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# DESERT & WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

Revd Cara Lovell

# Session Outline

- Introducing Wilderness
- Wilderness in Scripture
- Wilderness & Jesus
- The Desert Tradition
- Living through the Wilderness today

# Introducing Wilderness

What words or images come to mind when you think about the wilderness or desert?

What significance or meaning do we give to the wilderness / desert?

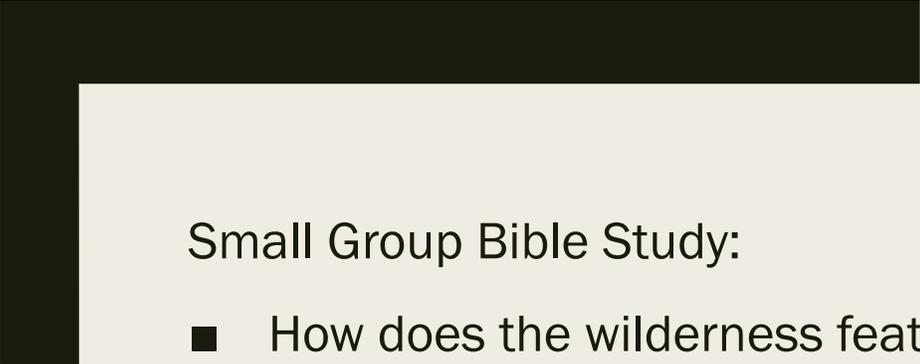


# Introducing Wilderness

“We must never forget as we ourselves find ourselves breaking loose from an evil Egypt, trying to move through the wilderness toward the promised land of cultural integration...

There is no crown without a cross. I wish we could get to Easter without going to Good Friday, but history tells us that we got to go by Good Friday before we can get to Easter. That’s the long story of freedom isn’t it? Before you get to Canaan you’ve got a Red Sea to confront. You have a hardened heart of a pharaoh to confront. You have the prodigious hilltops of evil in the wilderness to confront.”

Martin Luther King, 1957



Small Group Bible Study:

- How does the wilderness feature in this passage?
- What is the nature of the wilderness?
- Is the wilderness seen as positive or negative?
- What is God doing in this wilderness?

Genesis 21:1-21 / Exodus 16:1-15 / Hosea 2:14-23 / 1 Corinthians 10:1-13



# Wilderness in Scripture



# Wilderness & Jesus

## Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' "

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' "

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."' "

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.





# Wilderness & Jesus

- A place of absence
- A place of temptation and challenge
- A place of dependence on God
- A place of transformation
- A place of confirmation
- A place of encounter
- A place of learning



# DESERT TRADITION

# Desert Tradition

“There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the towns. You can be solitary in your mind even when you live in the middle of a crowd. And you can be a solitary and still live in the middle of the crowd of your own thoughts.”

Amma Syncletica

# Desert Tradition

“Whoever hammers a lump of iron, first decides what they are going to make of it, a scythe, a sword, or an axe. Even so we ought to make up our minds on what kind of virtue we want to forge or we labour in vain.”

Abba Anthony

# Desert Tradition

“The body prospers in the measure in which the soul is weakened, and the soul prospers in the measure in which the body is weakened.”

Abba Daniel

# Desert Tradition

Some old men came to see Abba Poemen and said to him, "We see some of the brothers falling asleep during divine worship. Should we wake them up?" He said, "As for me, when I see a brother who is falling asleep during the Office, I lay his head on my knees and let him rest."

# Desert Tradition

“He who wishes to live in solitude in the desert is delivered from three conflicts: hearing, speech, and sight; there is only one conflict for him and that is fornication.”

Abba Anthony



# DESERT TRADITION

How do you respond to this movement and the impulse to go out into the Desert?



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