

Israel's time in the wilderness is of great importance to Christians because of the way Christ fulfilled so many of themes and promises throughout the narrative. God's chosen people, the Israelites have been set free from their slavery but are now in the wilderness and in the process of learning what it means to be God's people before His plans come to completion. Does that sound a little familiar? For us, it's often representative of the fact that we were all born as slaves to sin but because of Jesus' great love and sacrifice we are free. We, too, are in our own wilderness as we have access to freedom but await the completion of God's promises and plans.

New to daily devotionals? Here are a few tips for this series:

- The Old Testament can sometimes feel distant and confusing. Remember that if we wish to truly understand the message of the New Testament, we must know the message of the Old Testament—this rings especially true for the Israelites' time in the wilderness! Take each part little by little and ask God, "How would you have me know you more deeply because of this Scripture?"
- You don't have to jump into these devotional questions right away. Try starting with prayer, sitting quietly with the Lord or journaling for a bit before starting.

Monday, February 18th

Read Exodus 32.

What do you find alarming about this passage? What is alarming about the action and word of Aaron, the people, God and Moses?

What perception drives the people of Israel to make an idol?

What is God's response? What specifically angers God about the Israelites' actions?

How would you define idolatry based on this passage? Using your definition, what areas of your life might be tempting idols?

Tuesday, February 19th

Read Hebrews 3:7-11

7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.' "

The author's intent here is to instruct the readers not to repeat the mistakes the Israelites made. How might the Holy Spirit be helpful in this?

To harden is to disobey the voice of God and act in accordance with your own desires. Where do you encounter the temptation to follow your own desires? Pause and ask God to bring clarity to your thoughts. Do any of these areas line up with the potential idols you named yesterday? Given the emphasis on "today," what actions might you need to take now?

How might God be inviting you into His rest? What might you need to change in your life in order to enter into that rest?

Wednesday, February 20th

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Why do you think it matters that Jesus, as fully human, can empathize with your humanity? Why do you think it matters that Jesus is also fully divine?

How might Jesus as fully divine and fully human allow you to approach him confidently? How might Jesus be extending you mercy and grace today? What actions might you need to take in response to Jesus' mercy and grace?

Thursday, February 21st

Read Matthew 6:21

²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

In the message last weekend, Pastor Paul called us to identify our false idols. When you think about your false idols, how have you found yourself identifying those areas as treasures? How has your heart been wrapped up in your idols?

How have you found your eyes drawn to those things? In what ways have you noticed unhealth in yourself because of them? How might you move towards having healthier eyes that fill your body with health? That is, how might you look from false idols towards the things of God? What might God be leading you to change, give up, or continue?

Friday, February 22nd

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-7

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea.² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.⁶ Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. ⁷Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.”

The Israelites received several blessings during their time in the wilderness but still drifted from following the one, true God. Our current culture is not far from this—what forms of idolatry make their way into modern Christian’s lives? How can we spur one another to flee from these idols?

How might you be like Moses, praying against disobedience? Close by praying this prayer by Judith Sutura on behalf of yourself and the church.

Saving God, you set your heart on us and made us your own. May we listen with the ear of our hearts to the many ways your Word and your love will be present to us and formed in us this day. We ask this through Jesus, the Word made flesh. Amen.



DEVO | February 16/17