

Practice Guide for March 3rd 2024

Into the Wilderness, pt. 2—It's Over. Now What?

Suggested Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Time Heist

Have you ever considered what you would do if you could travel back in time?

- Have each person write down their “Time Travel Plans” (1-3 bullet points) on a piece of paper and place them in a bowl or container.
- Pass the container around and have each member draw a paper and briefly discuss what is written on it, then guess whose time travel plans they are.

Opening (5 minutes)

Before beginning, open the meeting time with 2 minutes of silence to help you focus on interaction with God and one another. At the end, ask someone to open the gathering time with prayer.

Question for the group: Briefly describe a time in your that you experienced great uncertainty. How did it pan out?

Reflecting On Scripture (20 minutes)

Have somebody read Exodus 2:11-20 out loud along with the following quote:

“The wilderness is the context in which we learn to trust God in new ways.” —Ruth Haley Barton

Questions for discussion:

1. Based on what we know of Moses' story and this particular text, what might have been going on under the surface of his life that led him to his outburst and escape into the Wilderness?
2. What areas of immaturity do we see in Moses prior to the Wilderness that may have held him back from being the person the Lord needed to help deliver the Hebrew people from Egypt?
3. In what ways do you think the Lord used the Wilderness to shape Moses?
4. What role did Reuel (later called Jethro) play in Moses' Wilderness experience?

Have someone read Exodus 3:1-10 out loud.

Questions for discussion:

1. What role did Moses play in his encounter at the burning bush?
2. What did God reveal to Moses about his identity and purpose?
3. How did Moses' wilderness affect other people (for positive or negative)?

Read and reflect together on each of following quotes and how they relate to the previous Scripture:

All that is gold does not glitter. Not all who wander are lost. The old that is strong does not wither. Deep roots are not reached by the frost. —Gandalf (“Lord of the Rings,” by J.R.R. Tolkien)

“A leader is a person who must take special responsibility for what's going on inside him-or herself, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.” —Parker Palmer

Community Practice (20 minutes)

Take 3-5 minutes on your own to prayerfully journal your response to the following questions:

- What are the most recent setbacks in my life?
- What is the Lord inviting me to let go of through my setback? What is He calling me to embrace?
- What is one lesson the difficulties in this season are teaching me and one step I can take in response?
- What are some further ways I could “turn aside” like Moses toward the voice and invitation of God through this setback?

Share and explain your answers in groups of 2 or 3.

Gather back together as a group and turn your attention to Jethro’s role in Moses’ wilderness, and correlate that with the role of community and relationships in the Wilderness. Read this challenge from Sunday’s teaching slowly:

Imagine with me a community where our wildernesses are embraced as a part of the human experience and our collective story. A place where vulnerability is not a weakness but a bridge to deeper relationships, understanding and growth.

Group Discussion:

1. Who was there in the most difficult times of your life to provide, support, care or a comforting presence?
2. It is often hard for us to help others face long seasons of Wilderness (illness, crisis of faith or identity, financial difficulty). Why do you think that is?
3. What would it look like to be a community that embodies the challenge we read? What would we have to overcome to get there?

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Have one person close in prayer, and/or slowly read aloud this prayer-poem “Oh God Let Something”:

O God, let something essential happen to me, something more than interesting or entertaining, or thoughtful. O God, let something essential happen to me, something awesome, something real. Speak to my condition, Lord, and change me somewhere inside where it matters, a change that will burn and tremble and heal and explode me into tears or laughter or love that throbs or screams or keeps its terrible, cleansing silence and dares the dangerous deeds. Let something happen in me which is my real self, God. O God, let something essential and passionate happen in me now. Strip me of my illusions of self-sufficiency, of my proud sophistications, of my inflated assumptions of knowledge...

O God, let something essential and joyful happen in me now. something like the blooming of hope and faith, like a grateful heart, like a surge of awareness, of how precious each moment is, that now, not next time, now is the occasion to take off my shoes, to see every bush afire, to leap and whirl with neighbor, to gulp the air as sweet wine until I’ve drunk enough to dare to speak the tender word: “Thank you”; “I love you”; “You’re beautiful”; “Let’s live forever beginning now”; and “I’m a fool for Christ’s sake.” Amen.

—Ted Loder, Guerillas of Grace