The 'wilderness' is not a concept that is understood too well in Christendom, despite the fact that it is all the way through the Bible. From the book of Genesis right through Revelation there are clear references to the 'wilderness' as being something God often employs in His dealings with men. The pattern is undeniable.

When we look through the Scriptures we see that the wilderness is often a place of spiritual "crisis" and also preparation. It is the place God sends us before the "real action" begins - before we enter into the full purposes of God in our lives. There must be 'death' before there can be resurrection. There must be a desert place before the "promised land".

The wilderness is a place of trial and testing, of brokenness and full surrender to God. The props and activities that have kept us continually striving to "make things happen" are stripped away. Our self-reliance is shattered and replaced with a total reliance on God alone. Every "idol" in our lives (often including our own ministry) is brought under the piercing searchlight of God. Our selfish motives and ambitions are shown for what they are. This process may take years. Finally we emerge broken, chastened and purified. The process has matured and cleansed us in so many ways. We are now ready for the fulfillment of all that God originally called us to do. But our heart-motives are vastly different from what they were before.

We see this pattern all the way through Scripture. Many lessons can be learned from what we read there. Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Moses, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, Paul the apostle - and even Jesus Himself - all had to go through this "wilderness" experience. Very often it lasted for years and years. Why then should we be surprised if it happens to us?

Probably the best-known instance of a 'wilderness experience' in the Old Testament is the story of Moses and the children of Israel. Moses had been raised and trained all his life in the palaces of Egypt. But when he came face-to-face with his heritage as an Israelite, he rose up "in his own strength" and killed an Egyptian slave-driver. He was then forced to flee into the desert, where he was to spend 40 YEARS as a simple shepherd in the wilderness. What an enormous length of time! Imagine if every Christian leader had to spend that long in the wilderness before God would allow them to lead His people! It is almost impossible to imagine the depths of despair and "death" to all his dreams and hopes that Moses went through during this time. In fact, after 40 years it is hard to imagine anyone being "deader" to the usual ambitions and temptations of leadership than Moses would have been. And what PATIENCE these years of waiting must have produced in him!

We see here the lengths that God will go to in the "preparation" of a leader "after His own heart." (-Though 40 years is unusually
long). The isolation, the chafing, the crying out to God for deliverance - all play their part. Such an experience is almost irreplaceable. That is why God uses it so often. The hearts of driven men are so similar in so many ways, that God's "cure" becomes similar also! He will even shut us up in a kind-of 'prison' for a time so we cannot escape the process. It is that important. He does not want 'self'-oriented leaders shepherding his precious sheep.

After his 40 years of preparation, Moses returned to Egypt at God's command to lead His people out of bondage. This was the beginning of the entire nation of Israel's wilderness experience. For when they left Egypt the only way to their "Promised Land" was through the desert. Some commentators say that in a straight line, their journey could have taken just a few weeks or less. But because of their disobedience and fear, the vast majority of those who left Egypt were destined to die in the desert, never reaching the Promised Land. In fact, their wilderness journey ended up taking 40 years!

Now we need to take special note of this fact:- Not everyone who entered the wilderness survived it. In fact, multitudes perished there. The wilderness tried them and found them wanting. They went to the place of testing and failed the test. This is a pretty crucial fact to realize in our day also. Just because we are "called out" and enter a wilderness time, does not mean that we will embrace the dealings of God and respond appropriately. It is entirely possible to lose everything out there. These people lost out completely. Only their children came through to inherit the promises of God.

How clearly we see this pattern over and over again - in both the Old Testament and the New:- That many whom God wants to one day use are sent into a place of aloneness and brokenness before being brought into their true destiny. We have not even mentioned heroes of God such as Noah, Jacob, Job and others who all had similar experiences. Part of this process lies in the "waiting" that takes place. Also, the fact that all the supporting 'props' are taken away. The "waiting" alone can be torture.

The wilderness also deals with any fear of man or 'systemized' way of looking at things. God often uses it to bring a whole fresh perspective, which is very important for leaders who are going to be representing a "new" approach or facing opposition because of the confrontational words that they are bringing. The lonely desert years give them backbone to stand up to the crowd or the powers-that-be, and declare God's truth without compromise. They now truly fear God rather than man. And they think differently from others. The wilderness is vital for anyone who is wanting to bring fresh manna to God's people.

Are you someone who has been going through such a "desert" experience, my friend? Be encouraged! Look up, for your deliverance draws nigh. God only ever sends His children through such experiences when there is a great purpose to it. Don't give up. Don't be cast down. On the other side lies a 'land of promise' if only you can hang on to Jesus. Be active, be praying, be prepared. Don't become "passive" and let the desert swallow you whole. Use this time to draw closer and closer to Jesus. Dig down and plant your feet firmly on the Rock. Humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up in due time - if only you can cling to Him.
Thank you for posting this, brother! It's very encouraging to me right now since I've been in the wilderness for awhile now.

Andrew

The wilderness also deals with any fear of man or 'systemized' way of looking at things. God often uses it to bring a whole fresh perspective, which is very important for leaders who are going to be representing a "new" approach or facing opposition because of the confrontational words that they are bringing. The lonely desert years give them backbone to stand up to the crowd or the powers-that-be, and declare God's truth without compromise. They now truly fear God rather than man. And they think differently from others. The wilderness is vital for anyone who is wanting to bring fresh manna to God's people.

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Amen. God is raising up new leaders who serve the Lord Jesus Christ and not men and mammon. Oh may they be gentle, christ-like and full of love.

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Heb 13:6

Thanks for posting this.

"The wilderness also deals with any fear of man or 'systemized' way of looking at things. God often uses it to bring a whole fresh perspective, which is very important for leaders who are going to be representing a "new" approach or facing opposition because of the confrontational words that they are bringing. The lonely desert years give them backbone to stand up to the crowd or the powers-that-be, and declare God's truth without compromise. They now truly fear God rather than man. And they think differently from others. The wilderness is vital for anyone who is wanting to bring fresh manna to God's people."

This was a refreshingly surprising comment. I would never have expected that from the opening exploratory thoughts. Are you like...spying on my phone conversations and listening in on my prayers or something Andrew?

What an encouraging reminder. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thanks for this article. I have thought about this subject on and off for a long time. It seems that God uses the wilderness to kill off our old nature and make us useable for his purposes. This appears totally opposite to the way Paul helped church leaders under his ministry in the epistles. The end product may however be different? The list of leaders that spent time in the wilderness is interesting, most leaders spent time there and then came out of the wilderness to serve but Elijah and John The Baptist stayed in the wilderness and everyone came out to them. The people got ministered to in the wilderness. The people had to leave all the comforts and bad influences of civilization and humble themselves in the wilderness if they wanted to be ministered to. The church will follow pattern again and go out to the wilderness to hear God's leaders and to experience his power, it will be basic almost rough and ready but it will be genuine.
Thank you brother for posting it.

In Gen 15:19 God said to Abraham (Abram then) - "God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years."

Exo 12:40 says "Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years"

That shows a difference of 30 years. What that may indicate is it took 30 years more then what God had planned to break Moses. We can hinder God in His work of breaking us. But He is so merciful and patient with us. But that's a warning for us.

Thank You,
SJB