

WordOne Bible Study

A Wilderness Experience

by Alan C. Estby

Text: Mark 1:9-15 (focusing on 12-15) for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, Lectionary Series B

OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Realize that the temptations that come from the world, Satan and our own sinful self are around us daily.
2. Be secure in knowing that Jesus, God's angels and the Holy Spirit are with us during temptations to protect and provide for our needs.
3. Realize there is forgiveness in Jesus for the times when temptations lead us into sin.

GROUP GUIDELINES

This Bible study has been developed for use in a small group of 6-8 persons. If your group is larger than this, divide into smaller groups. Choose as a leader the person who has the oldest pair of shoes (or the dirtiest feet if you are bare-footed). The leader's purpose is to keep the group moving through the Bible study. One of the leader's most important functions is to encourage the participation of all members. The leader may at times function as a timekeeper so that each individual is given the opportunity to share. Participants should always have the freedom to pass if they do not wish to share their experiences.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

1. To become better acquainted with other participants in the group, share information about yourself (name, school, family, shoe size, etc.) and share something important about you as a person. (10 minutes)
2. Share an event or activity from this past week that was:
 - a. interesting or exciting for you
 - b. boring for you, or
 - c. changed the way you thought about something/someone.
3. Look at temptations together (10 minutes).

Share from the following list those items which you have a strong liking for, occasional craving or absolute need. (Put a line through those that do not apply.) List any "big" ones that might be missing.

coffee	soda	popularity	pastries	vegetables
chocolate	an automobile	milk	sports car	potato chips
candy bars	money	boy/girlfriend	pocket change	sweet things
latest fashions	late nights			

Would any of your "likings" be considered possible temptations that would lead you away from God's love? Share among the group as time and willingness allow.

LOOKING AT GOD'S WORD

1. Read Mark 1:12-15 in the group.
 - a. Reflect on verse 12. Recall a "wilderness" experience in your own life when your days seemed barren and empty. (Leader may need to give a personal example.)
 - b. Consider the cause of your emptiness.
 - c. Was your emptiness from feelings of despair, disillusionment, hunger, thirst, restlessness, conflict, fear, disappointment, your need of comfort or need of direction?
 - d. Look at the second half of verse 13. It says the angels took care of Jesus. In what ways or through whom may God's angels have cared for you during your "wilderness" experience?

- e. As members of the group are able, share individual "wilderness" experiences and how God cared for you during those days.
2. Divide the following passages among the group members, either as individuals or in pairs as group numbers allow:
Matthew 6:13 James 1:13-15 1 Corinthians 10:13 Hebrews 4:15-16
3. Read Mark 1:14-15 in the group.

REINFORCING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED

Complete as many endings to the sentence, "After searching God's Word I realize that I..." as you can in three minutes. Share sentence completions.

CLOSING

Close with prayer using one of the previous sentence completions from each group member as a prayer petition, such as, "I realize that I need to trust God more. Lord help me to trust you more." Group leaders should begin. Allow for other petitions and expressions of faith after each member has included his/her prayer petition. (Be prepared for periods of silence.) Close this prayer session with the Lord's Prayer.

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