referring to the highlands of the Judean desert west of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. **This is likely the same desert in which John the Baptist appeared (3:1).**

But...

*Unlike John, Jesus will not first preach.
He will fast.*

Throughout his public ministry Jesus will often get away to lonely places by himself to prepare for a particularly significant event (e.g., 14:13, 23).

Here his entire ministry stretches out in front of him, so he spends solitary time in the desert to prepare himself spiritually for the events to come, just as Israel had at one time lived in the desert before beginning her task in the Promised Land.

Jesus was readying himself for his public ministry through this extensive time of communion with his Father, who had just confirmed their relationship in the baptism.

But there is more to the story than spiritual preparation. Matthew tells us that Jesus goes into the desert for the expressed purpose of being tempted by the devil.

A battle is brewing while Jesus is fasting.

Matthew gives key insights in these first two verses.

(1) Jesus is Spirit-led.

The Spirit came on him at his baptism (3:13–17), and now the Spirit leads him to the desert.

Increasingly Matthew shows us that the Spirit is no impersonal force. He is the personal agent who will be intimately involved in guiding Jesus every step of the way in his earthly life.

Jesus has come to accomplish the will of the Father who sent him (26:39, 42), and it is the Spirit who guides him as he accomplishes the Father's will.

That is,

Jesus is in the desert not only to commune with the Father but also to engage the enemy.

That same Spirit will give power to Jesus in order to withstand Satan's temptations.

Rom. 1:3–4). Matthew readily emphasizes both Jesus' divine conception *and* his human lineage.

In the baptismal scene, Matthew has clearly emphasized Jesus' divine nature as the beloved Son of God.

But he just as clearly emphasizes that Jesus was Spirit-led into the temptation and was a human combatant in his victory over Satan.

The Spirit-anointed messianic mission.

Jesus did what he did in his earthly ministry not primarily because he was operating in his powers as God, but because he was operating as the Spirit-anointed Messiah.

Jesus came to live a fully human life, just like you and me, which meant voluntarily limiting himself to his human attributes. He performed miracles, healed people, even raised people from the dead, because he drew on the power of the Spirit.

Notice Peter's recounting of Jesus' activities in his sermon at Pentecost:

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders & signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know”
(Acts 2:22).

God performed the miracles, wonders, and signs through Jesus.

Moreover... Jesus lived a godly, pure life because he relied on the power of the Spirit.

In a later message Peter said: *You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.* (Acts 10:38–39)

In other words, **Jesus fulfilled the messianic promises as the Spirit-anointed human descendant of David.** His redemptive mission included living a fully human life that overcame all temptation in the power of the Spirit so that he could offer an unblemished human life on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

True, **that sacrifice could only be sufficient because the humanness of Jesus' sacrifice was sustained by his divine nature, as the God-man endured the cross. But while retaining full deity, he limited himself to full human experience.**

Try to imagine Jesus as a baby, lying in a manger in Bethlehem. He looks up into the sky and thinks, "What a wonderful world I have created. I remember when my heavenly Father and I discussed creating this world. How beautiful it is!" As he lies there he thinks further, "I'm hungry and I'm wet. I'd sure like for Mother Mary to change me. But poor Mom. She's had a rough time of it. That donkey ride from Nazareth was tough. So I think that I'll just let her sleep through the night. I'll wait until the morning to eat and be changed. Or, better yet, I'll just get up and get a bottle and change myself."

Does that sound reasonable? Of course not!

Jesus experienced full humanity. He thought the thoughts of a normal baby and had the same reactions as a normal baby. He cried when he was hungry and wet. He slept when he was full and dry. He was dependent on his human mother and father. **Although Jesus was fully God, he became fully human with all of the typical human experiences.**

Therefore, **while Jesus was fully God with all of the attributes of deity, he limited their use so that he could fulfill the promises of God's sending a very human messianic deliverer from the line of David.** He lived the same kind of life that you and I live, but he did so perfectly because he was perfectly obedient to the will of the Father in the power of the Spirit.

The beginning of Jesus' public ministry was marked by the Spirit's coming on him at his baptism (3:13–17), and it was the Spirit who led Jesus immediately to be tempted (4:1).

It is that same Spirit to whom Jesus turned in his humanity to receive power to withstand Satan's temptations.

The supreme example of the Spirit-led life.

We are in deep theological waters here, but it is important for us to grasp this. It is important not only so that we understand the truth of Jesus' experience in his life and ministry, but important practically for us as well, because Jesus is the example of perfect humanity lived perfectly in the power of the Spirit.

That same Spirit is available to us.

While we will not attain his perfection in this life (e.g., Phil. 3:12), we look to him for an example

of the kind of life lived in the Spirit that is available to us. That same Spirit is now transforming us into his image.

As the apostle Paul says, *“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).*

Jesus came to show us how to live human life the way God intended it to be lived.

In his human nature he lived a victorious life because he lived perfectly in the power of the Spirit.

Some of us may not perform extraordinary miracles, unless that is God’s will for our lives, but we can all live victoriously through the Spirit by following Jesus’ example in all areas of life.

To accomplish the will of God the Father.

By knowing God's Word we will be able to discern his will for us.

The ultimate goal in life is to hear at the end, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (25:21, 23).

How do we know what we should do? We must understand God's purposes for our life—purposes in the little details as well as in the larger decisions of life.

This is stated elsewhere in Matthew:

"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness"; "he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"; and "love the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (6:33; 16:24; 22:37).

The psalmist's instruction is helpful here:

"Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4).

Delighting in God, or loving God, may be the most important guideline for all of the decisions of our lives, big and small, because if we truly love God, we will not do anything contrary to his Word and will for us. At the same time, when we delight in our walk with God, we are freed up to pursue our own desires and dreams.

Barnes Commentary:

[Matthew 4:1](#)

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit – Led up by the Spirit.

Luke says [Luke 4:1](#) that Jesus was ***"full of the Holy Spirit;"***

and it was by his influence, therefore, that he went into the desert to be tempted.

It was not done by presumption on the part of Jesus, nor was it for a mere display of his power in resisting temptation; but it was evidently that it might be seen that his holiness was such that he could not be seduced from allegiance to God.

When the first Adam was created he was subjected to the temptation of the devil, and he fell and involved the race in ruin: it was not improper that the second Adam - the Redeemer of the race - should be subjected to temptation, in order that it might be seen that there was no power that could alienate him from God; that there was a kind and a degree of holiness which no art or power could estrange from allegiance.

Mark 1:12 says that this occurred "*immediately*" after his baptism; that is,

Ellicott's Commentary:

Led up of the spirit.

—Each narrator expresses the same fact in slightly different language. St. Luke ([Luke 4:1](#)) "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led in the wilderness." St. Mark ([Mark 1:12](#)), more vividly, "Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness."

What is meant by such language?

The answer is found in the analogous instances of seers and prophets.

St. John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" ([Revelation 1:10](#)). The Spirit "lifted up" Ezekiel that from his exile by the banks of Chebar he might see the secret sins of Jerusalem ([Ezekiel 8:3](#)). The "Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" ([Acts 8:39](#)). Those who spake with tongues spake "by the Spirit" ([1Corinthians 14:2](#)).

The result of this induction leads us to think of the state so described as one more or less of the nature of ecstasy, in which the ordinary phenomena of consciousness and animal life were in great measure suspended. That gift of the Spirit had on the human nature of the Son of Man something of the same overpowering mastery that it has had over others of the sons of men. A power mightier than His own human will was urging Him on, it might almost be said He knew not whither, bringing Him into conflict “not with flesh and blood,” but with “principalities and powers in heavenly places.”

MacArthur New Testament Commentary:

In Matthew 4:1–11 one of the most monumental and mysterious spiritual battles of all time is recounted—the personal confrontation between Jesus Christ and Satan. The devil’s temptations directed at Jesus in the wilderness of Judea were observed by no other human being. He was entirely alone, and it is therefore obvious that we could know nothing of what transpired there unless Jesus Himself had told His disciples of it.

Here He reveals the victory secret, as it were, of His momentous struggle with Satan.

THE PREPARATION

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. (4:1-2)

We learn from Mark that ***“immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness”*** (Mark 1:12).

The ***“immediately,”*** of course, is sequential to the baptism.

As soon as Jesus' baptism was completed, His forty-day wilderness experience began.

Mark's use of *ekballō* (“impelled”) indicates the necessity of Jesus' temptation. Although the temptations were given by Satan, they were a part of God's perfect plan for the redemptive work of His Son.

No sooner had Israel been delivered from Egypt than Pharaoh came pursuing her with his army. No sooner had Hezekiah left the solemn Passover than Sennacherib came against him. No sooner had Paul

received an abundance of revelations than he was assaulted with vile temptations.

And no sooner had Jesus experienced the first great testimony to His ministry than He faced the first great test of His ministry.

After being anointed by the Holy Spirit and attested by the Father, *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness”* (Luke 4:1).

Jesus now was in full consciousness of His divine mission, and His sacred humanity was filled through and through with the abiding presence and power of God.

As never before, He was deeply satisfied as He contemplated the redemptive work He was sent to accomplish.

The wilderness of Judea is a hot, barren, and desolate area that extends west from the Dead Sea almost to Jerusalem, and is some thirty-five miles long and fifteen miles wide.

George Adam Smith described it as an area of yellow sand and crumbling limestone. It is an area of contorted strata, where the ridges run in all directions as if they were warped and twisted. The hills are like dust heaps, the limestone is blistered and peeling, the rocks are bare and jagged, and often the ground sounds hollow (cited in William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 1:63). **Nowhere in Palestine could Jesus have been more isolated or in less comfort.**

Satan met Adam in the paradise of Eden, where everything good was provided and nothing harmful existed. Adam lost his battle with Satan while in the perfect situation. The Second Adam met Satan in the desolate, forbidding **wilderness**, where “He was with the wild beasts” (Mark 1:13) and was without food for forty days (Luke 4:2). Yet...

what the first Adam lost in an ideal environment the Second Adam won back in a terribly imperfect environment.

What better proof can there be that spiritual and moral failure are not caused by circumstances but by the character and response of the one who is tempted?

[DICTIONARY.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

wilderness

[**wil-der-nis**]
Phonetic (Standard)IPA

noun

1. **a wild and uncultivated region**, as of forest or desert, uninhabited or inhabited only by wild animals; a tract of wasteland.
2. **a tract of land officially designated as such and protected** by the U.S. government.
3. any desolate tract, as of open sea.
4. a part of a garden set apart for plants growing with unchecked luxuriance.
5. a bewildering mass or collection.

WEBSTERS DICTIONARY:

wilderness

noun

wil·der·ness 'wil-dər-nəs

[Synonyms of wilderness](#)

1

a (1) : a tract or region uncultivated and uninhabited by human beings

(2) : **an area essentially undisturbed by human activity** together with its naturally developed life community

b : **an empty or pathless area** or region

in remote *wildernesses* of space groups of nebulae are found G. W. Gray †1960

c : a part of a garden devoted to wild growth

2 obsolete : wild or uncultivated state

3 a: a confusing multitude or mass : an indefinitely great number or quantity

3 b: a bewildering situation

[Got Questions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

What does it mean to have a wilderness experience?

A “wilderness experience” is usually thought of as a tough time in which a believer endures discomfort and trials. The pleasant things of life are unable to be enjoyed, or they may be absent altogether, and one feels a lack of encouragement. A “wilderness experience” is often a time of intensified temptation and spiritual attack. It can involve a spiritual, financial, or emotional drought. Having a “wilderness experience” is not necessarily a sign that a believer is sinning; rather, it is a time of God-ordained testing.

A “wilderness experience” is often linked to a “mountaintop experience”; that is, the struggle follows a success of some kind. The period of trial comes on the heels of a period of accomplishment or achievement.

There are several biblical examples of people enduring a “wilderness experience.”

- **The people of Israel, in leaving Egypt, experienced a miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea. The triumph of finally being free from slavery was their “mountaintop experience.” Yet what followed was a journey through the desert. They were tried in an actual wilderness, and they failed the test. As a result, their “wilderness experience” stretched to forty years.**

Others who can be said to have had a “wilderness experience” include:

- **the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:1–9);**
- **the apostle Paul (Galatians 1:17–18);** and, of course,
- **the patriarch Job.**

Jesus also had a “wilderness experience.”

After Jesus’ baptism, “at once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being [tempted by Satan](#)” (Mark 1:12–13).

Jesus’ experience teaches us some important facts:

1) it is not a sin to be tempted;

2) it is God's will that times of testing come

our way—Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” when He went into the wilderness ([Luke 4:1](#)); and 3) we are never without God's grace—Jesus may have been “with the wild animals,” but “angels attended him,” too ([Mark 1:13](#)).

In a “wilderness experience,” a believer may struggle simply to survive from day to day. Financial, material, physical, or emotional burdens may press on him. The flesh cries out for relief. The believer is forced to wait on the Lord, find God's peace and joy in the midst of trouble, and through it all mature in his walk with Christ. Paul offers this encouragement for those who “have this [treasure in jars of clay](#)”:

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” ([2 Corinthians 4:7–10](#)).

The reason for these trials, Paul says, is
“to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (verse 7).

The wilderness is an unpleasant place,
fleshly speaking.

We naturally want prosperity, health, and easy going.

But...

the same God who created the garden also created the wilderness.

There will be times of trial and pressure. Our faith will be tested. But the God of grace will meet us even in the wilderness.

Missionary [Amy Carmichael](#) knew this truth:

“Bare heights of loneliness . . . a wilderness whose burning winds sweep over glowing sands, what are they to HIM? Even there He can refresh us, even there He can renew us.”

How many times did Moses ascend Mount Sinai?

[Moses](#) actually went up on Mount Sinai several times to meet God as recorded in [Exodus 19](#) through the end of the book. Depending on the reckoning, Moses climbed Mt. Sinai about eight times to meet with the Lord.

The first ascent. After the exodus from Egypt, on the first day of the third month, the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai. Moses' first trip up Mt. Sinai is described in [Exodus 19:2–7](#). He ascends the mountain in verse 3 and comes back down in verse 7. On the mountain God tells Moses that He is offering a [covenant](#) to the people of Israel: if they will keep the covenant, God will make them His own “treasured possession” and “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (verses 5–6). Moses reports this message to the people, and the people respond by saying, “We will do everything the Lord has said” ([Exodus 19:8](#)).

The second ascent. Moses returns to the top of Mt. Sinai in [Exodus 19:8](#) in order to relay the people's response to the offer of a covenant. God then tells Moses that He will speak audibly to Moses in a thick cloud so that all the people will put their trust in Moses as God's chosen leader. Moses descends the mountain in verse 9 in order to relay this information to the children of Israel.

The third ascent. In [Exodus 19:10](#), God is speaking to Moses again, which implies that Moses may have again climbed Mt. Sinai. (Some scholars believe God's words in verse 10 were part of the discourse in verse 9.) In any case, Moses is said to descend the mountain again in verse 14. Moses consecrates the people in preparation for the Lord's appearance on the mountain on the third day (verses 10–11).

On the third day, “there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast” ([Exodus 19:16](#)). The people of Israel were understandably frightened. Then “Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder” (verses 18–19).

The fourth ascent. Moses' fourth trip up Mt. Sinai is described in [Exodus 19:20–25](#). God summons Moses to the top of the mountain in order to have him warn the people not to draw near the mountain while His presence is on Sinai. He also tells Moses to bring his brother, [Aaron](#), up the mountain with him. Moses descends the mountain in verse 25. God

then delivers the [Ten Commandments](#) audibly in [Exodus 20:1–17](#). In fear, the people of Israel plead with Moses not to let God speak directly to them. Instead, they ask Moses to be their intercessor and they would listen to him (verses 18–19). Moses tells them to not be afraid but that God is testing them so that they would fear Him and not sin (verse 20).

The fifth ascent. Moses returns to Mt. Sinai in [Exodus 20:21](#) as he “approached the thick darkness where God was.” At this time, God gives Moses various laws, recorded in chapters 21–23, along with a promise to give the land of Canaan to the children of Israel ([Exodus 23:20–33](#)).

The sixth ascent. In [Exodus 24:1](#) Moses is summoned again to climb Mt. Sinai. This time he is to bring Aaron, Aaron’s sons [Nadab and Abihu](#), and seventy of the elders of Israel with him. The next morning, Moses “built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel” (verse 4). He offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings and read the Book of the Covenant to the people, who responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey” (verse 7). To ratify the covenant, Moses sprinkled the people with the blood of the sacrifice (verse 8).

After the ceremony, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the elders ascend the mountain, and there they “saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky” ([Exodus 24:10](#)). Amazingly, God allows these men to live, even though they had seen God; in fact, they “ate and drank” on the mountain (verse 11).

God then commands Moses to continue up Sinai in order to receive the stone tablets that God had prepared ([Exodus 24:12](#)). Moses takes Joshua with him and sends the others down to the foot of Sinai. While Joshua waits, Moses continues the ascent. For six days, a cloud covers the top of the mountain. On the seventh day, God calls Moses to enter the cloud and approach the top of the mountain. Moses stays there for [40 days and 40 nights](#) (verse 18).

During this meeting on the mountain, God gives Moses much information. This included the Ten Commandments written on tablets of stone by God Himself. Moses also receives complete instructions on how to build the [tabernacle](#), the [ark of the covenant](#), and the altar, specifications for the priestly garments, etc. ([Exodus 24–31](#)). Unfortunately, at the foot of the mountain, the Israelites had Aaron build the golden calf and were committing idolatry. When Moses and Joshua descend the mountain in [Exodus 32:19](#) and see what the people are doing, Moses breaks the stone tablets in anger. He then destroys the [golden calf](#) and disciplines the people.

The seventh ascent. Moses goes back to the Lord in [Exodus 32:32](#) in order to intercede on behalf of the children of Israel. This implies another ascent of Sinai. In a show of great love and mercy that anticipates the love and mercy of Jesus Christ, Moses offers his own life in exchange for the life of Israel (verse 32).

The eighth ascent. In [Exodus 34:1–2](#), the Lord says to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain.” Moses is to come alone. On top of the mountain, the Lord reveals Himself to Moses and describes Himself this way: “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (verse 6). Moses worships the Lord and receives a repetition of the covenant. Moses is on Sinai for another 40 days and 40 nights, miraculously “without eating bread or drinking water” (verse 28). When Moses comes back down to the people, “he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him” (verses 29–30).

The events at Mt. Sinai were monumental in the history of the world. God was creating for Himself a new nation with new laws and a new way of life. The Lord showed Himself to be a God who desires to communicate Himself and to forge a relationship with His people. In giving the Law, God revealed His holiness, clearly defined sin ([Romans 7:7](#)), and provided a guardian to eventually bring us to Christ ([Galatians 3:24–25](#)). The mediation of Moses on Sinai is a wonderful picture of the intercession of Christ on behalf of sinners ([Romans 8:34](#)).

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What is the Wilderness of Sin?

The Wilderness of Sin is a dry, sandy, wasteland in the southwestern part of the Sinai Peninsula—assuming that’s

where [Mount Sinai](#) is located. The people of Israel entered the Wilderness of Sin not long after leaving Egypt on their journey to the Promised Land ([Exodus 16:1](#)).

The Wilderness of Sin is one of six wildernesses through which the Israelites traveled on their way to Canaan. The wildernesses include Shur, Etham, Sin, Sinai, Paran, and Zin.

The Wilderness of *Sin* is sometimes confused with the Wilderness of *Zin*, a region on the northwestern side of the Sinai Peninsula. **The Israelites traversed the Wilderness of Sin at the beginning of the exodus**, arriving at the Wilderness of Sin “on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt” ([Exodus 16:1](#)). They did not enter the Wilderness of *Zin* until a year later.

Located between the oasis of [Elim](#) and Mount Sinai, **the Wilderness of Sin is mentioned only four times in the Bible, all in connection with the exodus from Egypt.**

Immediately upon arrival in the desolate Wilderness of Sin, the whole community of Israelites began to grumble and complain to Moses and Aaron about the lack of food: “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death”
([Exodus 16:3](#)).

God heard their murmurings, for it was in the Wilderness of Sin that He first provided “bread from heaven” in the form of manna. The manna appeared each morning after the dew dried as “thin flakes like frost on the ground”
([Exodus 16:14](#)).

It was white, the color of coriander seed, and it tasted “like wafers made with honey” (verse 31). **Each person was to gather just what he or she needed for that day and a double portion on the day before the Sabbath** (verses 16, 22). The manna could be baked into cakes or boiled in pots (verse 23). **God also sent the Israelites quail in the Wilderness of Sin** (verses 12–13).

In [Exodus 17:1](#), the people of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sin in stages, arriving next in Rephidim, where there was no water to drink. The people complained again, and God brought water from the rock (verses 2–7). **The only other mention of the Wilderness of Sin is in the book of Numbers as part of the journal Moses kept detailing the Israelite journey from Egypt to their campsite in Moab** ([Numbers 33:11–12](#)).

The Wilderness of Sin is also called the Desert of Sin. The name *Sin* has no relation to the English word *sin*. It is merely the name of the region, although its similarity to the name *Sinai* and its proximity to Sinai suggest a possible connection. The area may have derived its name from the ancient moon god Sin who was worshiped by desert dwellers.