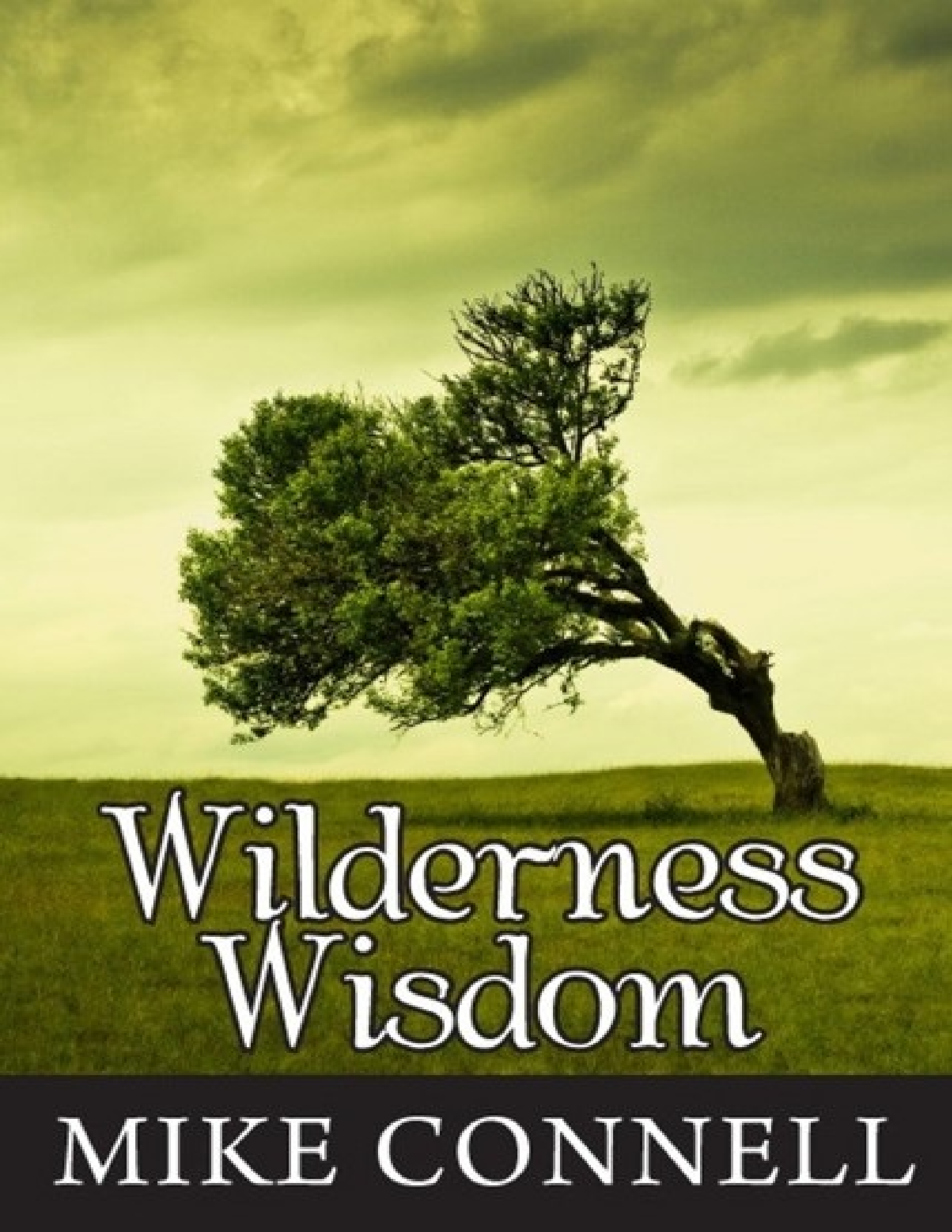

Wilderness
Wisdom
MIKE CONNELL

Wilderness Wisdom

Pastor Mike Connell

Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

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Wilderness Wisdom (4 sermons)

The Bible tells us, that of the people of Israel, the majority of them, God was not really pleased with. He loved them. He saved them. He got the Holy Ghost on them. He did miracles for them. But He was not well pleased with them, it says in 1 Corinthians 10.

It takes faith to please God. Why was God not so pleased with them? Because they were overthrown in the wilderness. When a period, which God designed for their benefit, came into their life, instead of responding in a godly way and understanding what God wanted to do, they fought, wrestled, and eventually fell and failed in that wilderness experience.

Jesus had a wilderness experience, it must be important. It can't be just an Old Testament thing. 1 Corinthians 10 says: it's a warning, a learning exercise, it's something for us to learn from, and it says: make sure you don't make the same mess ups that they made.

Wilderness Wisdom (1 of 4) Jesus, after He'd experienced the Holy Ghost and had this great encounter, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. If we want to become great in anything, there's always a season of preparation. Most of us want to just get the dream and we're there now, but it never works that way. Nothing in life works that way. There's always preparation. No one is born a great concert pianist, they had preparation. Everyone has preparation, and preparation's not nice.

Wilderness Wisdom (2 of 4) It helps if we just understand that the wilderness was God's idea, that that difficult season was His idea. All major men in the Bible had times or seasons which you would call a wilderness. A wilderness was a very dry place, full of wild animals, it was very difficult. It represented a very difficult season, a difficult time.

Wilderness Wisdom (3 of 4) If you're walking with God, you will find yourself quite frequently in transitions, changes. It's part of walking with God, because He's continually moving us on. You don't just get saved, and that's the end of it. He journeys you, because He has an assignment for your life, and He wants to

develop you, or mature you, or prepare you for that assignment.

The Bible speaks of transitions all the way through, and transitions are very uncertain times. They have their challenges, and have their difficulties, but God loves us to embrace the process of the transition and learn what we can, because it's your chance to prepare yourself for the next season. Many believers totally frustrate God's destiny for their life, because when God was trying to change them, they wouldn't transition.

Fighting the Good Fight (4 of 4) Every believer, whether you like it or not, is engaged in a spiritual conflict. The earth is a spiritual battle zone, and you're either in the fight winning, or you're in the fight and beaten up. The Bible calls it a fight of faith - its a fight about what you believe.

The only thing that can move the hand of God is that we are in faith, that we are agreeing with God about what God says. We take His side in life, and we begin to learn how to live and move by faith.

Just because you have a need, does not mean God will meet it. He knows the need. He looks for faith, and faith can be developed and cultivated. Faith has an evidence in our life, so when you're operating and living by faith, it is evident.

Audio

- Wilderness Wisdom (1 of 4).mp3
- Wilderness Wisdom (2 of 4).mp3
- Wilderness Wisdom (3 of 4).mp3
- Fighting the Good Fight (4 of 4).mp3

Notes

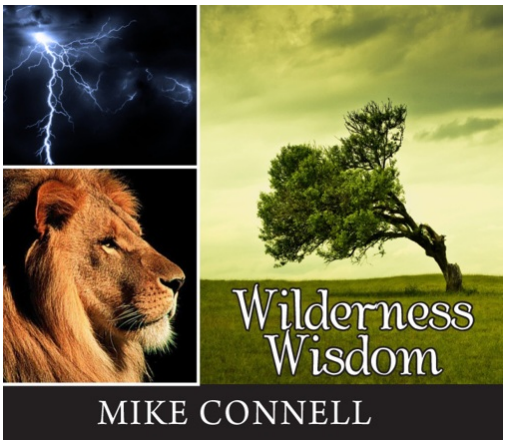
- Wilderness Wisdom (1 of 4)
- Wilderness Wisdom (2 of 4)
- Wilderness Wisdom (3 of 4)
- Fighting the Good Fight (4 of 4)

Wilderness Wisdom (1 of 4)

Sun 18 Apr 2010 AM « Back to Top

Audio» Notes» Share» Support» Review»

Jesus, after He'd experienced the Holy Ghost and had this great encounter, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. If we want to become great in anything, there's always a season of preparation. Most of us want to just get the dream and we're there now, but it never works that way. Nothing in life works that way. There's always preparation. No one is born a great concert pianist, they had preparation. Everyone has preparation, and preparation's not nice.



I wonder if you could open your Bible in Luke Chapter 3, and I have something on my heart to just share, and I believe it'll be a help, called a Wilderness Wisdom, or Wisdom from the Wilderness. How many people ever flunked a test? [Laughter] It's a shocker isn't it when you flunk a test? I remember my first year at university, my first maths test. I got four. [Laughter] I couldn't believe it - four. It wasn't quite so bad because I got four out of 50 which meant I did a quick sum, and turned that into eight out of 100, so in a moment I had eight per cent! I'm thinking dear Lord, I've come here to try and graduate, and I've four marks out of 50. It was dreadful, but that wasn't the end. I graduated and majored in maths, [laughter] so a flunk [applause] doesn't mean the end, and particularly flunking a test in God doesn't mean the end.

I like that about God, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, though he fall, though he fall, he shall never be utterly cast down by God, because the Lord will lift him up, and get him up again! That's what the word of God says - just got to believe it. Don't lie down there. No, don't lie down and stay down. I want us just to read a few verses. I'm going to read two. You know with a sandwich, you know you've got the bread of the sandwich, and there's a bit of meat in the sandwich? We're just going to look at the bits of bread first of all, because we like the carbohydrate. [Laughs] So we look in Luke, Chapter 3, Verse 21. When all the people were baptised, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptised. He

submitted to the move of God that was in His generation, in preparation to bringing in a fresh move - and then it says: while He prayed, heaven was opened. Oh, that's good - and the Holy Ghost came on Him in a bodily form like a dove, a voice came from heaven which said: You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased. What a wonderful encounter and experience; an open heaven, anointing of the Holy Ghost, God speaking verbally from heaven in a way that could be heard by everyone. That has got to be a great experience.

Okay, here's another good one. In Luke, Chapter 4 Verse 14: Then Jesus returned in the power of the Holy Ghost to Galilee, and news of Him went out everywhere, mainly because of all the miracles He did. Now don't you just love that? He had this fantastic encounter with Almighty God, the spirit of God on Him. What a great meeting that was! The presence of God came on Him, then we see Him with the power of the Holy Ghost. Now most Christians like those two verses. They like that part, but there's a little bit in the middle which is actually quite significant and important, and it goes like this in Chapter 4 Verse 1: Then Jesus, after He'd experienced the Holy Ghost and had this great encounter, and He returned from Jordan, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Well many people know about the acts of God, so we like meetings where there's miracles and great things happen, feel inspired and stirred; not so many people learn the ways of God.

Unless you learn the ways of God, you will become frustrated in your Christian life, because you'll be always reaching out for something that others seem to have, but it always seems beyond you. You're reaching to get something that seems available and seems promised, but it doesn't seem to come to you. It seems to come to others and there's this little thing in here which is really the meat in the sandwich, because between Jesus' experience of being filled with the Holy Ghost, and actually having manifestation of power, there was this period called a wilderness experience. I want to talk about that, because some of us are going through that wilderness experience now. It's important you understand what its purpose is, otherwise you'll get overwhelmed in it, discouraged. The Bible tells us, that of the people of Israel, the majority of them God was not really pleased with. Did He love them? He loved them. Did He save them? He saved them. Did He get the Holy Ghost on them? He got the Holy Ghost on them. Did He do miracles for them? He did miracles for them.

But He was not well pleased with them, it says in 1 Corinthians 10. It takes faith

to please God. Why was God not so pleased with them? Because they were overthrown in the wilderness. When a period, which God designed for their benefit, came into their life, instead of responding in a godly way and understanding what God wanted to do, they fought, wrestled, and eventually fell and failed in that wilderness experience. Jesus had a wilderness experience, it must be important. It can't be just an Old Testament thing. 1 Corinthians 10 says: it's a warning, a learning exercise, it's something for us to learn from, and it says: make sure you don't make the same mess ups that they made. Two billion people died so you could learn and expensive lesson, so it's quite good to read and learn the lesson isn't it aye? So the thing is that tests always come in the kingdom. Now when I went to university I had a test, but you always knew it was coming up, and you could prepare for your test. You swotted up, and then you went into a room, and then it was basically you'd learned. They did the test, they posted the marks the next day - so you knew about when it was coming, and what it was about, and you knew how to get ready.

But the tests with God don't work like that. [Laughter] What a shame. When God brings tests around our life, He doesn't advertise they're coming. They come when you don't expect them. You're probably in the middle of one right now - and when they come, they are not about head knowledge. They're not about how many books you've read, they're not about how many sermons you've listened to, they're not about how many iPod downloads you've got. They're not anything about how much knowledge you may have, and that is a dilemma, because for many of us we have a lot of knowledge. We've sat and listened to lots of wonderful preaching, but it's actually about what experience you have. It's about what is built into your life, in your walk with God. It is about the kind of person you really are on the inside, and in the initial phase of our Christian experience, often everything goes absolutely wonderfully. It's like we've - man, we've got cake, and we've got icing as well. It's just wonderful, we're having a glorious time.

Then next thing you know, you're eating bread with no butter or nothing, and it seems like it's a different deal. Now what happened? Where did God go? We don't understand that God actually designs a path for us. You know the Bible tells us that there is a scroll written with your destiny on it, and how your life will unfold, what God has prepared for you, but you have to open the scroll a little at a time. You've actually got to unwind it. It's not like a book, you'd read

the end of the book like that. With a scroll you've got to take it, and unwind it bit by bit. God prescribes for us, He knows exactly what we need. So the purpose of the wilderness training, or wilderness seasons in our life, is essentially it's for preparation. It is preparation. If you are facing a season that you might call a wilderness season, I can assure you, it is your time of preparation. It is a time God has set aside for you, to be prepared for the things He's planned for your life, so it's important that you respond to God properly in the season of preparation.

If we want to become great in anything, there's always a season of preparation. Most of us want to just get the dream and we're there now, but it never works that way. Nothing in life works that way. There's always preparation. No one is a great concert pianist, they had preparation. Everyone has preparation, and preparation's not nice. I was with some men on a ship, musicians. I asked them how long do you practice? They said eight hours a day. I couldn't imagine sitting at a piano practising eight hours a day, that's what they did - so people in the Bible, all through the Bible you'll find any great man of God, not only had encounters with God, which we all love by the way, but they had wilderness experiences. We don't want to hear about those, but they are the way of God, to get you from your encounter experience, and your revelation, into your destiny; so you have to go through preparation.

Moses had 40 years in the back side of a desert, Israel did 40 years in the wilderness, David had a season in the wilderness, Goliath faced the nation for 40 days and 40 nights. Elijah, why does Elijah suddenly turn out, and turn the nation upside down? Where was he before that? In a wilderness, in an experience that was preparing him. John the Baptist, where was John the Baptist found? He wasn't found in a church. He was found in a wilderness, and the Bible says: the word of the Lord came to him in the wilderness. Everyone else had titles and positions; he got God's word speak into him - a big difference. You can have whatever position you like, whatever title you like. It matters toot in the kingdom of heaven really. What counts is, whether you're hearing from God, and flowing with what God wants you to do. So anyway, God has a system of testing. It's helpful to know what that system is. It's called the wilderness.

Now have a look at it in Deuteronomy Chapter 8, and I'll give you just a few simple lessons out of it. It's always, always a place of preparation, and always God has something in mind for you, so let's have a read in here. We're going to

look at it here, Israel, then we'll look at it quickly with Jesus, then I want to show you how to certainly flunk the wilderness, keys to flunking. I've learnt the keys because I've done many of them you know, at one point or another - but then God doesn't leave you down there. He lifts you up, and then you can learn how to succeed, so I'll give you some keys to succeed too. Here it is in Deuteronomy, Chapter 8. And you shall remember - Verse 2 - the Lord your God led you this way, these 40 years in the wilderness. Notice that word 'led' you. God led you in the wilderness - to humble you, prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, fed you with manna - allowed you to hunger! What kind of God is that? Oh my - fed you with manna that you didn't know, or your fathers didn't know, that He might make you know, that man shall not live by bread alone; but man shall live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Verse 16: He fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers didn't know or hadn't experienced, that He might humble you and test you - now notice this - to do you good in the end. God's got a plan for good. So let me give you just a few simple things about the wilderness that may help. You notice the first thing is, God led them there. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, so God leads people into a wilderness. There are experiences you have in life; it's not the devil, and it's not because you've stuffed up or messed up in a big way. It's God's leading you into a difficult season, that's all. Oh why would God want to do a terrible thing like that? I just want it all to be sugar and nice and spice. Don't talk to me about crosses and things like that - I want blessing! I want anointing! Oh come on, get a life, get real. See, the anointing comes after the cross. Cross gets you to heaven. Cross is a way of life. Cross is always a part of this deal, so the first thing to realise is, God leads you into the wilderness. It's God's idea.

It's God's idea to get you into a wilderness time, so - a wilderness time. A wilderness experience is for preparation, not destination. A wilderness experience is preparation, not destination, so whatever experience you may be going through now, that you might like to call a wilderness, believe me it is preparation, not destination. It's a place God wants you to move through, not stay there. Don't stay there, and definitely, don't die there. [Laughter] Definitely don't die there! It's just a preparation for the destination God has for your life, and God has to prepare us. See, it's like children growing. You'd love to give them lots of

things, they have to be prepared. So the wilderness is a place of humbling. The wilderness is a place of humbling. The Bible tells us to humble ourself, but not many of us want to do that really, and so God allows us a few experiences that bring a great humbling in our life. You may have been led into such an experience. You didn't want to go there, you just were following Jesus, and next thing you find, there you are, you're in a wilderness, and it's incredibly humbling.

So what kinds of things - notice the thing about the humbling is, you suffer lack? Now He calls you to suffer lack. He didn't leave them hungry, He still fed them. He said He tested them, said allow them to suffer lack, allowed you to get hungry. Hunger is a good thing, if you hunger for the right things. So He allowed you get hungry, so what kind of experiences - now this is what they include. This is probably not an exhaustive list, but this is a list of some things that you could call a wilderness experience. You might like to tick one or two of them: Pressure, tremendous pressure coming on your life. It could be financial pressure, family pressure, pressure of ill health, pressure of all kinds of things. It could be lack of some kind, you don't have enough. Lack of ability, lack of skill, could be a lack in some kind of area - you're running a ministry and you've got a lack of people. You've got a lack of resources.

Injustice is another wilderness experience, nothing after you've been through what is perceived was an injustice. Of course we just look at it through our eyes, so we say that's NOT FAIR! [Laughter] God says: I'm just trying to prepare you! It's not fair - meaning I don't deserve this. Of course you don't, but God's preparing you. You have to learn how to handle injustice. How would you be able to understand the cross, which is full of injustice, so an unjust experience can bring you to the cross, where Jesus suffered great injustice, and you can understand how to deal with injustice. Most people just become angry when there's injustice, and they're not going to have an answer when they're angry. You have to have compassion, and so God has to take us through some experiences. When you've been through injustice, you can understand people who have suffered injustice, and instead of saying: oh just get over it, you have compassion, because you've worked through it yourself.

Misunderstanding is another wilderness experience. Moses thought they would understand the call of God on his life; I am called to deliver a nation don't you know! No they didn't know, and they didn't care, and they chased him out of

town and put a reward on his head. He ended up in the wilderness. What went wrong? I was so sure it was God, for me to deliver the nation. How come I'm here looking after sheep? Misunderstanding. Most of us want to be understood by people. When you feel misunderstood, now don't you get upset - welcome to your wilderness. You don't need to have people understand you. In fact when you walk with God, people won't always understand you, and you've got to live with that. How will you live with that? Well you have to experience it, and learn how instead of that natural desire of wanting to be understood - but you need to understand! I've got to explain! I've got to - no, you just need to lean on God, and let God sort it out. It's not an easy test, the one of misunderstanding.

Another one is opposition, where you have tremendous opposition, it doesn't seem fair. Another one is apparent failure, everything you've done seems to have fallen apart, and there it is, you look a mess. It happens. Probably the best way to describe a wilderness - if I want to use a word picture to describe a wilderness experience, it's a fruit tree in winter, bare sticks, doesn't look good. I like them in autumn, when they've got the beautiful leaves and fruit everywhere, it's wonderful. But there are times in our life when we look like we're a tree, there's no fruit, not even any leaves. All you can see are the bare sticks, and we live in an area like that. But one thing I've noticed about that, it's always followed by spring with the budding - and I notice it's followed by fruit bearing again as well, so it looks a bit like that, so that's the wilderness for you. Temptation is a wilderness experience.

What is there about a wilderness? Wilderness is a place where you feel alone. It's not you are alone, because God doesn't leave you, you just feel alone. You feel all on your own - all on my own! God, where are you? Of Hezekiah it said: God left him alone to test him, and see what was in his heart. God didn't leave him. It's just God withdrew the manifest presence, and it didn't feel like God was there. God was there, it just didn't feel like God was there, and in that didn't feel like God was there, then he had to make decisions what to do, because when you feel God, well it's great when you feel God. I mean you're in church, you feel God woah! Then you get out in the car park and someone upsets you, and suddenly you don't feel God anymore. That's what happens. Welcome to life.

So notice when temptation comes, it doesn't feel like God's anywhere near. It feels like He's a long way off, and that temptation's real close. That's the nature of a wilderness experience, it doesn't feel like God's so close. How many know

those kinds of experiences? They're horrible. I hate them. Fortunately I know that they prepare you, so no one likes a wilderness, but there are some wonderful things about the wilderness. It's a preparation, not a destination. It's a place of testing, and that word 'test' means, to prove the kind of quality, character that you have. So it's an opportunity for God to put on display, the kind of character, the kind of person you are, and the depth of your relationship with Him. So interestingly when Job was walking down the - notice that God spoke to the devil and said: do you notice my mate Job, what a good kind of guy he is? Then God's pointing out and showing off His servant. The devil says: oh, I tell you what, let me hit him a bit, and then you watch him complain. He said okay, have a go - and he did, and Job never complained.

God said: do you notice my servant down there, he's pretty good isn't he aye? [Laughter] Well you just let me smite him with boils, and you watch, he'll curse You! Okay - but you look at the end of Job, and you find the end of Job, he was doubly blessed. He came out with double portion anointing. Now of course everyone wants double portion anointing. I tell them get away from me, I want it myself. There's a way to get it. You have to go through some experiences with God. People say oh, lay hands on me, I want the anointing, want the anointing! Welcome to some wilderness time. Get alone with God, and begin to find your way into God in the midst of difficulty, and you'll come out in the power of the Holy Ghost. People want the soft thing - come up the front, and I believe in altar call, believe in laying hands, impartation, but my observation over years is most people lose it within a day. Why? Because they never played their part in the season of preparation, and there's important things to recognise in those seasons of preparation.

So pressure reveals what's in our heart. Notice what God says: He brought you into the wilderness, that He might know you. Does that mean God doesn't know you? Of course He knows you. In other words, He wants us to have an experience together, where our heart is exposed. This is intimacy. The word 'no' there is the word 'yada', meaning intimate love connection, so the wilderness is a time of intimate love connection with God. Oh, I thought you said it was a tough time? Well it is kind of a tough time, but it's actually designed to get your heart out to the open where God can see it, you can see it particularly, and a chance for you to become intimate with God, because in the wilderness God formed covenant marriage relationship with Israel. In the wilderness God encountered

them. In the wilderness God helped them. In the wilderness God provided for them, in fact they never lacked in the wilderness at all. It was a place of encountering, experiencing God, and deepening character and relationship with Him.

He said: that He would know you, what was in your heart, and that you might know man shall not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. But He said you need to experience the reality that the life you're going to live in the world, is a life of faith, depending on God. What we want is to have the smooth life, and get all the blessings. God wants the faith life, and faith doesn't necessarily feel good. You don't feel any great anointing on you when you're going through a wilderness experience, but that doesn't mean God isn't there. You've got to hold onto His words. You've got to trust His character, and when you see what comes up in your heart, in the wilderness time, you can be shocked. I've been through a few wildernesses - pressures, and the wilderness reveals what's in our heart, and so sometimes in the wilderness I've felt I wanted to have a drink. It was all I could do to stop thinking about having a drink. It wasn't a way to solve the wilderness, but it looked like it could solve it. [Laughter] Have a few drinks. Have one - have a couple, have three. Have the whole bottle, you'll feel a lot better. [Laughter] I did too [laughs] but that's alright, you learn to get out and grow and become a bit different. Don't tell me you haven't tried that either. [Laughter]

But all sorts of things come out in the wilderness - quite surprising, there you are on your own, doesn't feel like God's around, and suddenly this pressure's on you. Bitterness comes up, if it's in your heart. Offences come up, if they're in your heart. They all come out on display. Pride comes up, if it's in your heart. Whatever's in your heart comes up in the wilderness, just shows itself. People see it. If you've got judgement in your heart, that'll always come up too; critical attitudes, oh they'll all come up too. If you've got a victim mindset, that'll come up. You know what also gets dealt with in the wilderness? Soulish attachments, the things that we love that comfort us, and we prop our life up with. Well those, they get shown up for what they are too. Sometimes God takes them away, sometimes He calls you to repent and let them go. He wants us to trust Him, wants us to walk by faith, and so wilderness experiences help us deepen the quality of our relationship. Isn't that lovely?

Fears come up in the wilderness. All your world's falling apart, you'll be

surprised what depth of fear can be inside you, surprised. It grips your belly, and there you are, you love God and you're worshipping God, and you've got this deep fear gripping your belly, that you've got to face and overcome. That's wilderness time. It's possible to overcome these things. That's what they were for. They were to grow the people, not destroy them. Now notice here's the last thing; the wilderness is tailor made by God for you, so no one has to prepare one for you. God makes it for you, and it's tailor made for your enlargement, and for your blessing. Notice God's plan: if you are in a wilderness now, and you're walking through a wilderness, God's plan is to do you good, because He's a good God, and He doesn't mess up. You say: well you don't know what I'm going through. No, welcome to your wilderness. What's out the other side of it for you though, the joy ahead? You've got to keep thinking it's a faith walk, and so everyone, if you want to be a leader, great. Welcome. You'll have a wilderness experience sometime - may have more than one, and you'll just want to give up, but you can't.

In the wilderness people do quit. People quit in the wilderness. I've watched over the years, I've seen many - I've seen pastors, I've seen leaders, I've seen congregation members, quit God in the wilderness. You watch their life - they had many reasons for quitting, many reasons for leaving, but in the end I watch their lives what happens. It's not good, because you are called to greatness, and when you fail and draw back from God, He says my soul has no pleasure in him that draws back. You do open your life to all kinds of other problems, so escaping the pressure, the best way to escape is to run into God, never to run away from God. He will always give you the option, so I think God: I'll run, I'll place my hands in the hands of the Lord. [Laughs] Okay, let's have a look here in Luke, Chapter 4. Then the spirit Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, and He returned from Jordan, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Oh my God, the devil's in the wilderness! [Laughter] It's full of devils! Predators! That's what a wilderness was like. It's full of scorpions and snakes. Fortunately God has given us authority over serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy, nothing shall harm you. You don't have to be scared of it.

So notice this - And the devil said to Him: if You are the Son of God, command this stone become bread. And He said: it is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. So then the devil took Him up a high mountain. Ever thought how he did that one? That is a high

level spiritual encounter, transported from one place to another, by the devil. Man, that'd freak you out, wouldn't it? And the devil said: all this authority I will give You, and their glory, for it's been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I want. If You worship me, it'll all be Yours. Get behind Me Satan! It's written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve. Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said: if You're the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here, for it's written: He'll give His angels charge over you, to keep you, and in their hands they'll bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. He said: it's written, you shall not tempt the Lord your God; then the devil finished temptation, he departed from Him until a better opportunity presented itself.

In other words, Jesus gave the devil a whipping! How did He do it? Was it with the anointing? Think about that. He used the word of God, in His mouth, a sharp two-edged sword. You've got to have the word, can't just have experiences, got to be grounded in the word. Now you notice what the pressure - the pressure came on three areas. Now when we go back to the experience Jesus had, this is what God said to Him. He got the touch of the Holy Ghost on Him, got the anointing of the Holy Ghost on Him, then God spoke into Him these words: This is My beloved Son; or in other words, this is who You are, You are the Son of God. That's who You are. You're the Son of God, and not only that, I love You. I love You. You're precious to Me. That's what He got from heaven. That was a revelation. Now what does the devil say? Oh really, Son of God? If You're the Son of God, if You are who You say You are, You have to do something to establish it.

See, so who are you? Underneath all of that, who are you? Well if we ask the question, who are you, most people say something like this; I'm an accountant. No, no, I asked who are you? Er, this is my name. No, who are you? If you keep asking the question after a while, you find a lot of people say actually, I don't really know, I don't really know. So notice the devil tempts Him to put on a mask, or to establish His identity, who He is, in three different ways. The first one, you notice what he says. He says well change these stones into bread. The first one is the performance trap: I am what I do. Who are you? I'm an accountant or I'm a teacher, I'm a preacher. What if you're not preaching, who are you then? Oh I don't know. See preacher, that's what you do. You're not what you do. You are who you are. Who are you? Ooh, I don't really know. Well we

need to find out who we are in Christ, or we'll define ourself by what we do. So the world pressures you, well what have you done with your life? Ooh oh, not very much. Conclusion: well you're not much of a person, you must be a failure.

That trap, traps many people; well you're not doing much, you can't be much then, can you? Can you, I mean really? I mean if you were something, you'd have done something with your life. Oh what a mess you've made of your life. Really what have you done? I haven't really done too much at all. Really you've wasted what you've done, you've failed, and here you are, this age, and what have you done? Notice it's attaching your identity to what you do, and when you attach identity to what you do, you'll become a driven man, and you can't stop doing what you do. You can't give up what you do. Why? Because your whole identity is attached to it, and someone talks about or criticises what you do, you will erupt and defend. Why? Because when they touch what you do, they touched who you are. Jesus rebuked it with the word of God.

The second thing is possessions: I am what I have. So he said: look at this, look at this. I'll give it all to you. You can have it all! You can have it all! Little wee catch, just got to bow down. It's not too much, you can have it all. Now notice what it is; identity there is attached to possessions. Well, what kind of car have you got? Oh, I see, an old Ford aye, oh okay. What car - ooh a BMW! Ooh, you must be something! Oh, an old heap, you must be nothing. Notice people do it? They attach value or identity to possessions: so what do you have? Oh, well I have a lovely two storey house out in Havelock North with a pool and two cars, and one of them is a Jag. Oooh you must be special! And who are you? Oh well I live out at Flaxmere, and I have a small house, and we don't have a car, we have bikes, we get around on bikes. Oh! [Laughter] You got the idea? We had our season as pastors. We had no car, and we had bikes for the whole family - you, a Pastor? You don't seem to have much. No, we don't really, but we have one another, and we love God. It doesn't really matter does it? [Applause]

So we had to go through that wilderness, didn't have a thing. I wonder how we're going to get by - but you know what? We found God in it, and it didn't matter. You can have it, and give it away, so I have no attachment really to things now. Have them, we give them away, just like that, give them away. The reason is because I'm not defined by what I have, I'm not defined by what I do. When I was leading a movement of churches, and they said they couldn't get over why I'd resign off that and let it go. They could not understand it. I said: well I'm not

what I do. God called me to do that, now He's said: let it go, so I've let it go, it's no big deal. But for others it was a big deal, because the position was very important. Are you defined by your position, title and what you do, or what you have, you know, your possessions and lovely body ra-ra-ra? What if it gets old and saggy, oh! [Laughter] You don't have much do you. Unfortunately that's the route we're all going to take, you know? [Laughter] We need all the help we can get to make it look good. [Laughs] But we're not defined by what we have!

Okay and here's the next one. The devil tried to define Him by popularity: Oh, I am what people say I am! I am what people think of me. That's not bad is it? So you end up living to please people. What do you think? There used to be that Yes Minister programme on TV, and his whole thing was defined by what are the people thinking. You can't worry about what people think. They're going to think what they think anyway. If they think you're a nerd, well they're going to think you're a nerd, you know, so what? They're allowed to think what they like. But you understand, if we define ourselves by what people think about us, it's a real problem, because you can't be true to yourself, and you can't be true to what God says. You can't be true to your destiny, and you can't be true to the things God's put in your heart; the desires, dreams, gifts, passions. The problem is when you become a Christian, suddenly there's almost all this pressure and expectation comes on. Now you have to do this, you have to do this, you have to be this, you have to - and it's like this huge pressure to conform. Where did it come from?

It didn't come from God. It's often a manifestation what's already in your heart, the need to feel accepted, or fit in in some kind of way, a need to please people. When we please people, we can't be the servant of God, and so the issue of identity is a crucial one. That's what the devil pushes on, and wilderness testings, test our attachment to things, what we own, to positions. They test our attachment to people. Basically they test where your identity is found, whether you are founded and grounded, that even if I have nothing, and have lost everything, am doing nothing, look like a failure, and people think I'm hopeless, nevertheless I am who God says I am. Moses didn't look too good in the wilderness after he had a warrant out for his murdering someone - but he was a man of God. David didn't look to good in a cave hiding out with all his desperate men who were failures and losers - nevertheless he was a king. Jesus didn't look too good hanging out on the cross - He was the king of kings. There are times you don't look so good, but listen, they're followed by times when God does

something really great, if you can respond right in that time. You've got to respond right.

So notice that everyone had expectations on Jesus, just like they've got expectations on you. Now here's the thing: Jesus never lived out of expectations of people, or to please people; and so as a result, He upset everyone at some point. He upset His parents. He upset the people in His home town, they got offended with Him. He upset His disciples. Some didn't follow Him anymore, and all of them ran away, and one betrayed Him. He upset the religious leaders, when He didn't do what a rabbi's supposed to do. He upset the king. When the king wanted Him to do miracles, He wouldn't do a miracle for him. He upset the people, he upset everyone at some point, but you know what? He lived true to who He was, and this whole politically correct thing is all about trying to please, and look nice, and make people happy and feel good. It's got nothing to do with being a godly man or woman, and to do that, you have to face times when you may not look at all; or you may find you're going through a stripping and you're like a tree in the middle of winter. Nevertheless you have not changed. You are still who God says you are. You are still going where God says He's taking you, IF you keep hold of Him. It's a wonderful season, [applause] great season to be in. So how to flunk your wilderness test. [Laughs] How to flunk it in some - five easy lessons on how to flunk a test. Here it is, I'll give you them quickly because I want to get to how you succeed, but I thought flunking, you might recognise the flunkers - or you're perhaps sitting next to one you know, never know. [Laughter]

Anyway here we go, you'll know as soon as I read them out. Let's just go into Numbers, Chapter 6:14. Fortunately the Bible tells how to flunk the test, and the Bible's full of examples of people who flunked. I like that. I love that about the Bible. It doesn't worry about whether you look good, because almost all the great men of the Bible didn't look good at some time. At some point they look really, really bad - like Abraham, the great man of faith, the father of our faith. Someone says is that your wife? Aah no. [Laughter] It's my sister. [Laughter] Oh really? Well I might take her into my house then. Yeah, yeah, okay. [Laughter] It doesn't look good does it? It isn't good is it either - but he's still called a man of faith. See, so God never worries about the fact we've got weaknesses, lacks, flaws and difficulties and shortcomings. See, trying to be perfect, it doesn't work. Just God gives us grace, and He gives us two things; one, He gives us grace;

grace to grow, change and be who we're called to be, but not grace to be what someone else wants you to be. If you try and be what someone else wants you to be, you'll be frustrated and burdened all your life. It's so crucial to discover who you are, and fulfil it, what you're called to do and your destiny, and that you don't run to someone else's whistle. We listen to the Holy Ghost, and live out our life as God calls us to, learning how to do that.

Well anyway they flunked the test, look at this. So Numbers, Chapter 14: So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, they wept all night. I've done that - and then all the children of Israel complained. I've done that. [Laughter] The whole congregation said: if only we'd died in the land of Egypt! We should have died in the land of Egypt! We should have died in this wilderness! Why has the Lord - why Lord have you brought us into this land to fall by the sword, and our wives and children should be victims? Better to go back to Egypt? So they said: let's select a leader, we'll return to Egypt. Notice here there's a number of things of people flunking the test. There are all the signs they're flunking and the first sign is weeping, full of self-pity, why me? We've all done that too, have a pity party, and you're the only one there. [Laughter] It's a grand party, goes on - sometimes it can go on for days. Heaviness, depression, sad, poor me, and it's really bad, no one notices how bad it is for me. Why don't you all notice? You don't care, all that kind of stuff. It's all part of it - and complaining. So of course a sign you're flunking is when you're complaining.

Complaining is usually a statement of unbelief, that I don't believe God works all things together for my good, so I'll complain. So complaining is a big problem, complaining, negative talk. Complaining - and who'd they complain against? We've got to find someone to blame, so you find someone's who's visible; you look like you're a leader, I'll complain about you! It's your fault. You brought us here. It was all your idea, sat there in the back of the wilderness, dreamed up this whole idea to get us to where we are now. Look at the mess we're in. You! That's what people do. You're flunking, blaming others. See, you've got to find someone to blame when you're going through a hard time. You're flunking. When you blame someone else, you lose total power, because someone else is holding the responsibility for your life. Don't blame anyone else, just reach out to God and find out how to step up, and what you can do to make the thing different - but blaming, you're flunking. See? You'll have to repeat it again.

Victim mindset, notice our children and our wives will be all victims. Actually

they had a total victim mentality. They lived like slaves, and God wanted them to become mighty men of faith that could take a land; but to move from being slaves, thinking victim thinking, blaming, mindsets of self pity and angry, and blaming this and that, He had to shift that stuff out of them, to get them saying: God is with us, we can do it! We'll take that land! We'll slay those giants! How do you get it out of you? Well not by someone laying hands on you. You've got to go through a bit of tough time, and you then choose, as you see what comes up, to respond to the word of God, the word of God. That's why you've got to be in the word, otherwise you'll have very little substance. You'll live out of feelings. So there it is.

Then finally they rebelled and left. Let's get another leader. [Laughs] We don't like this leader. We'll leave, and we'll go back to Egypt. Now putting it simply, what it means is, people stop coming to church. We go down and have time in the pub instead. They're never happy down there either, because actually they've been overthrown in the wilderness, so they're not happy there. They're full of offence and hurt. They've been overthrown in the wilderness. God would help them get up, but it requires repenting of the unbelief, and letting go the disappointment, all the stuff that got into the heart. Over the years I've seen people get all kinds of things in their heart, all kinds of perceptions, and they often got things wrong, they had partial information, they never really found out what was going on. They just assumed and judged, all kinds of things - end up then out in the dark, in the cold, and angry and bitter, and still blaming someone else. There it is, it's all there: flunk! Flunk!

You say how are you getting on to moving to your destiny? Oh flunked! My bones are here, bleached in the sun, in the wilderness. That's what happens, then you want to feel better, so you've got to find some way to fill the pain, so you've got to fill it up with this, fill it up with that, fill it up with something else: work, busyness, buy some things, do this, do that, pleasure, all kinds of things. We've got to fill up the pain, but the deal is - you flunked. When the test God allowed you to go through, to prepare you for your destiny, when it came, you didn't see it for what it was, and you just let your old nature, unbelief rise up, and flunked in the wilderness. Terrible thing to do isn't it? Bet you know some people who did that. You haven't done that, but you know people who did that don't you? I don't want to do that, I think dear God, I've been close to it a few times, but however I didn't. God's grace, God... so how do we get through?

Here it is. We'll give you the simple keys how to get through the wilderness. My servant Caleb, he had a different spirit to everyone else. He has wholly followed Me. He believed My word. So we'll just pick it up, 1 Corinthians 10. You'll find out here's the keys. You want to memorise this verse: There's no temptation overtaken you which is not common to man; but God is faithful, and with that temptation will make a way of escape, you may be able to bear it. I know that verse. I've memorised that verse. That's a powerful verse. Here it is, here's the simple keys out of that verse. Here's the first thing. One, other people have experienced it too. You're not the only one you know. There's nothing new under the sun. Whatever you're facing, someone else is going through it, gone through it, is going to go through it. All stuff we face is common. Everyone goes through this kind of stuff.

The second thing is God is faithful. He will never abandon you, He'll stand by you in the midst of whatever you're going through. Here's the next thing: He says He will make sure you're not tempted beyond what you're able, so here's one of the best things you get from that. He will make sure that whatever happens to you, is not beyond what you're able. You know what that means? You've got the capacity to come through winning. It's like He can measure just how much you get. He knows just how much it takes to shift you, and no more. Now when you're on the other side, and when you're getting this stuff - aah! My life is falling apart, I'm a mess. No, it just knew how much to melt you, until you opened your heart at a different level and leant on Him. Notice the last thing He says here, make a way of escape that you can bear it. God will always provide an avenue to walk through it. He will provide strength and direction, absolutely certain. He will give strength and direction, see?

So here's a few things you could ask in the middle of your wilderness. You could ask: what is the actual struggle that I'm facing? What is the issue that I'm facing? What is it really that's going on that's causing me the trouble? What am I learning in this? What's being revealed about me, or about God in the middle of it? What is it I need to let go of or change? Now what word do I need to hold on and believe? Now there's no shortcuts to becoming a man or woman of God. There's no Bible school you can go through, that'll make you a man of God. There's no leadership course you can do that'll make you a man of God, or necessarily a great leader. You have to go through God's wilderness times. See, we look at Ian Clayton. Ian is travelling the world now, and been asked to

conferences all over the world, so how come someone from Hastings that no one's ever heard of is now speaking all over the world, and in demand all over the world? Well Ian had a long wilderness experience, and he used it well. I want what he's got. Oh, well welcome to the wilderness then. [Laughter] Just teach me, lay hands on me, tell me all you know. I can't, you have to learn this.

I think of Lyn, who carries a tremendous anointing to heal and to touch people's lives, and you say lay hands on me, I want your anointing, I want your anointing! Welcome to the wilderness. I know what she had to experience to carry what she carries, some of it anyway. You see people want things, but there is a way that God brings them to us, and God has ahead for you, a land full of amazing promises, amazing blessings, amazing abundance - but will you qualify yourself, by responding when God is touching heart attitudes? Will unbelief rise up, or will faith, and a right attitude? When the people of God faced this problem in the wilderness, they complained, cried, sat down, complained, did all kinds of stuff. This is what Caleb did: he said listen, God's with us, He's going to help us. These giants are bread for us. Don't rebel. Don't quit, don't resist. Stand up! God's best days are ahead for us.

That day when he said that a line was drawn, who will agree with that? Who will agree with the evil report? Two million people agreed with the evil report, and perished in the wilderness; two men stood strong in what God said. If God said He can do it, He can do it, and those men went in. Joshua, Caleb and all the generation under 30. What a great thing. God has great things ahead for us. He definitely has great things ahead, not only for us, for His church. Globally the best days of the church are ahead, but there'll be lots of reasons why you could stumble right at this time. There'd be lots of reasons to fall over, fail, quit and give up - but don't do it! Get your eyes fixed on the Lord! Get a hold of the word of God, and in the midst of it, let God help you grow. Then you will be prepared for the things He's about to pour out.

I believe God will pour His spirit out in a great measure on the church. I believe we're coming into an hour of the saints ministry, an hour when the church worldwide is going to break out, and burst out, and go in and possess the land, and carry the supernatural. But if God was pouring out the supernatural, would you have the character and faith to carry it? There's the question, not whether or not God wants to give it. He's already said He's going to do it. The glory of the Lord shall fill the earth - and God spoke that, at the very time a generation failed,

and two stood up and said: we're going to hold on to God and believe for Him. I'm believing for great things in God, great future, better future, bigger things, different things. It is a new day, it's a great new day, but oh my, I want to be ready. I want to be fully ready for it when it comes. I want to embrace all the things that God's doing and saying, and get into His presence.

In the middle of the wilderness, is a place to know Him. In Song of Solomon, in the last chapter, it said: who is this, coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on the arm of her beloved? Glorious bride that Jesus prepared. Where was she coming? A wilderness, a difficult time, difficult season. What was she doing? She was in a place of faith, leaning, leaning into God. You know maybe you've gone through your wilderness time, and have failed and flunked. Don't worry, God saw that coming too. He said to Peter: Peter, you're going to flunk. No, I'll never flunk, I'll never flunk, you can trust me. Peter, you're going to flunk, He said but its okay, I've prayed that your faith won't fail, and after you've flunked, and you get back up on your feet again, then you can strengthen others. So isn't that good? You can't miss. You can't lose. All you can do is lie down and not get up, but God wants you up. He wants all of us up. Come on, let's just stand right now shall we?

Summary Notes

Formatted » Back to Top »

Introduction:
Luke 3:22 "… the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove…"
Luke 4:1 "When Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit … was led by the holy Spirit into the wilderness"
Luke 4:14 "Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit …"
· 'The wilderness' is a place of preparation for your destiny to be fulfilled
· The Kingdom has a system of passing tests to qualify you for enlargement
· Tests in the Kingdom are about leaning to trust God and develop character

The Purpose of Wilderness Testing:
a) Wilderness Experiences are a preparation for enlargement/fresh move of God
· Bible examples: Moses, Israel, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, Jesus
· All the great men of God had experience to prepare them for their destiny (Word picture – a tree in water)

b) Lessons from Israel's Wilderness Experience:
Deut 8:2,3,16
i. God led them into the wilderness v2. Wilderness = 4057 OT = uninhabited place; solitary, desolate. The wilderness journey was God's idea – it was a journey not a destination
ii. The wilderness experience was for preparation not destinations
iii. The wilderness was a place of humility – of experiencing lack. Wilderness experiences include:

pressure, lack, injustice, misunderstanding, opposition, apparent failure, temptation
iv. The wilderness is a place of testing. Test = to prove or examine the quality of our relationship
v. Pressure reveals what is in our heart (know = yada = to be intimate) Bitterness, offense, pride, critical, judgmental, motivations, attitudes, soulish attachments, fears, unbelief
vi. The wilderness is Tailor made by God for our enlargement and blessing v16 “to do you good at the end”
vii. The wilderness is a place of deepening intimacy and trust

3. Jesus’ Wilderness Experience:
· Luk 4:3-12
· Pressure came on Jesus in 3 areas related to His identity
· “If you are” => a challenge to His identity
· Key issue: Who are you? How do you define your identity? Will you put on a mask and play a part?
i) Performance Trap v3 “I am what I do”
· What have you achieved? What do you do?

ii) Possessions Trap “I am what I own”
· What do you own? You are nothing unless possess you things

iii) Popularity Trap “I am what other people think”
· When you live to please people you cannot be true to who you are and your calling
· Everyone had expectations that they tried to put on Jesus
· Jesus lived true to himself, and his calling, identity and disappointed people constantly e.g. parents, members of his hometown, disciples, religious leaders, crowds
Note: The Word of God was the weapon He used to vanquish the accuser

4. How to Flunk your Wilderness Test:
· Israel flunked the test God gave them 1 Cor 10:5-6
· Evidence of flunking Num 14:1-4
(i) Weeping – self-pity v1
(ii) Complaining v2
(iii) Blaming other v2
(iv) Victim mindset v3
(v) Rebelling and leaving v4
· They flunked because the believed the negative reports instead believing God

5. Graduating with Distinction:
Num 14:24 “My servant Caleb because he has a different spirit in him and has wholly followed me … I will bring into the land”

1 Cor 10:13
a) 4 Things to remember in your wilderness
· Other people have experienced it too
· God is faithful, He will stand by me
· I have the capacity to handle this
· God will provide strength and direction to get me through

b) 4 Things to Ask in your wilderness
· Whet is the struggle/issue I am facing?
· What is being revealed about/in me?
· What do I need to let go of/change?

· What “Word of God” do I need to hold o to/believe?

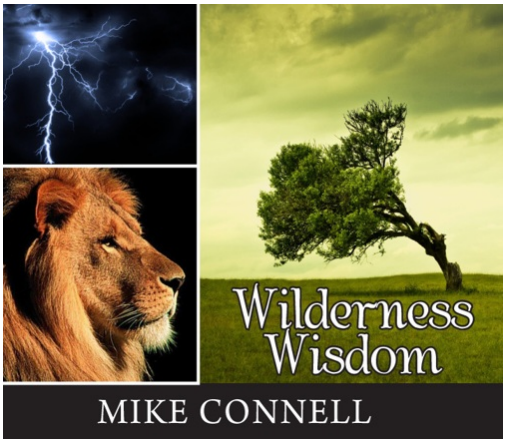
· How are you doing in your wilderness testing?
· What promise of God is shaping your response and destiny
· Peter – “When you are converted, strengthen your brethren”

Wilderness Wisdom (2 of 4)

Sun 2nd May 2010 AM « Back to Top

Audio» Notes» Share» Support» Review»

It helps if we just understand that the wilderness was God's idea, that that difficult season was His idea. All major men in the Bible had times or seasons which you would call a wilderness. A wilderness was a very dry place, full of wild animals, it was very difficult. It represented a very difficult season, a difficult time.



Could open your Bible with me in Deuteronomy Chapter 8. I want to just continue another thing related to what I was sharing. About two weeks ago I shared a message on Wilderness Wisdom, how to respond when you're going through a hard time - hard times come don't they aye? But they don't last. They're like everything, these too pass, so hard times come, and just because you're Christian doesn't mean it's not going to happen to you. the big decision, and the only decision you have, is when a hard time comes, when a tough time comes, when misunderstandings, difficulties, pressures, setbacks, all kinds of things like that come, here's the one question: how will I respond? Will I respond towards God, discover what God is saying, doing, and wants me to learn in this situation? Or will I harden and become bitter? That's the only choices we really have.

So I want to just look at one incident in Israel's life, but first of all I want to just get you a little perspective on it. In Deuteronomy, Chapter 8, it says you shall remember - Verse 2 - that the Lord your God led you these 40 years in the wilderness. Now notice they were in the wilderness for 40 years. It should only have been about one month. It lasted 40 years, because they didn't really learn the lessons - to humble you, test you, know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, fed you with manna which you did not know, and your fathers didn't know, that He might make you learn experientially, you can't live just by

external things. Man will live by every word proceeding from the mouth of God. Now notice this in the end of Verse 16, it said: God did this, that He might do you good in the end.

It helps if we just understand that the wilderness was God's idea, that that difficult season was His idea. Through the Bible we saw people, all major men in the Bible, had times or seasons which you would call a wilderness. A wilderness was a very dry place, full of wild animals, it was very difficult. It represented a very difficult season, a difficult time. Jesus, after He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and before He returned in the power of the spirit, went through a wilderness experience. Wilderness experiences are written about in the Bible, and listen, the Bible explicitly says 1 Corinthians 10: this was for us to learn from. So whatever they did is a great learning experience; best that they learned it, paid the price. We just read this story and learn the lesson.

Now if you can understand that this is what was going on, in Egypt - Egypt represented bondage and sin. It represents your life without Christ. Coming out of Egypt, God did it all. All they had to do was just respond. God had in mind that they would go into a land full of promises. He also has promises for you, promises for your marriage, promises for your finance, promise for business, promises for an inheritance, promises of all kinds. But between coming out of Egypt, where God did it all, they just stepped into the blessing; and going over here, here in the Canaan, the land of promises, they had to learn to walk by faith. They had to learn to possess. In fact, while the walked through the wilderness, God gave them supernatural provision every day. As soon as they got in the Promised Land it stopped. Now they had to operate kingdom principles, so Canaan represented kingdom lifestyle.

Canaan represented our life advancing the kingdom of God. It represents the church going into the community, making influence in the community, but for all of us, individually and corporately, we have to change how we think. So when they were in Egypt they were in captivity, they were in imprisonment, they were in hard bondage. In order to operate, and make an impact, and possess what God, they had to change mentalities. Here's what the wilderness is about: it's about changing how you think. It's about changing heart attitudes. It's about changing on the inside. That's what the wilderness is about; and so the purpose of the wilderness was to uncover their heart attitudes and mentalities. The first thing that happens when you're under pressure, what's in your heart comes up. Isn't

that true? Isn't that true - so it's to uncover it, not to condemn, but so we can actually grow and change. So the first purpose of the wilderness was to uncover what was in the heart, and in the thinking - the mindsets; because in order to enter the land, and possess the promises, and walk by faith, they had to have certain mindsets.

They had to have an overcoming mindset, a conquering mindset, a Joshua mindset. They had to have a different mindset, so how do you shift the mindset after living in Egypt in bondage and slavery and all kinds of slave mentality? How do you shift that mentality, from there, to becoming someone who's got a faith life that can now make a difference? Well you have to have changes, so God just allowed a few tests to come on the way - 10 of them to be exact, the fullness of testing. So He allowed 10 situations, to explore their heart and how they would respond, and what God was looking for was that they would learn to trust Him, and develop these two things: one, that they would develop a life of faith trusting God; and secondly, that they would develop inner strength and character, because you have to be tough to advance the kingdom of God. It's not for sissies. There's always resistance, always difficulties, and so a church of sissies isn't going to make a difference.

See, God wants us to grow, and become strong on the inside, strong in Him. Isn't that right? Okay, alright then, so let's go and have a look at one little example. This is the first test. Now notice this is after all the victories, so they've had all these victories. They've seen the 12 plagues, they've seen God deliver them, they've seen God open up the water, they've seen the waters close on their enemies - absolutely marvellous. Then three days later, they're in trouble; so we read it in Exodus, Chapter 15, Verse 22. It says: Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea. They went out into the Wilderness - here it is - they're in the wilderness, and they went out just a few days, three days to be exact. That's all it took to change them from laughing, celebrating, and praising God, to now having stress and strife and trouble, so that's Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, about the middle of the week in other words.

So from praising God on Sunday to the middle of the week, that's about all it was, and so the middle of the week, three days, they had no water and when they came to Marah, they couldn't drink the waters at Marah. They were bitter, so the name of it was called Marah. Should have given it away shouldn't it? And the people complained against Moses, what will we drink? He cried out to the Lord,

and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. So He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them. And He said: if you diligently heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what's right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep His statutes, I'll put none of the diseases on you, which I have brought on the Egyptians. I am the Lord who heals you.

There's a lot in this, and we can't do all of it in one session, but we'll just pick up - I want you to learn just a very simple lesson in this. You notice first of all, what is the experience they've had. The experience they've had is one of tremendous victory, that's three days ago, and then for three days they're without water, which means all their water supply dried out. Now remember although they're in the wilderness, there was a cloud over them, so it's not like they're under raging sun. They've actually got God with them, so every day, they can see the cloud of God's presence - so after three days the water's run out, so they're looking for water. There's an expectation of water, and the water that they get is bitter. In other words, they got their hopes up when they saw the water, then their hopes are dashed.

So it represents an experience where we struggle, and we have a season where perhaps the presence of God isn't so strong, where things are a bit difficult. We suffer lack of some kind, and then we got our hopes up that something's about to happen - and it doesn't happen! Isn't that a common experience, where what you expected, didn't come about; and what you didn't expect, happened? Well you know, you expected the bill to be paid, and it wasn't paid. It's a bit nasty when that happens isn't it? You expected something to come through, and it didn't come through. You expected this to happen, it didn't happen so your expectations were dashed. So here's the thing. You notice they were in this place called Marah. Now it tells us in Exodus, if we just take a quick look in Chapter 1, I want to read you a couple of verses there. I want you to understand the nature of the test, and what happened inside them.

It says in Exodus, Chapter 1, in Verses 13 and 14: The Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with hard bondage, or bitter or rigor. They made their lives - notice this - they made their lives bitter with hard bondage - in mortar, in brick and all manner of service. In all manner of service, they made them serve. Now what has happened is, the people have had to serve, and they've been under cruel masters. This is our life before Christ, cruel demonic masters. Sin is a cruel

master. We lived in sin, and when we live in sin and in broken relationships, and we just try and do the best, we suffer; and people have various backgrounds, but everyone who comes to Christ has a story. You have a background, and your background is made up of a whole range of experiences, much of it in bondage to sin - and not only your own sin, but the sin of others. So we are impacted, not only by what we have done, and the demonic torment of that, but by what others have done to us, and our failure to resolve it. So we carry with us baggage into our Christian walk. It's in the soul. You got saved, and your spirit was saved, but your soul wasn't saved, and you've still got all the baggage.

So you notice it tells us there their lives were made bitter. What happened? They were rejected, they were put down, they were used, they suffered injustice, they were treated cruelly; so their life in the world in Egypt was a life of put downs, of rejection, of injustice, of lack, of hardship. It's like, in many ways, the life of people before we come to Christ. There are many areas we suffer, or go through difficulties and experiences in, and of course what happened was, as a result of their bondage, they didn't resolve it - they became bitter. They were bitter in their heart. They were bitter because of their background, bitter because of their experiences. I know growing up, coming up out of my background, I grew up bitter. Bitterness is very easy to get into our heart. There's an injustice, or something happens that hurts us, it maybe repeats itself, and gets into our soul, we begin to feel resentful about it, angry and resentful about it.

If we don't forgive, and deal with it properly like God wants, it goes down deep, and begins to crawl its way down, and gets roots in our soul, roots of bitterness. I didn't feel bitter of course, no one usually really feels very bitter. Ask a person: are you bitter? They'll never say yes. I've rarely heard anyone say yes - but bitterness has a way of revealing itself, and it reveals itself when God takes us through circumstances in life which push on us, just challenge us. So one of the things is, the Bible tells us, that a bitter root defiles relationships. In Hebrews 12:15 it says: take heed lest anyone fall out of the grace of God, and there's the clue as to what the answer is: grace. It says: and a root of bitterness springing up, many are poisoned or stained. Isn't that interesting, that you could stain your relationships, that you could poison your relationships, that we could defile our relationships?

So how does that happen? Well it happens when there's bitterness. Bitterness in the heart is a root that grows, and produces its own fruit. Usually when people

are bitter they make judgements, and when we make judgements rooted in bitterness - well men, this is what men are like, or this is what my father, this is what people will treat me like - or we make judgements about ourself - well I'll never get anywhere, this is what's happened, this is the kind of person I am - we begin to judge people. We begin to judge ourselves, we begin to judge others. When those judgements start to form in our heart, they're rooted in bitterness, and they create almost like a bitter expectation, that whatever situation I'm in, this is what's going to happen to me. So people brought up in poverty for example, or financial hardship, you often have a real deep root of bitterness, that they'll suffer financial lack; and then every time a little bit of lack comes up, which is normal anyway in life, it just reinforces the pain: yeah, I knew it, you know?

There's this bitter echo from inside them, and bitterness can grow very deep, and it stains us, and affects our relationship. A woman marries a man who's bitter against his mother, and against women. Very soon, she will have a major problem in her marriage. He will defile the marriage by the bitterness. A woman who's bitter against her husband, because of the way her father or some other men treated her, will find herself in the end defiling the husband; and he will begin to take on the very thing she expected, because of the bitterness. Bitterness has a way of defiling and influencing everything around us, so we need to have a sweet spirit. Isn't it interesting, that after all those years of bitterness and defilement, that they've got bitterness in their heart? It's not surprising, after the way they've been treated, that they're bitter - it's not surprising at all. A girl comes up out of a home where she's been sexually abused, why would we think it's a surprise she's bitter? A person comes up, and their father's abandoned them. Why would we be surprised that they're bitter? Of course they're bitter.

A person's gone through injustice and hardship, and bad treatment, of course they're bitter. When you don't have Christ you don't know what to do. You just take it into yourself, and in the end you form judgements, and these roots go down into the heart, but they don't disappear when you get saved. When you got saved, your spirit was saved. Now you have to journey with God, and in order to come into the promises of a great marriage, a great family, great prosperity, we've got to let God work in our heart, to shift those old mindsets, and those old things that would hinder us becoming the people of God. So if God is wanting to shift you, or shift your marriage, or shift the church, He's got to shift us in our

heart, shift us in our beliefs, shift us in the way we are. So of course the way He does it, sets up a few things to press on us a bit.

The Bible says that if we judge others - Matthew 7, Verses 2 and 3 - if we judge others, we ourselves will reap with the judgement. So if I judge others in a certain way, very soon I'll find I'll be experiencing those things in my life. You know, you start to find you judge people: oh, that person's such and such a person, this kind of person, pretty soon I'll be finding, I'm reaping that very thing in my life. So the Bible says first of all get the beam out of your own eye, and you can see clearly. Here's the problem with judgement. When you judge a person, that means you look at their behaviour, you look at that person, and then you pass a sentence on it: well this is what I think! Some people just call it - its opinions. But when we have opinions based on appearances, and judgements on appearances, this is what happens is, your eye is so full of blocks, you can't even see anything clearly - so it says first remove the judgements out of your life, the log out of your eye, then you can see clearly to help the other person.

Very often when we look at other people, we evaluate and judge them on their behaviour, what you see. The Bible says: God doesn't look on man from the outside; He looks on the heart. We tend to judge people by what we see, how they turn up, their appearance, their behaviour. We've got no idea what's going on. We've got no idea the pain that's going on in their life, got no idea what they may be struggling with, we just see how they behave, and come to a judgement. Usually it's a judgement that passes a sentence upon them. When we do that, we're now positioned to reap the same judgement in our own life. We now have become blinded to reality. You can't see clearly unless you've actually got judgements out of your heart. You imagine, if you've got a little spec in your eye, and someone says please let me help you get that speck out of your eye, I know exactly what to do. As they lean over with a little wee scalpel, to get this thing out of your eye, you observe that their whole eye is blocked by a big beam, and that they can't see at all. You won't let them near your eye.

Why won't you let them near your eye? Two reasons: one, they can't see; and two, they've got no sensitivity to what you would need to be set free. So when there's judgements in our heart, it's impossible for us to really help anyone. The reason is because one, we can't see the true issues, we're looking superficially, and we're blinded by our own heart; and two, we have no sensitivity and compassion how to deal with the person's heart. One of the great things that's

needed in our life, is for the Holy Ghost to bring grace to us, to remove bitterness, so we can see clearly and have compassion for people. Then you're positioned to help them. So what is the first test God takes them to? Isn't it interesting, it's the waters of bitterness, the bitter water. So what does He do? He just gets their hopes all up, there's some water there. First of all He suffers a bit of lack, there's no water, then there is water, and then it's bad water. In other word,s at first we're struggling, then there's a glimmer of hope, and then it just sinks.

Now immediately that happens for you, something will emerge from your heart. What emerges from your heart, is the very thing that reveals what's going on in your heart, see? So there's fruit; whenever a person's got bitterness in their heart, there's always a fruit. There's always a fruit for the root. So if you ask someone - how many people here are bitter? Well you'd probably say no one's bitter, they're all lovely people in here. We've just been worshipping Jesus. [Laughs] It'd be wonderful if we had no bitter people here - but actually I've picked it up in myself at times. I've picked it up in a whole number of ways really. Let me tell you some of the ways you can pick it up. You can pick it up - it's always got a fruit, got a fruit, you can see the fruit. Here's the thing, you'll see it in a person's countenance. If a person's bitter, you'll see it around their face, particularly around the mouth. It shows in the mouth. The mouth begins to twist, and become tight, and you'll see it on the face, etched into the face. Bitterness eventually etches itself into a person's face.

Another place you'll see it is in the words they speak, the most common way is the words they speak. Usually what you'll find is, they'll be very negative; negative or critical, fault-finding. Now you see fault-finding, there's no faith in that. Fault-finding does not advance the kingdom of God. What advances the kingdom of God is faith. See faith sees what could be, and calls it forth; fault-finding says: you've got this wrong with you, we've got to fix it up before you can go forward. Actually it's not how God works. He never worked that way, He says: come to Me, and just respond to Me, and let Me put something into you, and you'll grow and you'll change. So fault-finding, judging, condemning, these are the kinds of things - here's another thing that bitterness shows up. Bitterness shows up in the inability to be thankful to people, or to express gratitude. Now you have a think: who has blessed your life? Did you show them gratitude? Did you, at any time, say: thank you, when you did this, it was such a blessing to

me?

People who are bitter can't say thank you. They never say thank you. It's just impossible to say thank you. Why? Because bitterness won't let gratitude flourish; and so relationships, always there's a demand, that somehow you've got to provide - somehow you've got to fix this thing up, because the bitterness is rooted in injustice, and a demand that you've got to do something. So it can't be fixed. It can't be fixed. The person has to repent, and be changed, so what does God do? God takes them to the waters of Marah. Now notice what happens, two responses here at the waters of Marah. First of all the people's response - what was the first thing they did? They - what did they do? Complained. Who did they complain against? They complained against Moses. He had nothing to do with it. It was God's idea, the wilderness; and the waters of Marah - he had no control over that whatsoever; but people who are bitter, have to find somewhere to put the poison on. You just have to. You can't put it on yourself, you can't even dare to look at yourself. You've got to put it out there, so you don't look inward, and so what they did was they complained.

That word 'complain' means - it's the word from which the modern Hebrew word 'hotel' comes from, to lodge overnight. So in other words, they had a resentment and a grudge that hung around overnight. They actually got resentful. They were resentful - first of all they had their hopes up, then their hopes are dashed, now they're looking for someone to blame. The bitterness manifests: Moses! and they begin to complain, and become bitter; and they've got to find someone to be bitter against, so they're bitter against Moses. Actually they were bitter against God, because what they're saying is: God, You don't know what You're doing, You're messing up. Actually the cloud was with them all the time. You would think they'd know that God was there. There's a cloud by day, and fire by night, it's there every day and every night - the presence of God is there every day, yet they're complaining against Moses, that Moses has somehow stuffed it up.

Now what Moses did was different. See now Moses, in the midst of a pressure like that, did the thing you can do, which is to reach out to God, so he cried out to God. I want you to see three things that happened when he cried out to God: number one, he got revelation. You see when you're going through a difficulty, the one thing you need is God's perspective - God, what are You trying to do in this situation? God, what do You want me to learn in this situation? Now I find it surprising, when people are going through difficulties, how few actually become

God-oriented, and ask God: what are You wanting to teach me? What do You want me to learn? How do You want me to respond? What is showing in my heart? Now that's the response of a man of God, or woman of God, but I find people look for someone to blame, or they get angry, they criticise, they fire up, go and have a drink or any kind of thing, but the one thing that's missing is just to come near to God and ask Him.

Now when you ask God for wisdom, He'll show you, give you wisdom - so notice he asked God, so God gives him three things. Three things happen: one, he gets revelation. If you're going through a trouble right now, what you need is revelation, and God can give it to you. What do you need to learn? What is the purpose of this experience? What is God wanting to teach you in it? What do you have to change in your life? What's showing up in your life? How does God want you to treat that person? Only God can show you those things. The second thing is, that God gave him revelation specifically of the cross. Notice He showed him a tree, that when the tree was put in the waters, the waters change, and the bitter becomes sweet? Now the only tree I know, that changed bitter waters to sweet, is actually this one here in the Old Testament, and the cross of Calvary in the New Testament.

You see in the midst of a difficult situation of injustice, suffering, pain and whatever, the one thing you've got to find is revelation of how the cross has dealt with this thing, and can bring you through to resurrection and life on the other side. You notice the cross is to deal with my issues, not someone else's. I don't bring someone else to the cross, I bring myself to the cross. Now you notice, He needed to bring the cross into the water, to change the water from bitter to sweet. What does that look like? Well here's an example of that. When Joseph - remember Joseph was treated terribly by his brothers. He brought a bit on himself, pride, and the way he carried on; but you know he was treated so badly by everyone, but he ends on top. He ends up out and he's filled with promises of God. He's had his 13 years wilderness, he's now in the place of destiny and guess what? When the brothers come notice what he said: It wasn't you who sent me here, it was God who sent me here.

He's not only forgiven them, he's got rid of all judgement. He's saying: listen, get over it guys, don't be hard on yourselves. Don't judge yourselves, because God was in it, behind it, and I look and I see how God has used us to get me exactly where I need to be, fully fulfilling the dream of God. Whoa! Thank You God for

working through this situation. Now you notice the bitter has become totally sweet. See, that's how God can do it, but you know to do that he had to forgive him, had to let go his judgements, and had to recognise actually, that was the tool God used to get me to where he needed me to get. Now you see we love the visions, dreams, desires and all that kind of stuff, but anyone who's started up a business, and had a dream for a business, will tell you that between the dream and the reality, there's an awful lot of suffering, pain and difficulty goes on, see?

So we love the dreams and desires, but there's a journey of growth, of experience, of learning a few things, to bring you to the place, where you actually now are fulfilling what God called you to do. There's a preparation. The wilderness is always just time for preparation, so you see how he cast it, and the last thing you see there is he had to cast it in. He actually had to apply the cross to the water, so God gave him the revelation. The revelation was one of the cross, but he had to actually apply it. If you're facing a bitter experience, God wants you to see how the cross, how the injustice sufferings of Jesus Christ, have fully paid the price, to totally set you free from all that bitterness, all those judgements, all that pain. This experience is just bringing it to the surface. Now you can really deal with it, so you can move on; and so you have to apply it. No one can apply it for you. You come up in altar call, no one can apply the cross to you. You have to actually apply it yourself, by faith.

No one can repent for you. No one can turn from sin for you. No one can confess your bitterness. You actually have to own your stuff; and so what happened was when the pressure came, instead of Israel owning what was in their heart, coming and responding to God's provision, they just found somewhere to dump it, so they didn't have to face it. In the midst of every wilderness experience, every setback, every disappointment in life, the first thing is: God, what is coming up in my life? God, what is coming out of my mouth? What is in my heart? What are You wanting to teach me? How can I grow, and how can I respond to this thing, and bring forth Your will into that? And that way you grow. That's how men of God work, and this is what he did.

So I wonder where we're at? What bitter experience or disappointing experience are you facing? What trouble, difficulty, setback are you facing? Think about that; what is it? It'll be a situation of some kind, and then when you think about it, what is manifesting in your heart? What kind of response are you making? Do you hear praises to God, and gratitude to God? Do we hear gracious words

flowing out of your heart; or is there a bitterness flowing out? There's a judgement, there's a demand someone else has got to do something, someone else has got to change, something else. Is there a demanding thing that comes through? What is coming out of your mouth? And if there's bitterness in your heart, you just need to face it, say: God, cleanse my heart from every trace, every root of this bitterness. Lord, heal me - and you notice what He said. This was for the healing, and God reveals Himself, not only as the one who saves people, but the one who heals the bitter lives, the lives that have been wrecked by bitter experiences. He's the God who heals the broken heart, He's the God who heals people of their diseases, He is the God who is the healer.

So they experienced of His God, their saviour. Now He says: but I can heal you. I know you've been through some tough stuff. You've had all this bondage, and people have abused you and done terrible things, and you've got all this bitterness and grief and sorrow, but I can heal it. That healing is by way of the cross. You've just got to be willing to come to the cross.

Summary Notes

Formatted » Back to Top »

Introduction:
· Kingdom of God has a process of development to qualify you for enlargement
· “Wilderness Experiences” are seasons of learning to trust God and develop strength of character
· Jesus: Anointed -> Wilderness -> Returned in Power
· Deut 8:2-3 Israel experienced a wilderness season – time of transition and preparation
· Transitions are Uncomfortable
1) Egypt – God did it all
2) Canaan – Israel had to arise and exercise faith to possess
Israel needed to develop faith and strength of character to possess the promises
· Purpose of their wilderness experience:
1) Expose and remove slave mentality
2) Develop faith as sons of God
3) Develop strength and character

Adversity is an Opportunity to Grow :
a) Israel’s first Wilderness Experience: Ex 15:22-26 The waters of Marah
· 3 days without water in the shadow of the cloud of god
· Their hopes were raised and then disappointment at Marah
· Marah = Bitter

b) Bitterness is a heart response to injustice: Ex 1:13-14 They made their lives bitter with hard bondage
· They were forced t work as slaves under task masters
· Serve with ‘Rigour’ = cruelty, severity, to break apart, to fracture

· ‘Afflict’ = 6031 = to put down, to humiliate
· Israel were cruelly treated and deeply wounded by their slavery. Reactions, abuse, sorrows, bondage
· When negative experiences are not resolved they develop deep bitter roots. Hurt/injustice = resentment = offence = unforgiveness = bitterness

c) Bitterness is a heart response to injustice:
Heb 12;15 “ … lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble and by this many become defiled”
· Bitterness is like a sour root that defiles the soul and pollutes relationships
· ‘Defiled’ = 3392 = contaminate, unclean, defile, pollute, stain
· Bitterness often results in inner judgments against God, self and people
· Judge = 2919 = to try, condemn, pass sentence upon
· Bitter root judgments defile relationships, set off a cycle of sowing and reaping
· The judgments people have in the heart affect capacity to see clearly
· Matt 7:2-3 “Remove the beam (judgment) from own eye that might see clearly”
· People don’t feel bitter but the heart knows Prov 14:10 and fruit appears

d) The Fruit of Bitterness:
Lk 6:44 “Every tree is known by its fruit”
· The fruit of bitterness is easily seen and identified
i) Facial expressions
ii) Critical
iii) Faultfinding
iv) Blaming
v) Inability to be thankful
vi) Condemning
vii) Judging
viii) Controlling and manipulate others

e) Adversity Exposes Bitterness:
Ex 15:24 “The people complained against Moses saying …”
· Complain = 3853 = to lodge oversight, grumble, make accusations, to hold a grudge or resentment against
· Adversity presented a choice – respond in faith or react in bitterness and unbelief

f) God’s Remedy for Bitterness – Grace:
Ex 15:25-26 “Moses cried out to the Lord”
· Faith response
i. God gave him revelation- insight and wisdom
ii. Tree = The Cross – the grace and power of God to save
iii. ‘He cast it” – Moses applied the tree by faith, the bitter became sweet
· The Cross reveals the response of God to injustice and bitterness
· The Cross is the Power of God to overcome injustice and bitterness
· We need revelation of how to apply the Cross to our situation
· Beyond this experience was water in abundance v27

3. Application:
· What ‘bitter’ experience or disappointing experience are you facing?
· How are you responding? Your countenance? Your attitude? Your words?
· What does the Lord want you to address in your heart?
· Will you bring it to the Cross and believe for the bitter to become sweet e.g. Joseph: Gen 45:7-8

· Response to Bitterness:
· Acknowledge
· Forgive
· Renounce Judgments
· Saw Grace

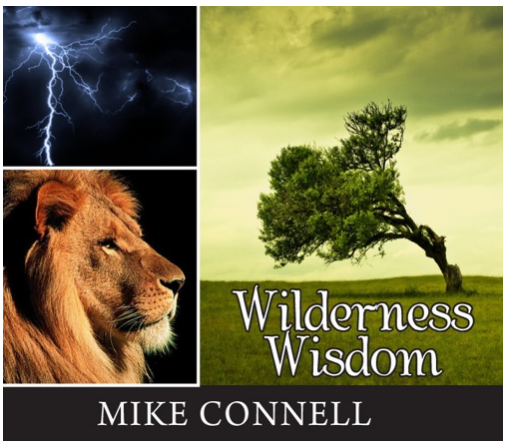
Wilderness Wisdom (3 of 4)

Sun 16 May 2010 AM « Back to Top

Audio» Notes» Share» Support» Review»

If you're walking with God, you will find yourself quite frequently in transitions, changes. It's part of walking with God, because He's continually moving us on. You don't just get saved, and that's the end of it. He journeys you, because He has an assignment for your life, and He wants to develop you, or mature you, or prepare you for that assignment.

The Bible speaks of transitions all the way through, and transitions are very uncertain times. They have their challenges, and have their difficulties, but God loves us to embrace the process of the transition and learn what we can, because it's your chance to prepare yourself for the next season. Many believers totally frustrate God's destiny for their life, because when God was trying to change them, they wouldn't transition.



A couple of weeks ago I brought a message just about the wilderness; a couple of messages on Wilderness Wisdom. How many found that was a help for you? It was a help for me [laughs] and wisdom, when we're going through a journey or a season of transition and change. The wilderness that we spoke about was an experience that the people of God had in the Old Testament. It was an experience we'd call a transition experience. Transition is where you move from one thing to another, you move from one place to another place, you move from one job to another job. You move from one experience to another experience, or you move from one assignment in God, to another assignment; you move from one situation God's got you in through into another situation. There are many examples of it.

So transitions are natural. We have natural transitions - seasons, right now we're in a changing season, and it's absolutely wonderful, but it's quite unpredictable and you get weather that changes. You have all kinds of things. You get equinox

winds. It's an interesting time, I love these changes in season, particularly love the season right now - and so we have natural seasons like that. We also have seasons in our life; you change from being a baby; then you've got to get up and you've got to go to school. It's a change - very uncomfortable going to school for the first time, then you have to go to high school and it's very uncomfortable. You leave school and go out, perhaps university training, go off to university. I remember it was very uncomfortable for me making that transition, and I've observed with natural transitions they're never easy. They always have challenge.

I just was reading something that said that in the process of giving birth to a child, the period of labour is the period of transition. From growing the child within the womb, to the child being manifested and born into the world, is a transition and it's got of course birth pains. So we see natural transitions around. What escapes us sometimes is that God also transitions us from one experience with Him to another, and your Christian life, if you were living your Christian life, walking with God, I can tell you now, if you're walking with God what will happen is you will find yourself quite frequently in transitions, changes. It's part of walking with God, because He's continually moving us on. You don't just get saved, and that's the end of it. He journeys you, because He has an assignment for your life, and He wants to develop you, or mature you, or prepare you for that assignment. So for example, if we have one level of job, and then we want to go to another level of job, we must qualify for it. You don't get promoted without some kind of success in the level you're at.

So in the Bible there are many transitions. The Bible speaks of transitions all the way through, and transitions are very uncertain times. They have their challenges, and have their difficulties, but there are some things are absolutely certain, and that is, that there's a process and God loves us to embrace the process of the transition and learn what we can, because it's your chance to prepare yourself for the next season. There are many believers who totally frustrate God's destiny for their life, not because they didn't believe or hope or have some kind of plan. It's just when God was trying to change them, they wouldn't transition. They wouldn't transition; and I want to show you - we're going to go back into that arena of looking at the wilderness journey, but I want you to see it from the point of view of transition. I want you to be thinking it from the point of view of God shifting them from one thing to another, and what He was requiring of them was to embrace the process of transition, and let God

change them in the middle of it.

As we look at this particular transition [Mike retiring, looking for a new leader], you'll see some challenges. Now here's an interesting thing about transition. When God's taking us through transition, He usually informs us, usually let's us know. As a church we've probably had prophetic word about two years ago, God was going to bring some changes. Don't we love the prophetic word? Love the idea of it. It's just the reality of it's a little uncomfortable wouldn't you say? Very uncomfortable. It's one of the most difficult times I've had during this transition, but that's okay. The second thing is, that in transition, God requires of us that we change the old ways we thought; the old mindsets we've had, the old ways of doing things. In order to be different, or to move into new things, you've got to change; so it's change usually the way I think. Most people think that life will go better for them if something outside them happens, when I win the Lottery, or have a breakthrough or something.

God wants to bring the change inside first of all, so all transitions, God expects us to be willing to change on the inside. So if you're going through a transition right now, there will be a challenge to re-think what you believe and what's going on, and look at what's going on in your life, and God's got His own way of getting that to come up into your attention - which I'll explain in a moment. Then the third one is, He calls us to be courageous. So for example when Joshua was going through transition, God called him: be strong and of a good courage, don't be afraid, don't be dismayed, I'm with you. He called him to position himself emotionally, with courage in his heart. Now courage doesn't mean that you don't feel fear. You can be terrified, and still be courageous; so to be courageous means you draw on the strength of God, and no matter how you feel, you face that fear, you face that difficult situation, you face that challenge, and you stand believing God to help you through it - then you come through it.

So God three times says: be strong, be courageous. Why? Because in transition, it requires you have inner strength and courage, because it takes courage to change. Many people don't change because they don't have courage to face the pain, don't have courage to face their fears, don't have courage to face the difficulties, the issues that were never faced before. Someone sent me a text this week. They said: Christianity's not for wimps. It isn't, because God calls us to courageously face things that most other people don't want to face; to face what's in our heart, to face how we react, the face how we deal with life, and to grow.

It's a wonderful thing, absolutely wonderful. So transitions; when God's taking us through a transition, the first evidences of it are that there's pressure comes on your life, or that there's lack in some area, or something goes exactly how you didn't expect it, or didn't want it to go. So during transition, there's all sorts of uncertainties, and things are not quite - we can't quite predict how they'll go, and we love to predict how things will go.

So there are what I'd call transition giants. In a season of transition in your life, there are some giants to face. So for example if you're a young person going to university, and you leave home and you go to live in some other city, a big city, and then go to study there, there will be some giants you will face. There will be challenges you've not faced before, just because you're in transition. After you've been there a while, you've kind of got to work it all out; or the giants have overcome you. So if you're facing a change in any part of your life, there will be some giants to overcome. We're going to see them, and we'll see them manifest in the lives of Israel in just a moment, but let me just give you them. So one of the giants is bitterness and resentment and offence. That's a giant to overcome, because in transition or change it's easy to become offended and resentful and bitter. Another giant to overcome is a giant of fear; because fear causes us to try and control, or hold together our world, and manipulate everything around us, so we feel safe. That's a giant.

Another giant is the giant of complaining; what we do with our voice, what we give voice to. Will we give voice to heaven? Will we give voice to fear and negativity and unbelief? What will we give voice to? Of course another problem that comes, or challenge that comes, is that we just go off on a wrong track, and we do something in order to try and control our world that gives birth to an Ishmael. Now when you look in the Middle East right now, all that fighting over there came about because in transition, someone had his own idea how to solve the problem and help God out. That was Abraham, and so Abraham, instead of believing God, and holding onto the promise of God, had a change in plan, took hold of Hagar, had a child through her and all the Arabs were birthed. All the conflict in the Middle East was birthed, because one man didn't handle transition well. Think about that. I wonder what turmoil is generated in our lives because we didn't handle our transitions too well. Other people get affected you know.

Okay, now let's have a look at a great transition. We're in Exodus, Chapter 15. See, you all know what I'm talking about here? Okay, good. I notice everyone

getting a bit quiet. Okay, well let's go now, have a look and lighten up a bit, and go there to the place in Exodus, Chapter 16. We were looking in Exodus 15. They had trouble because - here it is - and I want you to have a look at it. See, from the people's point of view, they were in bondage in Egypt and they got saved. Hurray, we're saved! Then suddenly, the enemy's behind them, mountains on either side, water in front - oh no, we're trapped. Hurray, we're saved! You think God was caught by surprise by the water and everything? He had a plan to get them through it. Then they get in the desert, they sing and they dance, and they have tambourines. Then they go three days, there's no water - boo, it's not going well. Then what happens is, the water they get is bitter - oh no - and so they start to murmur and complain.

But you know right beyond that, was a huge well. There were wells of Elim, there were wells and palm trees, there was huge provision. So from the point of view of Israel, they just had to journey it one experience at a time, and had to decide how they would respond to each experience. But from God's point of view, God saw from the beginning to the end. He said: hey look, I've got a whole place here full of water, full of palm trees, a lovely, cosy place. Yeah, yeah, I know there's a couple of tough spots on the way. There's one over there, no water for three days. And look here, there's some tough spots too. There's some bitter water, but I've got the answer. I know what to do. Don't worry, just trust Me. I can get you there. So from God's perspective, He's just got blessing in mind. From the perspective of those journeying, it doesn't look good. It actually looks bad - three days, no water, it's real bad. Then its bitter water, and we can't drink it. That's really bad - so how will we respond? That's the only thing you have power of choice over: how you will respond when you face difficulties in transition times. That's what you have power over.

You don't have power over the situation; you have power over how you will respond to the situation. You have power how you'll respond to God in this situation. You can choose whether God reveals Himself as your mighty healer, your mighty provider, your mighty source, and you walk out of that tough time, and you've got a testimony in miracles. Or you can choose whether you walk away bitter, critical, negative, and reinforced in your thinking. You choose. No one chooses that for you. You have to make that choice. So the thing about it here is, that Israel's in transition, and they're in transition from where God is providing everything for them. They're actually in a welfare mentality, a victim

or slave mentality, into a warfare mentality, where they actually have to arise and fight and possess the land. So God's got all this land of promises ahead for them, and He says: but I've got to get you to change your mentality, because you're going to need a mentality of faith! You're going to need a mentality of courage! You're going to need a mentality of perseverance, if you're going to get all I've got for you!

So how am I going to get that into them? Have an altar call? I don't think so. That's not how He gets it into them. He says: we're just going to allow a few tough spots on the way, and then we're going to give you a chance to see what's in your heart, so you can then respond and grow. So here it is, Exodus 16, let's read what happened. So they journeyed from Elim, and Elim was a cosy place; 70 palm trees, 12 wells of water the Bible says, a great place, plenty of provision, plenty of shelter. Everything's just nice. Then God says: you've got to move on. They went from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of sin. Sin means to be thorny, to be full of thorns. It's near Mount Sinai, which means a thorny place. When the Bible's talking about thorns, it's referring to the curse that came upon the earth as a result of the sin of man, that brought frustration. Remember He said" the earth will bring forth thorns and thistles, and you'll labour, but you won't get all that you're supposed to get from it, because the ground is cursed. So you'll be frustrated, you'll work hard, you'll have disappointment and difficulty.

So this whole wilderness of sin, the wilderness of thorns, was to bring to their attention they were now going to experience some difficulties, frustrations, some challenges, where they're not getting what they want, and in the midst of it, God is going to reveal Himself. He revealed Himself just before; He's the God who heals. Now He wants to reveal Himself as the God who provides - so it says: what happened there was, the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained. Oh, isn't that lovely? Complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. Then the children of Israel said to them: oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when they ate bread in full! Forgot about the slavery and the taskmasters and stuff, and the bitterness. You brought us out into this wilderness to kill us, the whole assembly with hunger.

Then the Lord said to Moses - see, when you read in that chapter there, you find out that the issue of complaining is mentioned about four times, look at it. Verse

7: In the morning you'll see the glory of the Lord; He hears your complaints against the Lord. What are we, you're not complaining against us? Verse 8: You're complaints against the Lord. Verse 9: Come near before the Lord, He heard all your complaining. Verse 11: The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: I have heard your complaining. Oh, I didn't think when I complained, God heard it. Four times see, four times He makes it very clear, that when we complain, He's listening. In fact the whole spirit world's listening to what comes out of mouths in the midst of a difficult time, and we have a choice what comes out of mouth, because what comes out of our mouth's in our heart, so whatever comes out of our mouth reveals the heart issues we're struggling with, as we go through a difficult time. That's a great thing to think of, so what's been coming out of your mouth recently? Can you remember very, very angry words? Bad words? Yeah well, we have those days.

Actually they're a heart response to a difficult situation, that's all. They show what's in your heart - it comes out of your mouth. Want to find out what's in the heart, listen to the mouth, every time. Sweet, blessing, faith, confidence, boldness, courage, defeat, negativity. Whatever it is that's in the heart, will find it's way out. It doesn't come out on the good times, it comes out in the difficult times, because - there's a reason for that in a moment. Okay, so I want you to see their responses to their lack of food. Now first they lack water, and God sorted that out for them. Now they're lacking food. Don't you think God can sort that out as well? God sorted the last one, He can sort this one out. Okay, now I want you just to read again what they said. They complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and said: oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, and when we ate bread to the full! You brought us out to this place to kill us, and this whole assembly, with hunger.

Now I want you to notice four things that emerge out of their mouth. There's four things come out of their heart, and you can read this very easily. Now these are things that are very common to people, common. I've had to wrestle with them, have to continually ensure my heart's getting free of them. It's just so easy. The first thing is bitter judging. You notice what they say to Moses: You, you brought us here, to kill us. Now that is a judgement, and it's a judgement rooted in deep bitterness of heart. You brought us here to kill us. It's the same, Moses later on, when God said stand aside, I want to kill them, and he said: no, and he interceded for them. [Laughter] Don't kill them Lord, see? So this is the first

thing that came out. Here's the second thing that came out; they complained, the whole congregation complained. They complained about Moses and Aaron. Now I want you to have a look here. The word complaint means to stop overnight. It means to stay permanently. It means to find fault. It means to protest against something that's been judged to be wrong, to make an accusation. Isn't that interesting?

So they judged and found something wrong, made an accusation, and found fault. That's what they did. We wouldn't do that of course. We would never do such a thing - and notice it was against Moses, so it always finds itself expressing itself against people. You notice this, they have actually - now who got them out of Egypt? God? Come on, give me a break. God required a man to get them out. Okay, now who's leading them through the wilderness? A man, okay then. So what do they do? Now it's like when David had his trouble, they want to kill him. Now you notice what's going on in the heart, that it's a heart issue. Moses says: who are we? We're nothing. We're nobodies, not really. He said the struggle you've got is not a struggle against people, it's a struggle against God. It's a struggle in the heart, with heart issues about God. That's the true situation.

Now notice they positioned themselves against Moses. In order to get what they needed to get, they needed to positioned right, and now they're positioned completely wrong. They're actually against, so what has put them against Moses? What's put them against God? What has caused them to be in a position where they're going to go nowhere, they're going to die? What has caused them? Here it is very simply: bitter judging in the heart. That's what brought them there. They made a judgement. Don't think judgements aren't important. They're a huge part of our life, they affect us. Then the next thing you notice, that they manifest as a result of that, is accusation, a critical word. You did this. You're the one to blame. You brought us out here to kill us. That's very bitter. Okay, and then the next thing you find is: bitter resentment and despair; oh, that we'd died in Egypt. You notice they then bring God into it. They said: the Lord should have killed us there; so what are they thinking about God now?

They're not thinking faith. They're not thinking trust. They're not thinking God is helping me. They're not thinking that at all. What are they thinking? They're thinking: You God, yuck! You've just left us. See, what manifested was the bitterness of their previous experience in slavery. It just flushed up in a hard

time. Now God knew it was there, but what happened was, they had a chance to see it and deal with it. So what happened was, they went through a difficult time. In the difficult time, the unresolved bitterness of their slavery in Egypt, the hurts, the resentments, the offences, the bitterness that went back over all their known lifetime of being under oppression, of being victimised, of being powerless, of being treated unjustly, treated wrongly, all that they'd suffered under the taskmasters of Egypt, it's all there in their heart. Yes, they're glad to be saved. Yes, they're glad to be under the Holy Ghost. Yes, they're glad to be having God with them, but you know what? They're still bitter in their heart. They've never resolved this stuff from their past.

So as God is wanting them to come into a position where they can actually be valiant warriors for Him, He wants them to deal with the heart stuff, get rid of the heart stuff, sort it out. Notice they judged God. Isn't it interesting, when something goes wrong, how people say: how come God caused that to happen? How come God let that happen? See, someone in our congregation just died. You know what comes up in the mind of many people? How come God let that happen? Why didn't He heal her? You know what that means? You've just judged God; found a fault with Him. Think how difficult it will be to step out in faith to believe for a healing in the future. See, as soon as you ask the question why, you enter into judgement, because you're looking for motives. Basically all we know is this: she died. That's all we know, and God calls us to respond in a certain way. Why did that happen? I don't know. I've got to just know that God does heal the sick. All I know is this time He didn't, that's all I know.

So I can't come to any conclusions. Once you start to ask the question why, then you'll go down a whole kind of root. You'll go down a root about well why does God allow others, why does got allow that, and you start to judge God, question God's motives, and judge Him. Then you find yourself arrayed against Him and your life in God can't prosper, so it's a real area that we have to deal with. So you notice here that they had a death wish, they just wanted to die. Now isn't that interesting, that when we're in the deepest struggles, often if there's roots of bitterness in the heart, and despair has come into the heart, often the thing that manifests is: I just wish I was dead. If you've had situations in your life where you've been in deep grief, deep pain, and it's been very bitter, and you just wished you were dead, in a time of stress and pressure, it will come up to the surface like stones in a paddock. There it is for you to deal with again, except

now you're not without hope. Now you have hope, because our God is the God of all hope, who can fill you with joy and peace, believing that you can resolve that old thing.

So in the journey with God there's stones and rocks and hard places, the resentments and bitterness just surface in our life. How do they surface? They're seen by how we respond when pressure comes on us. You know I'm talking about someone next to you aye? [Laughs] Tell them: listen up, this is for you. Okay then, let's just move on. Now you're getting the picture on that one. Now let me just go through. Here's the thing; your heart determines how you see and interpret life. Your heart determines how you see and interpret life. Think about this, your heart determines it. It's not what happens to you, it's how you interpret it, and how you respond to it. That's what determines what happens to you, and so in Proverbs 17, Verse 20, it says: the one who has a deceitful heart finds no good. Deceitful means distorted or twisted or crooked or perverted, so if our heart is not right, we don't see right. We can be as smart as we like, but we still don't see right, if there's something wrong in our heart. The Bible says for example in 1 John 2, it says: if you've got hatred in your heart, hatred, you can't see where you're going, and you keep tripping up.

You have relational issues you can't figure out, but you have a reason why they're like that, and that reason usually means, you've judged someone else as being the cause of the problem. But the real problem lies in the heart. Deal with the heart stuff. Let it come up, let it come out. Let God help you and heal you. Notice what Jesus says in Matthew, Chapter 7. Look what He was here. He says: judge not, do not judge. Do not judge. Do not judge. Don't judge. Judge not, because - why is that? You will be judged. Now there's something about judging that creates problems for us. The moment you enter into judgement, you start off a cycle of suffering for yourself, and we'll explain that in just a moment. Now with what judgement you judge, you'll be judged, so if you're harsh with people hey, they're going to be harsh with you. The measure you use will be measured back. In Luke, Chapter 6, it says: not only do you get it back, it comes around. What goes around comes around. The problem is, it comes around, and you get more of it than you expected, more of it than you gave out.

Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and don't consider the plank or beam in your own? How can you say to your brother ooh, you've got an issue? Let me remove the issue from your eye - but however, look, there's a huge beam

in your own eye. Hypocrite - first, first priority, remove the plank from your own eye, and you'll see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Well that's a great thing aye? So judge means to make a decision. It means to call into question someone's motives, make a decision what they are, pass judgement, and then sentence them. So whenever we look at situations or people, and we make a judgement: this is why that took place, this is why they did that, we now have made a judgement, and in making a judgement, you set yourself up higher. You notice in a Court, if you've ever been to Court - I suppose there'd be one or two people here been to a Court. You go to a Court, you notice the judge sits higher than everyone. When you become a judge, you seat yourself higher than everyone. I wouldn't do that, I'm actually in charge here judging; and you're down there, you're the condemned, and here's the list of accusations against you. I find you guilty!

That's what judging is, it's a heart issue. See judging, now here's one of the things. You notice Israel was very quick to judge. It is true in life, that if you have been through many painful experiences in your past, or have suffered abuse or wounding, the question you tend to ask constantly is: why? Why did they do that to me? And now, that you've asked why, you're going to enter into a process of judging. You'll come to some conclusions. Here's your conclusion: oh, they must hate me; or men will always do that to you; or women will always be like that; or I must be a bad person - judge yourself. Or God must dislike me and hate me. You notice the question 'why' triggered off all of those judgements? When you have experiences in life, we often don't know why they happen. Why is not a good question to ask? We should actually observe the situation, and ask the question: how do I handle this? What do I need to do? How can I make good choices in the middle of this, because once you start asking why, you're going to start to judge.

When you judge, there's a whole lot of things begin to happen. For example I've had things as silly as this. I walk in and I'm preoccupied, I'm just thinking about the meeting, and someone's rung me before I got here, and I've got a few things on my mind, so I walk in, and walk right past someone. Now you know what I did? I was just preoccupied, walked past someone, that's all I did. That's all that happened - but that person looks - he walked past me. That's an observation. What does that mean? Now he's about to enter into judgement: he doesn't like me. Now that's judgement. It's got nothing to do with reality, it's your conclusion

about what it means. Why doesn't he like me? I only tried to do this, I only tried to do that, and now I'm angry. Now you notice I'm angry, not because someone walked past me; I'm angry because I judged. My judgement has unleashed all kinds of resentment: I always have this trouble everywhere I go! People treat me like this. Before you know it, that person's wound up, and they can't worship God, and they're in a mess.

Don't think that's an exaggeration, I've seen it happen. People come up: why did you walk past me? I said: I don't know, I didn't even notice. I was actually full of - I'm so sorry, what? But they're actually full of something, so when you start asking why, then you try and find all the reasons.

So the Bible just tells us this: don't speak evil of one another. Whoever speaks evil of his brother is judging his brother. When you hear someone running someone down, they are judging them; and they're about to reap a huge cycle. If you don't watch out, you'll come into agreement with it, then you'll reap the cycle too. [Laughter] Think about it. So here's some insights. As soon as we decide why someone did something, we end up judging them, so here's the thing. When we judge others, we set ourselves in the place of God. Why did they do that? Hmm, he doesn't like me. See, so that's a judgement of someone's motive. It's got nothing to do with reality, it's just how I assessed what happened to me, and that will determine then some things, and away it goes. So when we judge others, we can't see clearly. That's what Jesus said: you can't see clearly. It's like you've got a beam in your own eye. Your own eye is so blocked, you can't see clearly. Can you imagine someone who's got a big hunk of wood in their eye, and they're trying to use a pin to get a speck out of your eye? What's going to happen? They're going to do immense damage, so you notice the thing is, we can't see clearly.

Jesus' concern is that we see clearly. Notice He doesn't say we shouldn't help others. He just said: don't judge them, and He said: you need to get the plank out of your own eye, then you can see clearly. In other words - and the context is one of judgement. In other words here's the deal; when you judge someone, you now cannot see at all clearly them or the situation. If you want to see clearly, you have to get the judgement out of your heart. You have to repent of it, renounce it and let it go. That's the deal, have to let it go. You notice then, not only that, we can't deal with issues in our heart. Why? Because we're looking at the speck in someone else's eye: look at that, look what he did, look what they did, look - and

you become obsessed, so obsessed with someone else's faults and failings, you can't see what's in your own heart.

Now of course we do this all the time, and we reap a judgement that comes on us. So judging ends up in fault finding, and criticism, and resentment and bitterness. It ends up in all kinds of horrible, horrible things. In fact actually, you notice unsaved people - a Christian meets unsaved people, you know what they tend to do? Tend to judge them: oh, they're going to hell. How do you know? How do you know their state of heart? Why did you set yourself up to judge where they're at, and where they're going? How did you know that? Oh, well it looked like it, and I concluded that. Oh - now what happens of course we see someone, and we immediately look through what's in our heart. We filter what's there, and we judge it in line with what's in our heart; so you see someone, and maybe they're just dressed a little bit untidily, or they're dressed in some way that you disapprove of, so ooh, that person must be such and such. How do you know?

You're making a judgement on something you know nothing about, and the problem is, Christians judge unsaved people, and judge one another, and judge God, and judge themselves, and wonder why there's no power in their life. How can you have power in your life to influence people if there are judgements in the heart? Jesus said this: I have not come to judge anyone; but we who are much wiser, who represent Him, feel we're free to judge all sorts of people. We can judge pastors and leaders, we can judge other churches, we can judge one another, we can judge the unsaved, we judge the government. We've so set ourselves up, because of bitter roots in the heart, and a judgemental attitude. What it ends up in, you end up religious. You end up religious, having the form of Christianity, but no power in it. How can there be power in it? God's not into judging. He said: I didn't come to judge anyone! The Pharisees judged. Here's a woman caught in adultery; well you can't get it clearer than that, she's caught, we caught her. We caught her! That means they caught the man too - however we'll just overlook that for the moment. It's not convenient, because we actually want to focus on the woman, because that's the source of the sin! You getting the idea?

See, the whole Pharisaical spirit, and judgemental attitude and pride, and: we're better than, oh we'd never do that. Jesus just refused to judge her. Did she sin? Yes, He didn't judge her though. Did she get caught? Yes, but He didn't judge her. He just exposed the judgements in the others hearts, and then when they

walked away He said: who's here to judge you? Well no one. He said: I'm not judging you either, but she was caught - but she was caught in adultery! Don't you understand, she was caught in adultery! You must pass sentence on her. She's got to be punished some way. We think that way, but that's not how God thinks. Jesus took all the punishment. He's not into judging people, and we're called to represent Him. Oh and the harshest people in the world, when someone fails, is a Christian. It's because of Pharisee spirit, pride, judgementalism, harshness. You have to repent of that. How can you bring the love of God, how can we manifest what Jesus is truly like? He doesn't judge people.

That's why every sinner, unsaved person felt really happy in His presence. Why? He never judged them. Did He have standards? Yes. Did He speak the truth? Yes. Did He try and fix their lives? No, He didn't. So you notice this person here, who has judgement in the heart, they're obsessed with fixing up someone else's fault. You notice he said: let me help you get the speck out of your eye, because I can see you've got a speck in there. There's a speck there, it needs to be removed, and I'm just the one to remove it; to which the reply is: well get the beam out of your eye first and, then we'll be able to have a go here. In other words: stay away from me. Your attitude makes it impossible for you to help me. Do you understand that? So we're not called to fix people up; we're called to love them, not judge them. They're responsible for their lives. The moment you try to fix someone, you've already judged them. You know what you've judged them? You are lacking. You are a mess. You need sorting out. That's just full of judgement. It's full of judgement, and who better than me to fix it! See, it's full of judgement, full of judgement. No love in that.

This is what surfaced in their hearts, so how do we deal with it? How can we deal with all this stuff? Everyone's gone a bit quiet. You know it's someone else I'm talking to don't you? You're thinking: dear God, why did I come this morning, should have stayed in bed. [Laughter] But it's okay. God wants us to hear this one. I've been hearing it all week, and I discovered some things in my heart that I needed to repent oh. Don't we all? I think for me, I grew up with many struggles over feeling rejected, and so when you live that way, and you're wounded inside, you live full of judgements. Your whole life is a judgement: do they like me? Do they not like me? Am I accepted, and yet your life's a mess. The strongest judgements were about myself, finding fault with myself, and judging myself. I had to repent of that. God, where are you? Judging God, see?

Then you're figuring out other people, and judging other people. My life was riddled with it, come out of a religious background, riddled with it. I had to work to get my heart free of it. It's a constant effort, because it's easier to go into judgement and bitterness, than it is to go into grace and love and truth.

I'll just show you quickly what Jesus didm because you want to follow Jesus' example in the middle of this, so we'll have a quick look and just read this out in Mark, Chapter 6. In these few verses here, we've got an interesting story, and its some people who don't have any food, and I want to see how Jesus dealt with that. Here it is. So we find it in Mark, Chapter 6 Verse 31. Get the context - the disciples had just come back and talked to Jesus about all the things they'd done. He said come on out by yourselves into a deserted place, let's rest. There's so many coming and going, they didn't have time to eat, so they departed to a deserted place in a boat by themselves. In other words they wanted to have a holiday, but then the crowd saw them and they came, and Jesus was moved with compassion. He ministered to them, then it got very, very late in the day, and they need something to eat. Well what more could they expect? I've given up my break, I've given up my meal, I've preached to them all day. Send them home! That was the disciples, judged them: send them home.

This is what Jesus said. I want you to see what Jesus said. He just did this, He said: well you do something about it, and they got really upset about that. Then He said: well how many loaves do you have, go and see and they found they had five and two fish, commanded them to get them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. They sat down in ranks in hundreds and fifties - now here it is, Verse 41: And when He had taken the five loaves and two fish, He looked up to heaven. The words 'to look up to heaven' is exactly the same word that's used when it says of Jesus' ministry: He came to open the eyes of the blind. When you look up to heaven, you are making a decision to open your eyes to the possibilities of God, in the midst of lack and pressure and difficulty. Remember He had the demand of 5000 or more people on Him, everyone's there needing food and all hungry, and now what am I going to do? They expect me to find - it could easily have been a response of bitterness and anger and resentment. Instead He looked up to heaven.

The first thing we have to do, is to open our eyes to God's perspective. Why are we here? Why are all these people here wanting me to feed them? No, no, no, no. Look up; God, show me Your perspective on this situation. The biggest

problem we have is, we don't have God's perspective. We see through the eyes of judgement, but to get God's perspective, you've got to look up to God, look up: God, show me Your perspective on this person, Your perspective on this person, Your perspective on this situation, Your perspective on this problem, Your perspective on this need. Show me Your perspective. Open my eyes to see it like You see it, and then I can operate in wisdom. You need your eyes open. So when you are facing a pressure and a problem, you just need your eyes open to the bigger picture. See, we only see the little bit, and remember they only saw that bit there where there was no water, and then there was bitter water. They didn't see there were wells coming up. They didn't see God as a God who heals.

Then they run out of food, and all they can see is they're out of food. They don't see God as a God who provides. They just don't see. That was the problem. Why couldn't they see? Because of bitter judgements - and so what happens is, Jesus looked up to heaven. So first thing is, we just - heaven is full of abundance see, so if you look around here you see huge lack. You look at people and see huge need. You look up there, and God, help me to see the abundance, help me have Your perspective on this situation, and how You want me to engage with You, to bring heaven into earth in this situation. That's the first thing.

The second thing, He focussed on God's love and goodness. How do we know He did that? Because He said what I see the Father doing that's what I do, so He made the focus of His looking into the heaven, and to looking to God's perspective, on the goodness, the nature of God. God is always good. If God is always good, He's going to provide. If God is a provider, Jehovah Jireh provider, He'll make a way. I don't know what it is, I don't know how He's going to do it, but that's okay. He'll make a way. He'll make a way. Why? No, He'll make a way. You focus on God's love.

So of course when you face yourself in a situation that's really hard, really difficult, first thing to do is to look up to God, to get His perspective on it, to look to the love and the goodness of God; and then resolve your issues, resolve your stuff. Do you know what comes up when you're going through a hard time? Bitterness and anger and judgement, all kinds of things. Well just resolve them, repent of them, bring them to the Lord. Let them go. Forgive, let it go, release it, let it go. Then what He did was, He took what was available and He spoke blessing over it. He blessed it. He didn't speak critically, He spoke well. He spoke life! He spoke into it: increase, provision, enlargement. He echoed what

He saw in heaven, and He saw something come as a result of it, and He acted in faith. God's miracle came, and the whole crowd were fed, an amazing miracle of God.

See now what do we do? Well we're just like the Israelites so often; something goes wrong, we get upset and angry and frustrated and flustered, get all kinds of things in our heart, and we're going to make judgements, then try to control the world around us, control everyone. Hey, abandon that! When something's going on, look up: oh God, this is the situation. Show me it from Your point of view. Show me how You want me to respond. Show me heaven's provision, and Lord, by the way, I got a bit negative there on the way. I was saying some dumb stuff. Lord, I repent of that right now. What is in my heart? Take it out of my heart. Let my heart be healed, renewed of the bitterness, and those things that are in there. Lord, I'm going to speak Your word over my situation. I'll speak Your word over that person. I'll speak blessing over them. I'll speak increase over them. I'll speak the love of God over them. I will bring heaven to earth. I will bring Your heart into this earth. It's a choice.

We're called to follow Jesus, and this is the example He set. Isn't it interesting, it said - now what happened in the wilderness was an example for us to learn from. All of those people who continually got bitter and judged and complained, not one of them who did that entered the provision of God. They never transitioned to the provision that God had. I want to transition fully into the new things God has for me. It'll take courage. You do too, I know you do, but why don't you just in your heart say: God, what has been coming up in my life? What has been flushing up out of my heart? As I face difficulties, what's come to the surface? Lord, I'm turning to You. I'm turning to Your love and Your grace, Your absolute wonderful goodness. Lord, forgive me for getting my eyes on people, and trying to figure them out and judge them all. Lord, just let me get my heart back in line with You, and Lord, into a place of grace, so my words I speak are full of grace, full of life, full of blessing.

Summary Notes

Formatted » Back to Top »

Introduction:
· Transition = a period of time between two seasons or phases in your life
· Natural Transitions – seasons of weather, seasons of life

· Walking with God involves transitions – processes and times of change
· God is concerned about the process –it brings about His purpose in our life – maturity, repositioning
· When God brings us through transitions:
i. He informs us of an season of change (listen)
ii. He requires we change old mindsets, paradigms and ways of doing things
iii. He calls us to be strong and courageous to journey
Courage - No fear, strength of God to face fears ad change
· Transitions bring pressures, uncertainties, fears, and surface what is in your heart
· Key things we must recognize and overcome during transitions (Giants)
(i) Bitterness, resentment, offense, judging
(ii) Fear that paralyses and seeks control
(iii) Murmuring and complaining – what w do with our voice
(iv) Giving birth to an Ishmael – plan of own making
· Israel was an example 1 Cor 10:6,11 – transition from Welfare to Warfare
· Change the way you think, an inside change. Other people get affected by the way we handle our transitions
· Se things from God's perspective: He's got blessing in mind
· You have the power over how you respond in a situation; you don't have power over the situation.
· Have a mentality of faith, courage and perseverance

Transition over Heart Issues :
Ex 6:1-11 Israel came to the wilderness of sin = Thorny, a thorny place
God is a God who provides. Complaining has been mentioned four times. What comes out of the mouth reveals our heart attitude = the heart responds to a difficult situation. This doesn't come out in good times but in bad/difficult times.
· They had experienced lack of water – bitter waters. Revelation God is a healer – abundant waters
· Now they experience lack of food – transition pressure and uncertainty
· Responses of Israel vs 2-3 Heart Attitude
(i) Bitter judging – "You have bought us to this wilderness to kill us". Deep bitterness of heart
(ii) Complaining = "The whole congregation of Israel complained against Moses. A heart attitude expresses against people.
· 3885 = to stop overnight, to lodge, to stay permanently, to complain
· Dictionary = to find fault, to protest against something, judged wrong, to make accusation
· Against = in opposition to, hostile to, resistant to
· They positioned themselves in opposition to and critical of Moses
(iii) Accusation/critical spirit - "You have brought us here into this wilderness to kill us"
(iv) Bitter resentment and despair – "Oh that we had died by the land of the Lord in Egypt"
· They judged God – and expressed the bitter judgments against God and against self
· Death wishes are rooted in bitter judgments against God and against self
· Their words were full of emotional manipulation and attempts to control

3. Your Heart determines how you see people and circumstances:
Prov 17:20 "He that has a deceitful heart finds no good"
· Deceitful = 6141 =distorted, twisted, crooked, perverted
· The way we see and interpret life is strength to the filters and beliefs of the heart
· If we have a heart that is bitter and judgmental we will have a critical eye. Matt 7:1-5 "Remove the plank from your own eye and you will see clearly"
· Judge = 2919 == to make a judicial decision, to call into question the motives, to be of an opinion, to pronounce judgment and sentence
· Judging opens the door to much suffering and pain

· It is not just what we experience, it is how we see and interpret that experience that impacts
· Let the issues come up and God will help you deal with it.
· Luke 6 What goes around comes around
· A judge set himself higher that other people and also higher than God
· Why? = enter into judgment, question God's motives, then come to conclusions
· Not 'why?' but ask 'How?' can I handle this.
· Stones and rocks surface when pressure comes up
· Your heart determines how you see and interpret life = how you respond
· People with a low esteem or value are full of judgments – they want to know why
· Judge = You know why someone did something
· Identifying what someone did, is not judging, it is just an observation. Concluding why someone did something is judging them
Jam 4:11 "Do not speak evil one of another, he who speaks evil of a brother and judging his brother..."
Rom 14:10 "Why do you judge your brother?"
Matt 7:1-5 Insights:
· When we decide why someone did something we are judging them
· When we judge others we set ourselves above them as God (pride)
· When we judge other we cannot see clearly – our view of life is changed
· When we judge others we become focused on what is wrong with them
· When we judge others we cannot see or deal with the issue of our own heart
· When we judge others we reap increasing judgment in our own life
· Judging leads to:
Faultfinding Torment Self-righteous Criticism
Justifying self Manipulate Controlling Offence
Religious Pharisaical behavior Bitterness
John 12:47 "I did not come into the world to judge the world but to save the world"
· We cannot fix people or change them, we must love and serve them so the Spirit and life of Christ is manifested through us
· Times of transition/pressure will surface what is in our hearts

Example of Jesus:
Mk 6:41 "When He had taken the five loaves and two fish He looked up to heaven"
· Jesus had every right to feel resentful, pressured by the needs of people and their demands
How did He respond?
(i) He opened His eyes to God's perspective:
· "Looked up" = to recover sight that was lost Lk 4:18
· Heaven is full of abundance, there is not lack and pressure in heaven
· We are called to bring heavens resources into earths lacks by faith
· Open your eyes to God's perspective for that person or situation. Look up to God and open your eyes to the bigger picture.

(ii) He focused on God's Goodness and Love - Jn :19
· Whatever you focus upon grows greater in your life
· If focused on negatives then they captive your heart
· We are changed as we focus on the Glorious Person of God – who He is!
· See heavens provision. Speak blessing. Bring heaven to earth. It's a choice

(iii) Resolve bitter judgments /offenses by forgiveness and repentance:

Mk 1:15 “The Kingdom of heaven is at hand repent and believe”
· Repent of patterns of judgment and harboring offences, resentment and anger

(iv) Speak blessing over people and circumstances:
Mk 6:41 “He blessed, broke and gave”
· Blessed = 2127 = to praise, celebrate with praise, speak well of, release grace

(v) Expect the Spirit of God to move on the people and situations

Jesus didn’t come to judge anyone
We are called to represent Him not judge others
We are not called to fix people, we are called to love them.

Fighting the Good Fight (4 of 4)

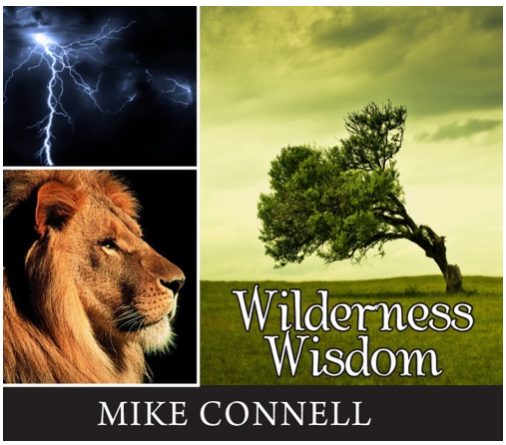
Sun 30 May 2010 AM « Back to Top

Audio» Notes» Share» Support» Review»

Every believer, whether you like it or not, is engaged in a spiritual conflict. The earth is a spiritual battle zone, and you're either in the fight winning, or you're in the fight and beaten up. The Bible calls it a fight of faith - its a fight about what you believe.

The only thing that can move the hand of God is that we are in faith, that we are agreeing with God about what God says. We take His side in life, and we begin to learn how to live and move by faith.

Just because you have a need, does not mean God will meet it. He knows the need. He looks for faith, and faith can be developed and cultivated. Faith has an evidence in our life, so when you're operating and living by faith, it is evident.



Why don't we open our Bible in 2 Corinthians 10. I hear you've had a great time since I've been away, great meetings last week, and great youth service, Shane Willard preaching fantastically. Isn't that great to see young ones rising up like that? Man, that's what we want to see. Isn't that right? That was a pretty weak response. [Laughter] I hope that wasn't jealous old people being quiet. [Laughs] Come on, you want to see young people rise, rise up. [Applause] If you're in the 50-plus age bracket, it's crucial you be excited about the next generation rising up, or you'll be missing totally what God would want you to do in this season, which would be part of encouraging them. You see, there's always something for us to do, but if we're focussed on me, we miss what we're called to do.

We have to see what God wants us to do in the different seasons of our life, then embrace that, and so if you're 50-plus there are two things, at least two things, you need to be aware of. One is that within the next decade, there's going to be

huge increase of people in that age group, all needing Christ, and so there's a huge harvest field in Hawkes Bay emerging in this next five to 10 years, of people over 50 needing to be won to Christ. Who will reach them? Will it be you? See, will it be you? So you've got to think that one through, will it be you, and if it isn't you, then God has to raise up someone, who will stand in the place you were called to fill. Think about it. Then the second thing is that God's wanting to cause a young generation to emerge, that can begin to pick up the baton of ministry and the baton of leadership, and begin to emerge and become a very strong voice. We have to be a part of helping that happen and see, we have to be part of that. Why? Because in this coming decade, probably about 50-plus per cent of the whole earth will be people who are under the age of 20.

So it's a real need for us, individually and corporately, to see where we're positioned in life, and to fully embrace the part we have to play in it. We'll talk more on that a little bit later as we go through the year, but I want to just carry on, and just do one more message on the wilderness, then I want to get out of that wilderness. [Laughter] My goodness, I want to get out of that wilderness, but anyway, it was a season of growing, so just going to give hopefully my last message on the Wilderness Wisdom; about fighting a good fight, fighting the good fight. So let's just read here, first of all in 2 Corinthians, Chapter 10, Verse 3: For though we walk in the flesh - that means we're in a physical body - we do not war according to the flesh. We don't struggle or fight with people - for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal or human, but they are mighty through God! Mighty through God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments, and every high thing exalting itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought into obedience of Christ.

Every believer, whether you like it or not, is engaged in a spiritual conflict. There are no exceptions. If you want to have the absence of conflict then you need to die and go to heaven. It's the only place I know without conflict - but we're in the earth, and the earth is a warzone. The earth is a spiritual battle zone. You see it everywhere. You read the papers, no matter where you look, you can't escape that we are in a battle zone. The battle zone is between the kingdom of darkness, which controls and rules through the thoughts and the behaviours and the attitudes and sin patterns in people; and the kingdom of God, which God wants to expand, to bring hope and light and life into our community. His agent for doing that is the church of Jesus Christ, so for us to advance the kingdom, it

requires we understand there is a fight that we fight. There are no exceptions. You're either in the fight winning, or you're in the fight and beaten up. If you're beaten up, then you need to come up the front, get healed, get delivered, start to get discipline in your life, start to grow in your Christian faith, start to get foundational patterns of living established, and then begin to win, because God has called us to win, not to lose.

There's no such thing as losing in the kingdom of God. God has never lost a battle yet, but we lose them, and we lose them when we lose sight of God, and when other things control our life. So there is a battle, and it's not a battle against something you see. Your fight and struggle is not with people. We think it's with people. It is never with people. People were called to love and reach out, to show the loving kindness of God, but there is a spirit world that manipulates, controls the environment, influences people, and also influences you. So the battlefield is a spiritual battlefield, and the place it's fought out is primarily in your soul. Your soul is the place this battle, or this fight of faith, takes place; and notice what the Bible calls it. It says it's a fight of faith. In other words, the key thing is, what do you believe? What do you believe in your heart to be true about your circumstances, about people, about God, about finance, about the feelings you have, about the thoughts you have? What do you believe? It is a fight about what you believe.

The only thing that can move the hand of God is that we are in faith, that we are agreeing with God about what God says. We take His side in life, and we begin to learn how to live and move by faith. You have to understand, just because you have a need, does not mean God will meet it. He knows the need. He looks for faith, and faith can be developed and cultivated. Faith has an evidence in our life, so when you're operating and living by faith, it is evident. It's evident in how your attitude is; it's evident in how you think, it's evident in what you say. If unbelief is in our life, it's evident by complaints. Complaints are the evidence that my heart is responding to unbelief, and I have a wrong perspective on life. The Bible says: in everything give thanks. Well that can't be true, how could I give thanks in everything? Because I know that God is making everything work together for my good, so giving thanks in the midst of difficulty is an act of faith, an act of warfare. Complaining is an act of belief. Negative speaking, pessimism, critical thinking, judging, all of those are the actions, or the out workings, of a heart that is not in a place of faith with God.

So in this next season I was really thrilled - I picked up what Brydon spoke, and don't know how many of you picked it. He was talking about just in the finance area, but he said: its faith; and we're in a season of faith, of actually stirring faith in our lives, so we need to be fired in faith! Amen. God is for us! Notice it says: the weapon, so we're not powerless. You've got something you can do, just got to do something with it. The weapons of our warfare; there is a conflict, it is your warfare, and here's something good about your warfare. One is, God has never failed in a battle yet, so He'll help you. The second thing is that it's your battle, not mine - so I hope you're winning it. You know one of the things is, you can actually tell when people arrive in church, whether they're winning. You can tell when you shake hands with someone, whether they're winning. It's all over their face, and in their spirit, and in the atmosphere that they carry, a winning attitude; or a defeated attitude.

So when we come to praise the Lord of course, some days the poor old song leader has to get into perspiration, and a sweat, and just about exhaust themselves trying to encourage people to respond to God; but you see the Bible tells us to give a sacrifice of prayer, so if it's not going well then give them a sacrifice, costly only when it's not going well. That's when it's a real sacrifice. If it's going well for you, easy to praise the Lord. It's not a sacrifice then is it? [Laughs] Okay, let's move on. So what we want to do is, we're going to go back, and we're going to look because when God took people out of Egypt, He had in mind them going into a land of promise, so He took them through a few situations where they experienced lack. Now if you're experiencing lack, that's okay. The key thing is, how will you respond? Everyone has lack at times. We all have lack at times, and there's times when you go through, and all your resources are less than the challenges you face. That's life, and it happens seasonally, you have those pressures.

I look around the world, it's like it's happening all over the world. Euro used to be strong and now look at it. They're all talking about pulling in the belt, and starting to cut back, and having to stop their spending. So when you're going through lack, it is the time to reach out to God, and to ensure that you're in a place of faith, and you do what you can do; then declare what's going to happen in your future, and call it into being, got to operate in a faith way. Okay then, so we're going to look into this Old Testament. I want you to see the first battle, because God actually let them go into a battle; and the battle, because it's the

first one, it means it's a significant one. It forms a foundation for understanding how all battles will be fought, so we're going to look in Exodus Chapter 17, Verse 8 through to Verse 16, so let's just read it right now. We can't lose the battle. We can't lose the battle unless we give up faith in God. If you give up faith in God, well you can't win, can you?

So now Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. Now Rephidim was the place where God had provided an abundance of water. In fact they had so much water, it gushed out and formed a great river, so it was a great place Rephidim. But at that same place, which was a great place of blessing, now became a great place of conflict. So the very place that had been a place of blessing for them now was a place of huge conflict, and they had to face it. Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua: choose us some men and go out and fight with Amalek. Fight! Don't roll over, fight. Don't pray, they won't go away. Fight them! Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. And so Joshua did as Moses said to him, and he fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron and Hur went up the top of the hill. Nice for them up on the top of the hill isn't it? And so it was - not down there fighting the battle you know? Top of the hill, I suppose if they're going to hurl arrows, the ones on the hill will be the ones to spot.

So when Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. And Moses' hands became heavy, got tired, and so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on either side, and the other on the other side, and they held them up because they were smart. They noticed something. They noticed when his hands were up, we're winning; when his hands are down, we're losing. What does that mean? People are losing their lives, getting cut, and arms slashed and legs slashed, and limbs being slashed off, so it's a good idea to help this fellow hold his arms up. There's something about holding his arms up that works. And so Moses' hands became heavy, so they supported his hands, one on the other side and one on the other side, and hands were steady until the going down of the sun - so it was all day this battle was fought, it wasn't a short battle.

So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. What's good? A sword, edge of the sword, you know - and the Lord said to Moses: write this for a memorial. So isn't it interesting, so this is the first battle which means it's significant. There's something to learn in it. The second thing is, God wanted

them not to forget it, so He said: write it down. I want you to write it down, record it. I don't want you to forget this. Write it for memorial in a book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, and I will utterly block out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. So He said: this battle is not over yet. You've won round one, but this is going to be ongoing, He says: but don't you worry, because I'm going to clean it up, and you're going to have a total victory, and there'll be no trace of Amalek left. How about that? That's a good promise from God isn't it?

So maybe you're just on round one of your fight. Don't worry. God says He's going to clean it up for you, if you'll just stick with the battle aye and learn from it, learn the strategy. Okay then, so they did that; and then He said: Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner, and he said: because the Lord has sworn - the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. So we're going to just have a look at the battle because one, it's the first one, and that's always significant in the Bible. Everything that's first is very significant. The second one is because God said He's going to want them to remember it, not forget it, because God doesn't forget stuff. He wanted specifically to remember, so there's some keys in here. I'll get to the keys shortly, but I want you to understand the battle, because if you don't understand the battle and what actually they were up against, it's a little difficult to understand why it's so important to follow the strategy.

So in this passage there is a strategy given for warfare, it's a divine strategy, and so that's why it's important. So when you face battles and face pressures, there is a divine strategy to follow to ensure success and we want to succeed, we want to win in the battles we face. No matter what our battles are worth, we want to succeed in them, so I want to just talk firstly a little bit, spend a little bit of time so we just understand Amalek, and you just have a little understanding of where they came from, what they were all up about. Now in Genesis 36, Verses 10 through to 12, it tells us that Amalek was a descendant of Esau. In fact he was Esau's grandson. Now why is that important? His grandson - because in the Bible generations are connected, and so therefore where someone originates from tells you the DNA, tells you the nature of that person, where they've come from. So he descended, or he was the grandson by a concubine, so it's an immoral relationship of someone who's seeking to gain influence by being connected into the family of Esau.

So there's immorality in the background. There's agendas to try and gain influence, not through a right marriage, but through just being a concubine, trying to get in on Esau's family. Now why is this? What's so significant about Esau? Why all these interesting things about Esau? The thing is that Esau was the firstborn son; so Abraham, and then Isaac, and then Esau. Now of course immediately you think that's not right; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. No, but it should have been Esau, but you see Esau made bad choices. Esau did not value spiritual inheritance. He did not value, he did not understand, or get the importance of, blessing flowing down from one generation to another. He did not understand the significance of the blessing on Abraham being a generational blessing. He did not understand fully the power of that blessing that came, by being connected to Abraham: In Abraham I'll bless the nations of the earth. I will bless you, and you'll become a blessing. I will bless you financially, bless you in your marriage, bless you in your family, bless you in your relationships, bless you in your work. I will bless you - and Abraham was blessed. He was a multi-millionaire, a very rich man.

See Isaac also was a very rich man, so it should have been Abraham, Isaac and Esau. However, Esau despised, or did not see the significance of, spiritual values. He was a very worldly man, man of the earth, and so he valued just meeting his immediate needs. He was more interested in just having a good time, or filling up; and so the Bible calls him in Hebrews 11: a profane man. That word 'profane' means literally to open up or to create a door of opportunity for something to come in. It's the same word used when the Bible says: don't give a place to the devil, so this man Esau, he didn't place value on spiritual blessing, and the flow of spiritual blessing down a family line, didn't place any value on it at all. In fact actually what he did do, was he traded his blessing for a meal. I won't get into the issue of trading, but what he did was, he made an exchange. He exchanged something that was worth millions to him, for one meal. He compromised, in other words, and traded away what God intended, or he could have had.

The Bible says Esau have I hated, Jacob have I loved. Now Jacob wasn't exactly a very honest man, in fact he was very manipulative and he lied, deceived, did all kinds of things. Nevertheless, he had this that was good, and this is what God looked at. See we look at the lying and cheating and deceiving and manipulating, all that kind of thing and think oh man, what a guy, you know? But God looked

him and saw: here's a man who has true values, eternal values. So Jacob was a man who loved the blessing God.

So this descendant of Esau, the whole thing about Esau was that one, he despised the blessing, and then he hated Jacob when he got it, so the roots of this Amalek are this. It's about despising, and holding of no place or value, your spiritual inheritance in Christ; trading it away for something that'll just get you by today, and having resentment against those who walk in that blessing - hatred actually. Hatreds manifest by accusations, judgements, back-biting, all that kind of stuff there, so that's the spirit behind it. So what does Amalek actually mean? That's its source and its origin. It means to dwell in the valley, but it means actually this. It comes from a word - I looked up the Hebrew meaning, so I just tried a different source. I found it really quite interesting what it means. It means literally this, it means: to toil, and it's combined with another word meaning: to remove spirit life. So this is what Amalek means: to remove, or empty out, your spiritual life, through seasons when you're under pressure, where it's difficult and you're struggling.

So Amalek then is a demonic power that comes to steal away your spiritual life, to steal away the blessing, to steal away your life with God, and he comes at times when you are going through struggles, difficulties, misunderstandings, pressures; and you're feeling weary and toiling and straining a bit. Does that sound familiar? See, sounds familiar, okay then so that's what it means, to lose your spirit life, the life of God, the vital relationship with God, the dynamic expression of life that God's called you to, through a season of toil and difficulty and pressure. That's what it means - so what is the nature of it? They were nomads. They never settled anywhere, so they were like Cain. Cain was cursed, so he never settled anywhere. Many Christians never settle anywhere. You can't ever be productive if you don't settle; and so they were nomads, they had no commitment, no roots. They had no place they were planted. They built no lasting relationships, they just wandered.

You can't be fruitful, productive, or have great spiritual inheritance unless we're planted, form relationships, become committed somewhere. Wherever it is may not be perfect - it certainly won't be, because we're there [laughs] but however, we need to be planted somewhere. We need to build relationships. The church is not just about a big body of people gathering like this. It's about actually the connecting and forming of relationships. If we don't form relationships then we'll

never really come into our full inheritance. We can't because Christianity's never about walking alone. It's about a body, and most of the promises God made are to His body. Because we're western in thinking, we're very individual in thinking, so we just take it all for ourselves and don't worry about you mate; but actually it doesn't work like that, because there are so many scriptures that talk about our need to consider one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, love one another, so Christianity is about a community of people experiencing God together. Relationships are vital. People feel lonely, and then they become nomadic. They become like Amalek, wandering around from this place to that place.

But the real problem is actually your difficulty in forming relationships, open relationships, where we can talk and enter in and engage one another, and share our struggles, and have people pray for us. You know that's the kind of Christian community that God is building. That's the church He's building, where we can be in a small group, we can share our heart, and people will stand with us through our troubles and difficulties. So Amalek comes to steal away all of that, so this spirit would come to try and stop you forming any relationships, and to end up hating people you should be loving. So God calls us to love one another, and to love the community, love the people who are unsaved. Why? Because He does; not to judge or find fault, but to love and engage, and bring the life of Christ to them.

I had an interesting experience last week, quite interesting really. I had a guy who was a Buddhist and he was - I won't describe him in a way that could be known by anyone, but he had been in politics. He was in a very high position in politics, and now he was going through some very, very difficult season of litigation, and all kinds of accusations were against him. So I was asked if I could counsel him, and I sat down and he got talking a little bit about the problems he was having and whatever. Suddenly the Lord just opened up to me to understand, one, exactly what the nature of the problems were; and two, that I didn't need to lead him to Christ for God to bless him, so I just shared with him. I said: the Lord's showing me this is what your problems are, da-da-da-da and he began to weep and weep and weep, and I shared with him. I said now I want to pray and we just prayed and rebuked the things, prayed for the peace of God to come in his life, and the guy, I mean he looked transformed afterwards, totally transformed.

Did I lead him to Christ? No, not at that time, but he's got relationships there. He will eventually come to Christ, no doubt about it. But one thing you could see was, he walked away having had an experience of God that was good, and so here it is, a Buddhist serving some other God, yet God was good to him, so he walks away - God was good to me. Sometimes this is what we do. We mentally judge people, you're not a Christian. God can't bless you. I've got to lead you to Christ before God can bless you. It doesn't work like that. God's good to the just and the unjust, so many times the best miracles happen for unsaved people [laughs], because God is so good. We just need reminding He's so good, isn't that great? God is good. Tell someone God is good. [God is good.]

Okay then, so now the interesting thing about these people is that they were not in a territorial battle, not trying to steal someone's territory. They just hated Israel! No cause, just hated them. They were totally agin them. In fact when you look down the Bible, Haman, who had a plot to get rid of all Jews, he was one of these guys. He was a descendant of the Amaleks; and you look down to Herod, who killed all the children. He also was a descendant of these Amaleks, so everywhere you see this Amalek spirit, it hates God's blessed people, so it tries to come in all kinds of ways to destroy God's people, or to put them under such labour and toil they give up their spirit life, and they're no longer walking in blessing. You've got to keep your spirit life, got to keep in a place of faith. We've got to fight this fight and win it, so we walk in light no matter what we're facing! No matter what struggle you have, God wants you to walk through it, with peace and joy and life - and you can do it! You can do it! You can do it if you choose to. That's wonderful!

So what else do we find? Read in Deuteronomy 25 we find the strategy. So how did Amalek attack? Well it's helpful to know how he did it. It's interesting how He's recorded it all; write it all down, so no one ever forgets. In Deuteronomy 25 Verse 17, Moses says: remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way, attacked your stragglers or the people at the rear, and all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary, and he didn't fear the Lord. It shall be when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies, in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you will blot out remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. Don't forget.

So God's quite important - tell them don't forget. Listen, these guys, they've got

to go. Anything that comes against your inheritance, your blessing, the vision God's given you, it's got to be dealt with. God has put vision in your heart, and destiny in your heart, something in your heart. Believe me, this is what Amalek comes to steal - your destiny, steal your vision, steal your hope, steal your dreams. Why? Getting out of the realm of the spirit, getting into just caught up naturally, trying to just live a good life and get by. The Lord wants us to have a strong life, a powerful life in the Holy Ghost inside! So what did they do? They came up and they attacked. Now that's interesting, they come up unexpected. They come up from behind. They didn't sort of line up like a normal battle was; you declared war, you stood out the front, this one lined up here and this one lined up here. They stared one another down, and shouted and argued and whatever, like did the haka to one another and that kind of stuff, and then they took one another on. It was always like that.

But this group were different. They just sneaked up behind, when no one suspected; so the nature of Amalek, it's a sneak attack. It's a terrorist attack comes up on you when you're not aware of it. Notice where it came, the rear ranks. The rear ranks were the people furthest away from leadership, that had the most distance relationally. We can be separated in all kinds of ways from one another. We can lag behind, we can have all kinds of struggles. See offence will make you tired and weary, offences. If you harbour offences, you'll get tired and weary, and you'll straggle a bit, spiritually, see? Distrust will cause you to straggle, doubts will cause you to straggle, negative thinking will cause you to straggle a fair bit. You lag behind. You can't make movement when you're, you know? See the stragglers were the ones who were lagging behind, so they were sort of slowed down and burdened and weary, and so in a sense what happened was, they were sort of lagging back, and the enemy whip in and take them all out.

So that would probably be the elderly and the children and women. They just kill them mercilessly, take all the goods. They were just plundering what they had. They were plundering, what they wanted was the blessing, we'll steal it away, take the life, steal the blessing. So people who struggle with loss of strength, loss of vision, if you start to lose your vision you'll straggle. You lose momentum in your life, don't have a dream to hold in your heart. We lose momentum. We haven't got something we're looking towards, and moving towards. As that goes further out, we just straggle back. We begin to slow down in our Christian life.

They were tired, they were weak you know, and perhaps they're - the word there 'tired' means to be crushed; or they actually had wounds or difficulties or challenges because of their journey. Now all of us at times have crushing blows come against us. I'm no exception. We have times when blows come against us, which crush you in your spirit, or hit your soul and affect your soul, so it slows you down.

When you're slowed down like that, that's when the enemy comes to pick you off. That's the nature of this thing, and so when we get hit or knocked or whatever, and we begin to slow down, and our spiritual life's slowed down; we begin to lose our vision, get a bit fuzzy and whatever or get offended or get hurt; or don't know what God's doing or feel a bit lost and everything. When that happens that's when this enemy comes to steal out and take your life, take your spirit life and get you to stop praying, stop being in your word, stop fellowshipping, stop connecting, stop giving, just stop doing the things that will engender spirit life. So one of the things I think in the coming season, I feel God's just been stirring me that we get the basic disciplines going back, the foundational things we need to be doing, to see that we're established in them. So if you haven't got a regular prayer life, you'll be lagging behind; if you haven't got time in the word, you'll lag behind. See, if we're not fellowshipping, connecting, we'll lag behind. There are many things that are basic disciplines. If we don't do them, then we begin to lag behind and get weary, just worn out and tired.

So what was the impact? Now the impact was horrendous, and if you want to see a little bit more about Amalek and how it operates, go look in the Story of Saul. I won't go into there, I'd rather just finish and give you the strategy for winning! A strategy for winning - let's go and have a look back in Exodus 17. Now Moses said to Joshua - notice this, a clear direction given: choose some men and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God. So Joshua did as Moses said; so here's the first thing, right positioning. Everyone had to be positioned right. Moses needed to be on the mountain, on the hill, holding up the rod of God. He needed those around him, who would support him. He needed someone in the battlefield, who would lead the army. See, he needed people to be aligned in the army, so they could fight and engage the enemy. In other words, everyone had to be in their right place. One of the key things to getting victory in spiritual conflict is to be positioned right.

You have to be positioned right. The Bible tells us God sets members in the body, as it pleases Him. In other words, He puts us into a body of people, and He has a place for us to fit. He has a part of the church to fit into. Sometimes we don't find it so easily, but there's a place for you, there's a place for you in the body. Then there's a positioning spiritually in your relationship with God. You know we were singing: we walk in the freedom Christ has won, so I need to be positioned in my walk with God so I am standing boldly, confidently, no guilt, no shame, standing in the presence of God, able to draw on His resources and speak on His behalf as an ambassador, as a king into the earth. King Saul had a destiny, a dream, a vision, an anointing, a call of God, to be a king in the earth; just like you and I have an area we're called to be king, to bring the life of God into, but this is what happened to him. He was called to go up against Amalek but he compromised, lost the battle against Amalek, and lost his positioning. Very, very important your positioning. I'll go onto that in another session, but we need to know where and how God has placed us.

If you're the husband, God has called you to be spiritual head, to stand up in a place of prayer and responsibility in the home. If you've got a leadership role, God calls us to stand up and be positioned near Him, hearing Him, following His directions. So positioning is everything. Positioning is one, about our spiritual positioning, our relationship with God; two, it's about our connection with other people, and where we fit. If you try and get somewhere you're not supposed to be, you'll find yourself out of God's protection, you can't win the battle. It's very important to be positioned right. Positioning - interesting, think about this. God made a place or position for Adam, before He made Adam. Think about that. He made a place for him, and He had an assignment for him; so before Adam was created, God already had a place for him prepared, and a job for him prepared. Think about that - so the man had to come into the place God had for him, in order to fulfil the assignment God had for him. That's why it's so important for you to know what God has called you to do, and to be, and where He's positioned you to be, who He's positioned you to fulfil that with - very, very important. Very important.

So our assignment is what God called us to do. Our positioning is who He's called us to connect with, and where, in order it might be fulfilled. Let me tell you this, the devil will do everything he can to get you out of positioning. If you're out of positioning, you can't fulfil your assignment. Think about this:

when Adam sinned, he was then taken out of his position. He lost his position spiritually and physically. He was removed. Now I have seen many people, over years, see their whole family spiritually destroyed, because the position God had for them, and the place God had for them, they actually got offended or something went wrong, they couldn't handle it or didn't handle it or whatever; and they withdrew with offence. They were so wounded it actually cost their whole family their spiritual inheritance. I've seen it countless times. Positioning is everything.

You know I've had many offers to go to different places. I have them currently there. There's like offers to go do this, do that, whatever. Here's the thing I've realised a long time ago. The only great place to be is where God called you to be. That's the place of His will, it's the place of His prosperity, it's the place of His blessing, it's the place of your destiny. You can't guarantee, if you go outside that, you'll be able to ever do what you think you could do. I remember knowing a pastor - I'll have to be careful not to identify him - but who had a very good church going in New Zealand. He went to Australia thinking all things would be big in Australia, and now I look, he has not got - he had a church that was very big for its hour and time, and now he's got almost nothing. He's the same guy, trying the same things, but it's just not working for him. He's not in the right place, not in the right positioning - so positioning. Alignment is the second thing. You notice they were all united. They had one thing in mind. They were united around a common purpose, a common vision, a common goal, and you know Jesus has made that clear for us; our common vision, purpose and goal, you can put it in all kinds of words. At the end of the day, it always comes down, it's to go into the community and change it. Everything else, Jesus wrote it down so we wouldn't get it wrong. I like the fact He wrote it down: GO! Make disciples! Say well I'm not that, I'm not called to do that. We could argue with the Bible, or scratch that bit out of your Bible, or do something with it, but don't just leave it there, because Jesus gave every one of us a mandate to enter the community, to influence it. There's no way around it, and we can have great meetings and have great conferences, do all this kind of thing, but at the end if it doesn't overflow to the community, we miss the number one thing. Good thought isn't it aye, get aligned? [Laughs] Nice to be aligned isn't it aye? [Laughs]

So that means every person who comes who's a visitor, well you reach out to them. Why? Because you're aligned with our goal of gathering up people to

Christ. Wherever you go, you're reaching people to show the friendship of God to them. Why? Because that's what we're here for, it's what we're here to do. People in your sphere or metron, you're reaching out and doing something actively to reach them. You say: well I do car park, or I do prayer, or I do administration - nonsense. That's nonsense. That's just a specific function. We're all called to the big purpose, which is people. It's always about people. It's always about people. It's always about people, and the moment you forget it's about people, you've missed the point, you've missed the purpose. You're not aligned. Okay then, so God will be working on us to get us positioned right, and aligned right, focussed right in this coming season. It's going to be exciting and it'll be good.

Here's the next one. Here's a good one now - and so you notice that Moses held up the rod of God! That is a picture of persevering prayer! He didn't just hold it up, and He had the victory. It was nice, because he held it up one day there, and the waters opened up. Then he went whoosh, and the waters closed. It was nice to just do whoosh like that. It would have been nice to stand there and go whoosh! and get rid of all the enemy. It didn't work that way - he had to remain in a place of passionate persevering prayer, upholding the authority of God, his hands lifted to heaven, lifted to throne of God, from where his power and his source comes. Listen, if we don't connect with heaven, if we don't connect with God, if we haven't got strong prayer coming out of an engagement with God, you can't win the battle! If you lose in prayer, you lose it altogether! You haven't got what it takes.

Here's the thing. For the church to change a community, you have to have what it takes on the inside, so that the community doesn't change you. For most Christians, the community changes them. We think, talk, act and behave just like the community does. Why? Because we haven't got enough inside us, and the inside us part is the discipleship, that the growing and the basic disciplines, basic walking with God, the routine stuff that keeps you strong and alive and in God, so you can be like a Daniel. Daniel went into the world of Babylon. Daniel was over all the magicians. This is a hard one to handle. Think about this: that Daniel was over all the occult practitioners. That was his position in the world. Of course we love to think of Daniel being a nice person, and a man of God; but how do you be a man of God, and be over all the occult practitioners? That's your cell group. [Laughter] I've got all the occult practitioners, and they're all

still into it, and I'm supposed to be in charge of them. Come on, think about that - and you think your job's too hard. Go back and have another read of it.

But he had such a presence and life of God in him, spirit life, the life and presence of God. He rose to the top. Why was he over all the occult practitioners? Because what he had from God was better than them. He had more wisdom, more prophetic insight, more words of knowledge, more revelation. He had more than any of them. Shame the church doesn't have that these days. It has to come back to what we need to come back to. See, so we can actually have influence that way. A smart boy that one, and so he would have had to all dress up and wear eye make up and all kinds of stuff to live in Babylon in those days. You want to read the history of what it was like there - would have had face painted and all kinds of things, and eyes and rings and stuff like that. He'd look quite bad. He's over the practitioners. I think if we saw Daniel today, if you had a chance to step into time and saw him, you'd write him off. [Laughter] Doesn't fit what we think of as a man of God, doesn't look right aye? Your cell group's all the occult practitioners, I can't - come on now - and you're leading them? Eternal burn? Now no, no, no, that wasn't it. He actually showed he had better than them. I think he probably won them all to the Lord.

How about this? When the king was going to kill them all, he said: give me a chance, I want to save them all. Think about it. Think about it. Anyway that's just an aside - so persistent prayer, fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man releases great power! James 5:16, Luke 18:1, pray without ceasing. Don't give up, don't quit. Men ought always to pray, and not get weak. You hear that one? Actually I don't like the way Jesus said it: Men ought always to pray and not quit. He did, He said that, and Paul wrote it too: I will that men, men everywhere, pray with hands lifted up, free of wrath and anger. If you have a prayer meeting, there'd be a lot of women there. It's wonderful, filling in for the men who aren't there - just the thing. You want to win the battle, you've got to pray. Listen man, if you don't pray, how can you win? How can you be spiritual leader in your home? How can you stand and deal with demonic powers that infest your home life, if you don't get in the spirit and pray? We must be able to do that. If you don't know how, get along and get someone to teach you how. This coming few months we'll get people up and praying strong!

The last one, so you notice it's a two part thing - so up here is where it counted. If you haven't got it with God, you'll lose it on the ground. If you don't maintain

strong, effective prayer, engagement with God, flow of the life of the spirit, you can't win in life. That is the message. Whenever his hands got tired and came down, whenever there was a weakening, a lessening of prayer pressure, that's when the battle went backwards, and so I like it on the ground there. Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword, so finally it's the word of God, sword of the spirit's the word of God. The Bible's clear about that. So he defeated him with the sword. What does that mean? That means it requires faith. You can't get anything to shift supernaturally without faith. That means: I believe what God says about me in my circumstances. I will speak and proclaim and declare what God says about me in my circumstances. Then I'll act, and do what God says to do. He says: overcome evil with good - okay, I'll overcome evil with good. Just think about that.

If someone's done you evil, what's your first response? Overcome it with good! [Laughter] Shake your fist at them and grrr! Get angry, or some kind of thing like that - no! Overcome evil with good! Pray without ceasing! In everything give thanks! This is the life of faith. It's a great life that causes people to win in life. Hold the word of God. See today, how many of you are praying? How many of us are praying, and holding God's word over our personal life, over our family, over our marriage, over our finances, declaring: it shall be to me, according to God's word? I am blessed. There may be recession, but I am blessed. I'm a seed of Abraham, the blessings of God on my life, I am blessed when I come in and when I go out! I'm blessed in my marriage, blessed in my family, blessed in my work! Everything I put my hand to is blessed! I am a blessing to everyone today!

You've got to get it in your heart and get it in your mouth. That's what faith looks like. That's what faith talks like. That's what faith sounds like. You can always tell if someone's in faith. It looks like they're in faith, it sounds like they're in faith, and they do something that shows they're in faith, see? You can't believe and do nothing, you know. The demons do that, so join the crowd of demons, believe and do nothing. They believe and do nothing, can't be saved. You can't - see faith steps out. Faith acts on what God says, so on the one hand there was strong prayer, on the other hand there was a holding to the word, the promises, the destiny of God. You notice what it says in Joseph. Joseph had a dream. Joseph had a great destiny, but in all of it, he had to hold the word of God! When he's being sold as a slave, when he's standing naked on the slave block there, and

they're casting bids for him, nevertheless it shall be done to me, according to what God said to me! When he's framed and put into jail for rape, a false charge of rape, nevertheless it shall be done to me, according to the word of God! When he's in the bottom of the prison, nevertheless, it shall be according to your word Oh God.

The Bible says the word of God tried him, and then his time came, and then he's out and you know what? It was just like God said, but he held that word over his life until his circumstance changed and aligned with what God said - faith!

Summary Notes

Formatted » Back to Top »

Introduction:
2 Cor 10:3-4 “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God …”
· Every believer is engaged is a spiritual conflict against spiritual powers
· The battleground for the warfare is the soul – through life, emotions and choices
· The issue at stake is knowing God and fulfilling the call and destiny of God
· God is for us – our weapons are mighty through God – powerful, capable, and supernatural!
· Today we look at Israel’s first battle – recorded for us to learn from 2 Cor 10:11

Israel’s First Battle:
(a) Key passage: Ex 17:8-16
(b) Who is Amalek?

i) Origin of Amalek
Gen 36:10-12 Amalek was a descendent of Esau
Esau did not value his spiritual inheritance – no value upon the blessings of God
Esau focused on meeting his present needs rather that spiritual inheritance
Esau traded the inheritance, right of firstborn for a meal Heb 12:16
Esau is being described of being profane = accessible, able to get foothold in him Ep 4:27
Esau hated his brother Jacob because of the blessing Gen 12:41-42

ii) Name and Meaning of Amalek
Amelek = 6002 = to dwell in a valley
= Root = to toil = to remove spirit life
= > loss of Spirit life through labor, toil, weariness

iii) Nature of Amalek
Amalek were nomads – wanderers – not planted anywhere, like Cain
No commitments, no roots, never connected, joined, became accountable
Carried a bitter hate against the people of God who walked in blessing
There was no land or territorial dispute – just hatred and desire to destroy
Note: Haman was a descendent of Esau Esther 3:6,10
Herod was a descendent of Esau

Both carried the same spirit of hatred for the seed of God, promise!

iv) Strategy of Amalek
Deut 25:17-19 ".. he met you on the way and attached your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear when you were tired and weary"
Amalek came up from behind, unexpected, no warning, people not looking
Attacked:
i) Rear ranks – ones furthest from leadership, loss of strength
- people who lagged behind, loss of vision
- offense, doubts, negative thinking
ii) Tired – ones who were weak, lacked strength, vulnerable, shattered emotionally
iii) Weary – Worn down by journey, difficulties, demands, pressure
Impact of Attack of Amalek is seen in Saul's behaviour
1 Sam 15:1-3 Mission from God – destroy the stronghold of Amelak
Instead of destroying the Stronghold – he spared the King

v) Traits 1 Sam 15
· Compromise – seduced away from what God called him to do
· Disobedient – refused to deal with issues, and didn't obey directions of the Holy Spirit
· Unrepentant – full of bitterness, resentment, blame shifting, refusing responsibility
· Fear of man – desire to please people rather than God
· Control – desire to look good, appear good before man
· Loss of vision and destiny – he forfeited his kingship, right to rule
· What has God called you to do?

3. Strategy for Winning:
Ex 17:9-13
(i) Right Positioning:
· Every person was positioned according to gifting and calling
· Positioning is important to winning in life
· We are positioned in Christ to enforce His victory
· We also must know how/where God has positioned us in Christ 1 Cor 12:18

(ii) Alignment:
· There is complete unity of purpose = one purpose, one vision
· Every person was aligned to accomplish the one purpose
· There is power in agreement and unity Ps 133, Matt 18:19
· Aligned with God – with His Word – with Vision – with People

(iii) Persistent Prayer:
· When Moses held up the 'Rod' – the authority of God of Israel prevailed
· There were demonic powers operating in the unseen spirit realm
· When the authority of God and His Word is upheld we can always win
· Jam 5:16 Effective, fervent prayer = Prevails!
· Luk 18:1 Men aught always to pray and not faint

(iv) Word of God:
· Sword = Word of God Eph 6:17
· We must hold onto and use the Word of God
· The Word was framed – created and formed by God speaking

i) Believe the Word of God Mk 9:23
ii) Speak the Word of God Rom 4:17
iii) Act upon the Word of God Jam 2:22
· What issue is God calling you to face?

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