The Wilderness

Connect Group Guide - 4.12.26

Opening Prayer

Ice Breaker

Share a time when you felt "stuck" in a season of life. How long did it last, and what helped you move forward?

Key Scriptures

- **Isaiah 43:19** - "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."
- **Malachi 4:2** - "But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves."

Message Recap

This message is a reminder that the wilderness season is not punishment but preparation. God uses these dry places to expose what we truly depend on and to refine our character for what's ahead. Like the Israelites, our response and obedience determine how long we remain there, but God's goal is not to harm us—it's to shape us. He is more concerned with who we are becoming than what we receive. The way out is through a deep reverence for Him that keeps us close to His presence. And the promise is clear: the wilderness will not last forever—God is preparing us to move from survival into freedom and into everything He has next.

Key Takeaways

- **The wilderness is temporary** - No season lasts forever; God is always moving us toward something.
- **Obedience determines duration** - How we respond in the wilderness determines how long we stay there.
- **Healing precedes prosperity** - God must make us whole before He can bring us into fullness.

- **Reverence is the key** - Those who fear God's name are the ones who experience breakthrough.
- **Prosperity has purpose** - God blesses us to build His kingdom, not just our comfort.
- **Stay ready to move** - Don't get so comfortable in your current season that you miss what's next.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Wilderness

1. The message mentioned that wilderness seasons can be for either correction or preparation. Which type of wilderness do you think you might be in currently? How can you tell the difference?

2. The Israelites turned an 11-15 day journey into 40 years of wandering. What attitudes or behaviors cause us to stay in the wilderness longer than necessary?

3. Read Malachi 4:1-2. What is the contrast between verse 1 and verse 2? What makes the difference between these two outcomes?

The Refining Process

4. The message stated: "God is more interested in who we're becoming than what He can give us." How does this perspective change the way you view your current struggles?

5. What are some "false things" that the wilderness might be burning away in your life right now? (pride, self-reliance, wrong priorities, etc.)

Fear of the Lord

6. How would you define "fear of the Lord" based on this sermon? How is it different from being afraid God will punish you?

7. Pastor Mike said fearing the loss of God's presence should be our greatest fear. On a scale of 1-10, how much does the thought of losing intimacy with God motivate your daily decisions?

Healing and Alignment

8. The illustration about Miranda's back showed that alignment can't happen until healing occurs first. What areas of your life might need healing before God can bring proper alignment?

9. "Kingdom prosperity is when every area of your life comes in alignment with God's will and purpose." Which area of your life feels most out of alignment right now: relationships, finances, career, spiritual life, health, or something else?

Purpose of Prosperity

10. The message emphasized that "prosperity in the kingdom is never about personal comfort." How does this challenge common Christian teaching about blessing? Do you agree or disagree?

11. God blessed Abraham so he could be a blessing to others. How can we maintain this "kingdom mindset" when we receive blessings from God?

Big Thinking

12. Pastor Mike shared about expecting a million-dollar check at the post office instead of fearing bills. What would "big thinking" look like in your personal situation?

13. What "small thinking" patterns do you need to break free from? What would change if you truly believed God wants to do something unprecedented in your life?

Moving Forward

14. "You cannot inherit tomorrow while clinging to yesterday." What from yesterday (past hurts, failures, disappointments, or even past successes) might you be clinging to that's preventing you from moving forward?

15. The sermon ended with the idea of getting your "forwarding address ready." What practical steps can you take this week to prepare for what God wants to do next in your life?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one action step to implement this week:

2. **Identify your wilderness** - Journal about what wilderness season you're in and ask God to show you what He's trying to teach or heal.
3. **Practice big thinking** - Write down one "God-sized dream" that would require faith and God's intervention to accomplish.
4. **Audit your alignment** - Evaluate each area of your life (spiritual, relational, financial, physical, vocational) and identify where you're out of alignment with God's will.
5. **Release yesterday** - Identify one thing from your past you're clinging to and take a concrete step to release it (forgiveness, letting go of bitterness, moving past a failure, etc.).
6. **Increase kingdom giving** - Look for one way this week to be a blessing to someone else or to invest in kingdom work.
7. **Cultivate reverence** - Set aside 15 minutes daily this week just to sit in God's presence, focusing on who He is rather than what you need.

Prayer Requests & Closing

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to different perspectives on Israel; focus on biblical teaching rather than politics
- Encourage participation from everyone, but don't force anyone to share
- If someone wants to give their life to Christ during discussion, be prepared to pray with them
- Keep the discussion focused on personal application, not just theological debate
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable about Israel or Jewish culture to a future meeting