

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S4E9

How God Works In The Wilderness - (Matthew 3:1-7)

Description – We’ve all been there at some point, a hard season in life. The question we have to ask ourselves is this: What is God trying to teach me in those hard times, those times when we’re in the wilderness.

Today we’re getting into the purpose of John the Baptist. We’ve talked about his attire, his diet, and even the way he baptized, but today we’ll look at his purpose.

Matthew 3:1-7

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” ³ For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said: A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight! ⁴ Now John had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

So just before we get to the purpose of John. We have to ask, where is John baptizing?

The text says that he’s baptizing in the wilderness of Judea. So why is a guy who’s a priest by birth preaching in the desert? He’s out in the dry, hot, rocky desert.

So why does Matthew say that John is in the wilderness? Well, first of all, he’s doing this to fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah.

So why the wilderness? Why not a palace? Why not Galilee? Why not the temple mount?

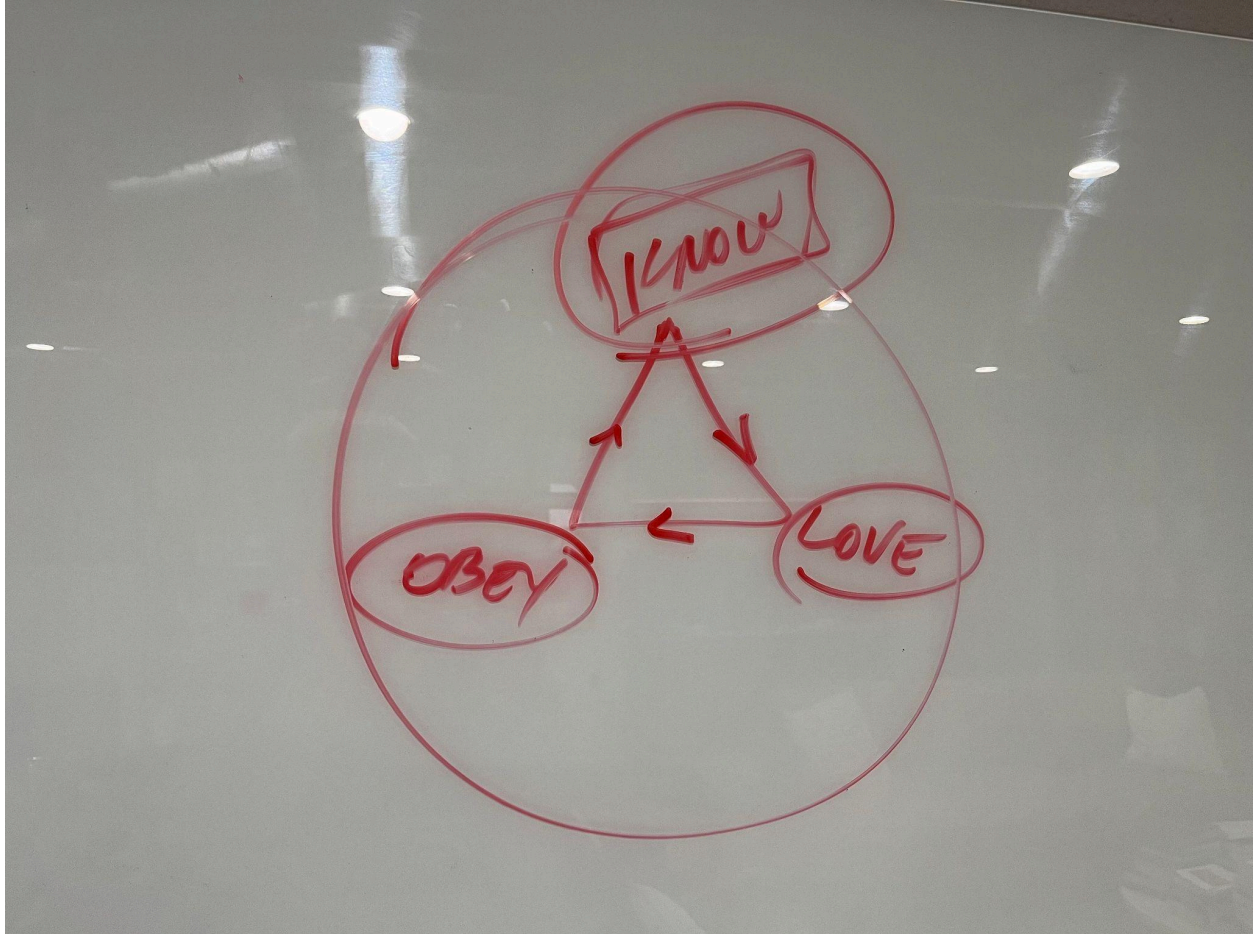
You would think that God’s son (and by extension, the forerunner to the Messiah) would come and be taken care of, would have the best of the best, fine garments and places to stay.

But when you hear wilderness, you need to think of three things:

1. The wilderness is a place of separation.
 - a. All throughout the Bible the wilderness separates people from the world and culture to bring them to a place of dependence on God.
 - b. The wilderness is a place of testing. Will you grumble and complain about the wilderness, or will you turn to God and depend on him?
 - c. The number for testing is “40”
 - i. Jesus fasted for 40 days
 - ii. Moses was 40 days on the mountain with God
 - iii. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years

2. The Wilderness is a place of preparation
 - a. It's a place where you are preparing for something
 - b. "No pain, no gain"
 - c. God is always preparing you in a wilderness season for something greater in the future.
 - d. God is always looking at you to see if he can trust us. If He can trust us with a little when no one is watching, then He can trust us with much when everyone is watching.
 - e. The gift can become a burden if you're not ready to receive it.
 - f. You say you believe in God, well the wilderness proves what you believe.

3. The Wilderness is a place of revelation
 - a. God is always trying to take us from grace to grace, from intimacy to more intimacy with God.
 - b. Everything in the christian life hinges on this illustration:
 - c. Knowing God - Loving God - Obeying God
 - d. Example: Vivian & Kelvin, married for 40 years this October. But on their wedding day, Vivian would have said she loved Kelvin with all of her heart. But now today, she loves him even more. How? Because she knows him more!
 - e. The exact same thing is true of Jesus. You'll never be disappointed about spending time getting to know Jesus.
 - f. John 14:15 - ¹⁵"If you love me, you will keep my commands.
 - g. John 14:21 - ²¹The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him."
 - h. Moses saw God in the wilderness
 - i. Elijah saw God in the wilderness
 - j. John saw the glory of God in the wilderness



It's in the hard times, the hard places, when we're in that preparation stage that we get to see God working and moving.

John knows his purpose from the beginning. Would we respond the same way?

John 3:27-30

²⁷ John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.

²⁸ **You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.'** ²⁹ He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete. ³⁰ **He must increase, but I must decrease."**

Could you build a \$1 Billion dollar company and turn the keys over to someone else and go off to live in anonymity. Could you build a church from a church plant up to a megachurch and hand it off to another pastor?

God, guide my steps, and guide my stops.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do in your christian life is to stop and walk away from something.

The key is, never miss the lesson God is trying to teach you while you're in the wilderness, the place of suffering.