

WILDERNESS

THE ONLY WAY AROUND IS THROUGH

Wilderness Series

Part 3 - "Don't Stop Believing"

Small Group Material

May 20th, 2018

Leader Guide

Bottom Line: *You don't have to understand HOW it matters in order to believe that IT matters.*

Study Verses: *Matthew 4:11, Luke 4:13, Hebrews 2:18, Hebrews 4:15-16, Romans 5:2-5, 1 Peter 4:1-3*

Define The Win: *Participants would recognize that God shapes and forms their character while in the wilderness. They would understand the importance of recovery and tending to their heart after experiencing temptation. Group members would be able to articulate what resides at the heart of the struggles they continue to encounter.*

Key Points

- *Experiencing temptation isn't a reflection of a lack of maturity.*
- *What we fill ourselves with after facing temptation is critical to how we recover. We need to create space for recovery.*
- *The battle of belief centers on surrendering our power for His provision, our will for His ways and our lives for His purposes.*
- *Perseverance produces character.*
- *When we quit trusting we quit obeying and when we quit obeying we stop believing.*
- *Faith is an activator. It starts a process.*

- *We often forsake the very thing (FAITH) that can sustain us through our struggles.*
- *The validity of the struggle isn't the main issue, but rather what our attitude is in the midst of the struggle.*

ENCOUNTER

- **Over the years how have you internalized facing repeated temptation and continual struggles (I'm a bad Christian, I'm being punished, I give up, this is never going to end, I've been good...this shouldn't be happening, etc.)?**
- **We don't think our way away, we behave our way away. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? How does a lack of trust influence our obedience and later on our belief?**
- **In what ways do we either overestimate temptation or underestimate our struggles?**
- **What's the difference between sustaining hope and relieving hope?**

FORMATION

- **Read Hebrews 2:18 and Hebrews 4:15-16. How does understanding that Jesus empathizes with our weakness impact the way we approach Him in prayer when enduring struggles?**
- **Read Romans 5:2-5 and 1 Peter 4:1-3. Do you believe God has a grander purpose for the struggles you encounter? Why or why not? What makes you answer in the way that you do?**
- **Read Matthew 4:11 and Luke 4:13. Why are recover, rest and refueling necessary after facing a season of temptation? What is the danger in believing that if we more spiritual we wouldn't face temptation continually?**

EXPRESSION

- **What is at the heart of the temptations you continue to face? How are you attempting to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way or putting your needs above His own?**
- **Think of the issue you struggle with the most. What lies are you believing when you give in to this temptation? How does Scripture demolish those lies?**

- **Where do you need to recover, rest and refuel from a season of temptation? How can you tend to your heart this week?**

LEADER INSIGHT: *When we quit trusting God cares, provides for us and loves us unconditionally, we quit obeying. And when we quit following, we stop believing that God has a grander purpose for the struggles we face. We don't tend to drift due to theological reasons or holes in our belief system.*

The break in our connection with Christ happens because we violate our conscious over and over. If we don't address our struggles, we finally get to the point where we say, "It doesn't even matter anymore." We don't believe or think our way away from God; we behave our way away.

We often forsake the very thing (FAITH) that can sustain us through our encounters with temptation. The battle of belief centers on surrendering our power for His provision, our will for His ways and our lives for His purposes.

We have to pay attention to where our thoughts wander and the lies we believe when in the thick of the wilderness. At the heart of every temptation resides the question: Can God be trusted? If we fail to understand that God utilizes our struggles to develop perseverance and shape our character, we waste so much mental and emotional energy wondering why we face hardships and temptations over and over again.

We leave ourselves vulnerable to feeding into the lies the enemy wants us to believe. Some of us wonder if our struggles are punishment for not having enough faith. We reason that if we were a good Christian that we wouldn't struggle. Wrestle with something long enough, and we'll stay put in the land of "that's just who I am." The validity of the struggle isn't the main issue, but rather what our attitude is in the midst of the battle.

What we fill ourselves with after facing temptation is critical to how we recover. We need to create space for recovery. By tending to our hearts, we learn how to respond differently when temptation rears its ugly head again. By strengthening our faith, we activate a sustaining source that we can rely on no matter what comes our way.