

Hi KC Parents,

wil·der·ness

(wĭl'der-nĭs)*n.*

1. An unsettled, uncultivated region, especially:

a. A large tract of land that has not been significantly affected by human activities.

c. A barren or desolate area; a wasteland.

2. Something characterized by bewildering vastness, perilousness, or unchecked profusion

3. A state of neglect, powerlessness, or disfavor

I like to take hikes and enjoy the beauty of the wilderness, but I'm not what you'd call a "happy" camper! No siree! I'll gladly stay at the nearest Hilton to the campground you've reserved, and join everyone at the campsite after I've had my shower and eaten my breakfast (a breakfast which does not smell like smoke).

However, I think I can confidently and truthfully say that 2020 has been a "camping in the wilderness experience" for all of us. I can tick off every finger on 2 hands the bazaar and unexpected things that have come up amongst us and our family members during this year. Then add the pandemic, with national and global issues on top of that. These circumstances can lead us to doubt God's love, and bring on outright despair if we're not careful. I think we're in a bonafide wilderness, folks. And we've been camping here for months.

Remember: the Bible is our wilderness manual. God is very familiar with the wilderness, even though we aren't. In Exodus, He led the children of Israel into the wilderness to protect them. (very interesting- might God be protecting us in this season, from things we just don't see or understand?) In Isaiah 40:3, he says that his thunderous voice is crying out to those in the wilderness. He tells them to prepare the way and make a highway straight through the desert for our God. This gives me the idea that God opens a path to himself for those who are in the wilderness. On this path, it's his thunderous voice that's leading us... ever play the game "Marco Polo"? God's loud voice is guiding us to his heart. His voice is calling us, but we must recognize it and be open to listening.

It can be disturbing to think that God himself would lead us into the wilderness, but If I have to be in a wilderness, a God-appointed one is my first choice! While the wilderness is difficult, it's often the most fertile ground for our spirituality, character, and connection with God to grow. Looking back on your own life, I'm guessing the times you've grown the most personally may have also been the times you were facing your biggest struggles. It's through the wilderness that we recognize our dependence and desperate need for God.

In Isaiah, we are reminded that God is with us during the most difficult of times.

I am doing something brand new, *something unheard of*.

Even now it sprouts and grows and matures.

Don't you perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness

and open up flowing streams in the desert.

Wild beasts, jackals, and owls will glorify me.

For I supply streams of water in the desert

and rivers in the wilderness

to satisfy the thirst of my people, my chosen ones,

so that you, whom I have shaped and formed for myself,

will proclaim my praise. Is. 43:19-21

When we allow God to lead us through the wilderness, and surrender to his provision, the result is praise.

Lord fill us with a confident hope that you are in control of everything that's going on in our lives. Let this time of wilderness shape us to be the people you want us to be. Fill us with faith and trust in you so we can proclaim your praise, nonstop—for you are so worthy!

Blessings,

Viv Stone