

Walking through the wilderness well

In a recent conversation with someone I was talking to they told me they had been through a **good** wilderness and learned a valuable lesson.

When they said that it just sounded great, "a good wilderness". Let's face it we generally refer to a wilderness time as a bad experience, a lonely and horrible time in our lives. One we would prefer to forget.

In general I think the way we enter a wilderness, travel through it and respond to it will determine how we come out the other side.

Some people don't come out the other side—they camp there, always in the position of going through it. Then there are those that come through it but not well. They're full of bitterness, anger, blame and regret.

A Wilderness:

is a desolate place, a spiritually dry place, a place of trial and temptation, a soul searching place, a place of solitude and crossroads, decision making or a place of suffering.

Let's face it we've all been there and will go there again from time to time before we die.

I think it is God's training school, His developing course where he teaches us so much:

- ◆ How to die to ourselves and how to live for Him
- ◆ How to overcome
- ◆ How to trust in God
- ◆ How to spiritually fight
- ◆ How to rest
- ◆ How to discipline the flesh

Moses was in the wilderness for 40 years. Some say it was because 39 years wasn't enough time to teach him that he wasn't going to redeem Israel in his own strength. Israel was also there for 40 years, wandering until they learned to obey and trust God.

David was there a number of times because of the jealousy of others, the sin of self, the threat of the enemy, and the pride of his own life.

There are a number of reasons we can end up in the wilderness.

Job seemed to be there because of Satan's attack on his life. All of his friends seemed to be trying to work out why he was going through what

he was going through and his wife just said "curse God and die." But Job just shaved his head and worshipped God.

Joseph ended up in a pit and a prison wilderness because of the jealousy of his brothers and the false accusations of Potiphar's wife.

Elijah at Beersheba ended up in the wilderness (1 Kings 19:4) under a broom tree praying that he might die. Here he was calling down fire on a Sunday and under the broom tree on Monday.

Paul speaks of a wilderness time in Galatians 1 and 2 where he went into obscurity in the desert place and was revealed the Christ.

Jesus went into the wilderness: "**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.**" Luke 4:1-2.

So whether it is through disobedience, driven by others or just the circumstance of life or something you are simply going through, we can all end up in the wilderness from time to time.

The underlying factor we need to consider when entering the wilderness is what will empower our exit and journey through this time.

Could God have me here and what does he want to develop in me?

Jesus wasn't being punished in fact he just finished a very high point in his life—His baptism where God said: *This is my son with whom I am well pleased.* The Holy Spirit descended upon Him and the heavens opened above Him.

Then he was led into the wilderness.

When we or others are in the wilderness we automatically think "what have I done wrong?"

We all have our own theology of why crap happens—it is called crapology. Generally if you are of "catholic" origin you will feel you have deserved this crap. Those who are of "Pentecostal" origin feel they can cast out the crap or overcome it. The "word of faith" folks are similar to the "Buddhists" and feel that this crap is not really happening. Then there are the "extreme Islam" like some believers who will cause you crap. Judaism is similar to so many low self esteem Christians and ask "Why does all the crap happen to us?"

But Jesus was led into the wilderness so it is like crap happens and God allows it but will lead us through it.

So what helped Jesus travel through the wilderness well?

1. He went in full of the Holy Spirit.

We need the Holy Spirit because when you are going through it you will need more than your own:

- ◆ Thinking and council
- ◆ Strength and
- ◆ Ability

You need God's spirit because it is not by might or your own will power but by God's spirit says the Lord. Zechariah 4:6. Don't be scared of God infilling you with the Holy Spirit. Our God is a supernatural God who will do supernatural things. We need everything God has got for us especially when we are walking into a wilderness.

One of my favourite scriptures that speaks of God's strengthening us is in Isaiah 40:28-31 "**Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.**"



[Kev has just returned from a 40km hike in the wilderness of Tasmania, the Freycinet Peninsular hiking with Dave Morse, pastor of Energizer Church and Dan who is a chaplain at a local high school and running a youth outreach close by.]

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So be filled with the Holy Spirit and don't let it remain a one off experience but be continually filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18.

Let the rivers of living water flow from your belly for they will not only be an oasis to you in the wilderness but to others.

"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." John 7:37

2. Make sure Gods word is in your heart.

Not the one in your hand or on your self but in your heart, coming out of your mouth. That is when the word becomes alive and active, sharper than a double edged sword. It was like God was saying to Jesus the sword of the spirit will put the enemy to flight. It is not just a matter of quoting scripture like a magic formula but to know and believe it, then speak it over the situation. This is how you got saved.

"But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Romans 10:8-10

The picture of Jesus in the book of revelation sees Him with a double edged sword coming out of His mouth, not in his hand or by his side. (Revelations 19:15). This is how He defeated the devil in the wilderness. When the devil came to tempt Him first with His identity and the craving of his flesh he said: **"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."** Luke 4:4.

Then the devil came to test who He served and worshipped and the desire of His eyes and the short cut to power. He said: **"It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only."** Luke 4:8

Then lastly the devil came to tempt Him with His identity of the pride of life but He said: **"It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test."** Luke 4:12

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

Our divine weapon is God's word in our heart coming out of our mouth.

3. Go in knowing.

Jesus was led into the wilderness. There is

always a purpose in God. Too many believers when they are in the wilderness play the blame game or the shame game. Instead of looking inward (naval gazing) or outward (blaming), look upward and hear from God because there is always a voice crying out in the wilderness from God who has a positive purpose for why you are in there. Just before Jesus entered the wilderness he heard a voice in the wilderness at his baptism: ***"As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation.'"*** Luke 3:4-6

Prepare yourself for God's salvation to flow through you. Don't let anything block it, not the valley of deficiency nor the mountain of pride nor any crooked or rough way that might be in us, that could hinder the flow of God's salvation to mankind.

Jesus went in knowing that God was going to do a work on Him in the wilderness. You might be saying surely Jesus didn't need that. But in Hebrews 5:8-9 it says that He learned obedience from the things he suffered and once made perfect He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

So we must see wilderness time as:

- ◆ Training times
- ◆ Defining moments
- ◆ Tempering and strengthening times
- ◆ Times where God is doing great things in us so His life can flow through us.

James 1:2-4 says it so well: ***"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."***

The key words in these verses is *"because you know"*. God is doing something deep, something rich, something powerful, something that is going to see results in the future.

It says that Jesus returned from the wilderness empowered by the spirit. (Luke 4:14) Not just full of the spirit but empowered by the spirit. That is why he stood up in church with confidence and said what he said in Luke 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Love
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LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY MANUAL

KEVIN WILCOCK

This is simply a bunch of messages compiled by myself that will help leaders and those who minister in some form to serve and lead more effectively. It is also an introduction to some of our basic philosophy of how and why we do church the way we do.

They say if you take from one person, it's plagiarism. But if you take from ten, it's creativity.

This manual is pure creativity. It has been borrowed from everyone I have had the privilege of sitting under, whether by conference, tape, book or on a personal basis. Thank you.

I have discovered there are three ways to get a sermon

*Hatch it
Catch it, or
Snatch it.*

These messages were hatched, 'caught', snatched, rematched and dispatched to you.

I hope you enjoy them.

Kevin

Order a hard copy of Kevin's manual by phoning our office on Ph 4961 0211 for \$35.00 including postage.

Or receive a pdf copy of the manual via email free of charge at info@lifechurch.org.au

KEV'S TRAVEL

23rd - 24th Jan Shellharbour

28th Feb - 1st Mar Gosford

11th - 12th March Melbourne



Kevin trying out his mate's new ferari (scuderia 430)

[I don't think he actually got to leave the carpark!]



GlobeReach some of the works we support overseas or are planning to support in the future

JORDAN – Affef Hasalah

Christian Persecutions

Prior to summarizing a few of the important events Arabs for the Arabs (AFTA) has participated in over the past two months, as well as those events which we are preparing for in the months ahead, we feel it is necessary to reflect upon and identify with, some of the Christians of whom we are aware that currently suffer for the sake of spreading God's liberal gift to the unreached or for choosing to identify with Christ.

As many of you are aware, AFTA operates exclusively in Muslim majority communities and countries, most of which enforce Islamic Law (Shari'a) to varying degrees, either through traditional practices or government statutes. For the Arab and Arab Christian, Shari'a Law as a whole, when implemented in a society is the foundation upon which Muslims are allowed to oppress, discriminate against, intimidate and ultimately act aggressively towards non Muslims. Indeed contemporary Muslims who desire and/or seek ways to implement Shari'a Law to its fullest extent most likely also participate in, or strongly sympathise with, "terrorist" activities.

It is because of Shari'a law that sister "A", a MBB remains in hiding with her daughter out of fear that her abusive husband (who authorities recognize as such) will claim the right to take their daughter and raise her as a Muslim. It is

because of Shari'a law that a former "Christian", who converted to Islam while married was able to successfully petition the courts to take her three children from her first marriage in order to raise them as Muslims. And it is because of Shari'a Law that evangelisation among Muslims is prohibited and the act of encouraging MBB's to gather together as a church remains difficult in all Arab countries. In spite of these obstacles, we know that God's power is greater than that of Shari'a Law. Nonetheless we should never stop praying for God's comfort upon individuals such as those mentioned above as well as for those who actively work, toward thwarting the influence of Shari'a Law across the Arab world for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Highlights

Mobilisation Team

Throughout the month of November, AFTA dedicated much of its energy to preparing its new mobilisation team for service. The team consists of three couples who will travel to Jordan's various churches in order to encourage them to adopt a more missions oriented purpose for life. We are encouraged by the progress of our team and would like to see them begin their new ministry at the start of the new year.

Training Conference

On 11th January, AFTA will host a missionary training conference in Egypt for 10 Arab couples. The purpose of the conference is two fold.

Firstly AFTA representatives seek to determine the receptiveness of the group to spreading the gospel in areas of Egypt that have no Christian presence. Secondly for those couples who are prepared to reach out, the conference will serve as a mechanism to equip the audience with the leadership skills necessary for planting house churches, particularly in the area adjacent to Alexandria. Two of the couples have already been groomed by AFTA for the task of resettling in a non Christian neighbourhood and therefore the conference will be an important time of Christian fellowship for them. Please pray that all who attend the conference will be united in spirit and will reach a consensus regarding the vitality of church planting among the lost.

To give into AFTA electronically:

Account Name:

Waleed Madanat, Ibrahim Zabaneh, Shadi Baka'an

Bank:

**Standard and Chartered Grindlays
First Circle, Jabal Amman**

Amman

JORDAN

Account No.

01-18-2219174-01 (US\$ account)

Swift code scbljoax

CAMBODIA – Linda Chisholm

Prison Fellowship's desire is to serve prisoners by using what are becoming our 'signature' services—reintegration, education, child and family, and humanitarian relief.

During this year, 3,500 prisoners accessed education programs, 350 released prisoners were supported in their reintegration and hundreds of men, women and youth provided with basic needs provisions and health care.

Blue Gate House (BGH) provides services to help prisoners rehabilitate and reintegrate back into society by offering counseling, mediation, pre-release group teaching and counseling, relief aid, family assistance, fares home, medical services to those inside and outside of prison, a training and apprenticeship program and small loans for income generation.

Testimonial No.1

S....N...., her nick name is Mom lives in a house rented in Chim Chao with her mother 70 years old and a widowed daughter with 2 children and 2 sons one of them is married with 1 baby and the other one is addicted to drugs

and stays with a friend. Mom was arrested for selling drugs and stayed in prison for 1 year. All of them have no real job. She was released from prison on 22 August 2009 and come to BGH to meet us and we provided a fare home and starter pack. 6 days later we went to visit her. She had a job of selling fruit for another person and she wanted to sell it by herself but she has no money, it would cost around \$50 to start. After a discussion we decided to help her with family assistant for 3 months by giving rice 30kg per month, house rent of \$15 per month and other food so she can save money from her work to start the business. 2 months later she had enough money to sell fruit on her own and now she is trying to find another place for her daughter too. Now they are very happy.

Testimonial No.2

N....P.... Live in Prey Veng province with his old mother, he was released on 9 August 2009. He stay in prison for 9 years at CC3 because of robbery. When he was released he went home first and then come to BGH to ask for help for chicken and pig raising and to help him find

church to go to. We went to assess the situation, we saw that he has an old mother and a sister but they are very poor, just finding food, day to day. We decided to help him by buying him 5 big chickens and palm leaves for a chicken house and also the neighbours gave him some chicks too. Now he goes to sell his labour in the rice field and his mother says at home feeding the chickens. Then he had money to buy a bicycle to go to church. Now the small chicks are big enough and have started to lay eggs and some can be sold to make income. He also has a plan to buy pigs for raising.



Linda Chisholm

Email: Linda@pfcambodia.org



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www.ozreach.org.au

Church Planting Plan - Michael McGarrity

It's a new season in the life of the church in Australia; we're in a season of preparation, a time of refining. God is stripping away our religious approach and returning his church to relationship; God is stripping back the principles of management, returning his church to partnership in his mission. In Australia the church has a great opportunity. Aussies hate rules and religion, but love relationships—loyalty to your mates is vital—as a nation we're never far removed from the raw passion of the wild pioneers of our past. During the Innovate conference at Life Church God confirmed something I'd already sensed...it's time to connect with the new thing God's doing; time to make changes in the way we've established church here; it's time to innovate. Paul wrote to the church "there aren't many fathers willing to take the time and effort to help you grow up." God's looking for spiritual fathers to invest energy, experience and expertise into a new generation, a new breed who will go to the world with the message of Jesus and plant new churches like we've never seen before.

We're planning to help make that happen, to share experience and expertise, to equip this new breed of pioneers that God is raising up to plant new churches across our landscape. God is doing a new thing...get ready...it's coming!

Michael McGarrity

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Michael & Howard Hadley hanging in a café in Cronulla talking the future.

Howard is currently attending the Baptist church with his family in the shire and is the Chaplain and Manager of the Sydney F. C under 20's traveling with them around Australia while currently still managing his wardrobe company with his partner Steve in Sydney. Howard Hadley will share in next months edition on going missional in the sports arena.

I'm quite excited about Michael's initiative and I am excited about working alongside of him. He is basically looking at a number of things.

1. To intensify the discipleship input amongst those leaders that have a desire to be involved in missional church planting on whatever scale.
2. To kick off a conference in 2010 that will be open to everyone but we will be looking for 10 to 20 people that are wanting to take the training further.
3. Among these 10 to 20 people there will be four weekends over that next year where they will visit churches that have strengths in certain areas such as:

- ♦ Pastoral Care, relational and small groups
- ♦ Missional & Incarnational Evangelism
- ♦ Leadership & discipleship
- ♦ Celebration, preaching, teaching and public meetings.

We will keep you posted throughout the year on the development.

Kevin

Mates in Ministry

When: 19th February 2010 10:00am to 12:00 noon

Venue: Airport McDonalds (the one outside) purchase your own lunch from the healthy menu of course.
9 Ross Smith Avenue, Mascott (sorry about the venue it is just accessible as Rod is flying in)

Speaker: Rod Irvine

Rod pastored and led the Figtree Allsaints Anglican church for just on 20 years seeing it grow from about 350 to 1300 people becoming South Coasts largest church. Rod is an astute leader with great insight and strategy. He is a great father and family man married to Helen for many, many years. He is also a good friend as we pastured together in the same city.

For Senior ministers and assistants and those in charge of organizations and missional ventures.

Organised by Ozreach. www.ozreach.org

Email the office to give me an idea on how many will be there.

info@lifechurch.org.au

Put a macca's sign in here.

A DAY IN THE LIFE @ 24HR EXPRESS

Will be on the 19th to 20th February 2010.

Playing at Soapbox will be Bodacious Cowboys a 14 piece band that pay tribute to Steely Dan. From lunch time Friday to lunchtime Saturday.

only 6 places available.

- ♦ Soapbox (Jazz Venue)
- ♦ Soul Café (Soup Kitchen)
- ♦ Alcoholics Anonymous

It's Missional
It's Emergent
It's Incarnational
It's 24 Hr Express

- ♦ Spend personal time with Kevin talking about missional church
- ♦ Stay for Sunday if you like but not essential.

Cost for Soapbox
\$45.00
Cost for 24 hr Express
\$35.00