

# With Jesus Into the Wilderness

Exodus 19.1-8

Mark 1.1-20

God knew that after 400 years of living in Egypt, Egypt was deep in the hearts of His people. Surrounded by nations whose lifestyles, customs, and activities were oriented towards false gods, they were more like and more in relationship with the world around them.

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. (Mark 1.12-13)

As followers of Jesus we emulate what he did, including following him into the wilderness. It is there that we experience clarity and are reoriented as God's set-apart people.

- ▶ “wilderness” – a barren place; where we are not supporting our lives with all of the usual things, but are in a place where our focus is more completely on Jesus
- ▶ “fasting” – eliminating and depriving ourselves of things that we sensually enjoy so that we are more attentive to spiritual matters.

- ▶ “pray” – time spent not in intercession but in relationship—in solitude and contemplation; “Be still and know that I am God.” “Let us fix our attention on Jesus.”
- ▶ “Scripture” – increasing our times spent in the Scripture. Our likeness to Jesus and our effectiveness for Jesus is directly related to consuming and internalizing the Word of God.

- ▶ “repentance” – examining our lives , schedules, and indulgences; asking: What is in my life that does not lead me straight towards Jesus?

A true follower of Jesus, a true *apprentice* of Jesus, wants to be with Jesus — but that always requires leaving something else behind.

A true follower of Jesus lives with the intention of progressing in spiritual transformation—

“to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3.10-11)

— arriving at the next point in life more like Jesus, in a deeper relationship with him, more victorious over sin, self, and the world, and having greater spiritual influence in the lives of those who don't know Jesus.

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3.12-14)

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.” (Philippians 3.20-21)