

Wilderness

LENT – Part 3

March 8, 2026

Six Wilderness Stories:

- After Adam and Eve's sin, they were cast out of the garden and into the wilderness. (Genesis 3:17-24)
- After Hagar fled from Sarai because Sarai was mistreating her, Hagar escaped into the wilderness. (Genesis 16:6-10)
- After Moses murdered an Egyptian, he fled into the wilderness. (Exodus 2:11-15)
- After the Israelites were freed from slavery, they wandered the wilderness for 40 years. (Numbers 32:11-13)
- When David was running from Saul, he hid in the wilderness. (1 Samuel 23:14)
- Before he started his ministry, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days to be tested. (Matthew 4:1-11)

There is No Formula to the Wilderness

¹¹ One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹² Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian.

Exodus 2:11-12, 15

¹¹ 'Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — ¹² not one except Caleb son of

Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the Lord wholeheartedly.’¹³ The Lord’s anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.

Exodus 32:11-13

⁶ *“Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.*

⁷ *The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.* ⁸ *And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”*

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

⁹ *Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.”*

¹⁰ *The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”*

Genesis 16:6-10

David stayed in the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.

1 Samuel 23:14

The Wilderness is a Place of Testing

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil.

Matthew 4:1

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

Psalms 139:23

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.

2 Corinthians 13:5

**You Have a Choice About How You Will
Respond to the Wilderness**

Small Group Discussion Questions for the Week of March 8, 2026.

Opening

Where is your favorite place to go in nature? What memories do you have there?

Digging Deeper into the Scriptures

Read Genesis 3:17-24; Genesis 16:6-10; Exodus 2:11-15; Numbers 32:11-13; 1 Samuel 23:14; Matthew 4:1-11

1. Compare and contrast these passages about the wilderness. How are the ways the wilderness is brought about different? Is the wilderness seen as a bad thing all the time? Are there any universal qualities about the wilderness? Etc.

Applying the Scriptures

1. The wilderness (the chaotic and/or challenging times in our lives) often reveals the state of our heart. Is there a specific emotion or pattern of behavior that tends to come up when you encounter difficult times in life?
2. What does it look like to give these emotions or patterns of behavior to God?
3. How can you support one another, as a small group, when one of you is in the wilderness?