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WITH MERRIK FAULKNER

Winning in the Wilderness Session 1: Submitting to the Wilderness

Key Scriptures

Matthew 4:1–3

Opening Remarks:

Have you ever driven through a storm? Picture a storm with semi-trucks parked on the shoulder and drivers moving slowly with hazard lights flashing. In those "white knuckle" situations, it can be hard to see anything, much less the sunlight at the end of the clouds. In this session, we will look Jesus' experience in an uncomfortable situation: the wilderness.

Watch Session 1 Video

Questions:

- 1. What does the wilderness look like in your life?
- 2. Why is it so hard to follow God into the wilderness, even though we know He is with us?
- 3. What are some practical ways to submit to the wilderness?

Closing Remarks:

No one likes it, but we all go through seasons of wilderness. Israel was delivered from Egypt, only to be led directly into their wilderness. The biblical wilderness denotes a desert place. Following God into the places He calls us to go is an exercise of trust. So when God leads us into a place that is uncomfortable, submit to the wilderness, knowing He will use it for a purpose.

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Winning in the Wilderness Session 2: Starving Your Flesh

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 4:3-11

Opening Remarks:

Scripture celebrates the wonder of being made in the image of God. He made our physical bodies, and they are good. That Greek word for body is soma, but it was rendered in English as "flesh." Scripture also talks a lot about the struggles of our "flesh" but in the sense of our carnal human nature. The Greek word for that selfish part of us is sarx, but it was rendered as "flesh" too and requires us to look at the context of a Bible passage to understand if it's referring to our physical body or our selfish human nature. In this session, while we look at the hunger of Jesus' physical body during His forty days in the wilderness, we also springboard into a conversation about the desires of our selfish human nature. We recognize the importance of keeping our selfish nature (flesh: sarx) in check so we can rightly value the eternal things of the spiritual realm.

Watch the Session 2 Video

Discussion Questions:

- 1. What are some temporal things that cause you to lose sight of the eternal?
- 2. What do you think it means that character can crush a person's calling? How do we protect against that?
- 3. We understand the value of "starving" or keeping in check our selfish human nature. What are some practical ways to do so?

Closing Remarks:

Scripture reminds us of the importance of prioritizing spiritual values over our selfish human nature and what it wants. The wilderness is often a time when we can take a hard and honest look at ourselves and refocus to prioritize the things of God.

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Winning in the Wilderness Session 3: Staying in God's Plan

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 4:5–11

Opening Remarks:

Have you ever done something you wish you hadn't? Better yet, have you ever made great plans only for things to go completely different than you had hoped? Usually when we take on God's job of leading our lives, it ends up a mess. It is best to stay in God's plan.

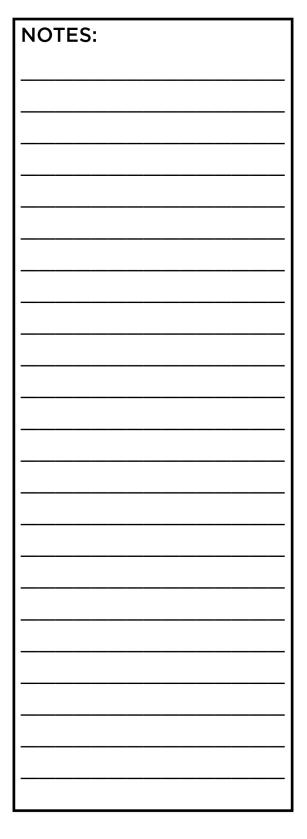
Watch the Session 3 Video

Discussion Questions:

- 1. How has God's plan challenged you?
- 2. Have you ever done something you thought was God's idea, but it was really your own? What did you learn from that?
- 3. What are some safeguards we can put in our own lives to stay in God's plan?

Closing Remarks:

Satan will do anything to keep you from where God wants you to be. In the temptation we studied today, Satan removed Jesus from the wilderness that the Spirit led Him into. We must be careful to go and stay where the Holy Spirit leads or places us. Psalm 91:9–12 gives us the beautiful promise that if we stay in God's dwelling place, no evil will be able to hinder us. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is stay in the wilderness, but if that is where God has led you, stay until He brings you out.



Winning in the Wilderness Session 4: Serve God Alone

Key Scripture:

Matthew 4:8-11

Opening Remarks:

Sometimes we forget that every decision we make is a choice to serve something. Because of that, it can feel like we are losing our freedoms by submitting to God's plan. In this lesson we will discuss how serving God alone unlocks the most freedom we could ever achieve.

Watch the Session 4 Video

Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever been tempted to believe that there is freedom outside of living for God? How did you navigate through that?
- 2. What spiritual or life disciplines have you put in place that have led you to true freedom?
- 3. What Scriptures help anchor you in your commit to serve God alone?

Closing Remarks:

Satan offered Jesus earthly kingdoms in exchange for His worship. Jesus' example was to respond with Scripture (Deuteronomy 6:13). Satan offers a lesser promise to us of fleeting prestige in this world, but Jesus reminds us that what we worship is what we will serve. If we worship Christ alone, we get to serve a God who promises love, joy, and peace. We win in the wilderness by serving God alone!

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