



Advent Devotions 2022: God With Us

“Watch for this—a virgin will get pregnant and bear a son; They will name him Emmanuel” (Hebrew for ‘God is with us’). Matthew 1:23 (MSG)

GOD IS WITH US IN THE WILDERNESS

The wilderness is a place of spiritual, mental, and emotional challenge. We often experience isolation, fatigue and self-doubt. We feel far from God, spiritually dry, and that our prayers are ineffectual. It can also be a place of increased spiritual awareness and depth.

God often uses the wilderness times to get our undivided attention so He can speak to us. God spoke to Abraham while he was in the wilderness. God spoke to the Israelites at Mount Sinai while they were in the wilderness. God met a ready-to-give-up Elijah in the wilderness.

“A voice is wailing, ‘In the wilderness, get it ready! Prepare the way; make it a straight shot. The Eternal would have it so. Straighten the way in the wandering desert to make the crooked road wide and straight for our God.” Isaiah 40:3

In our Western cultures, we are very used to our comforts. Even as followers of Jesus, we try to avoid the wilderness. We don’t like when life is hard, and barren, and dry. The wilderness makes us feel isolated, so we do what we can to escape it. But what if we asked God when is the right time to move on? Or is He trying to tell us something? (<https://firmisrael.org/learn/wilderness-meaning-bible-importance-desert-seasons/>)

Marlena Graves (M.Div., Northeastern Seminary) an author and adjunct professor at Winebrenner Theological Seminary states in her book *A Beautiful Disaster* that “The wilderness has a way of curing our illusions about ourselves and teaching us to depend more and more on God. When we first enter, we’re convinced we’ve entered the bowels of hell. But on our pilgrimage, we discover the (wilderness) drips with the divine. We discover that desert land is fertile ground for spiritual activity, transformation, and renewal” (*A Beautiful Disaster*. Baker Publishing Group, 2014, p.7).

Dear Lord, in my wilderness place, let me hear what You are saying to me. Let my time in the wilderness be fertile ground for spiritual transformation and renewal. Remind me that You are still Emmanuel, ‘God with us’ even in the wilderness. In Jesus name, Amen.