

God Is With Us In the Wilderness| LEADER GUIDE

As Christians, it's often easy to believe God on the mountain tops. It can be more difficult for all of us when we find ourselves in a valley. This lesson takes that one more step: We often EXPERIENCE God in the wilderness. Times of doubt, loneliness, the unknown, the unexpected, etc. can all drive us to what feels like the wilderness. The good news is that when we find ourselves there, God is STILL "Immanuel!"

Things to Note:

This is the last Small Group Lesson of the fall term. Small Group Lessons will resume the week of January 23, 2021. Be sure to plan extra hang-out times with your Small Group between now and the start of the next term to stay connected over the break.

Ice Breaker/ Weekly Check-In:

Look to ask penetrating questions about the group's experiences of hunting, camping, and outdoor adventure trips. Who has been the farthest away from civilization? Or maybe the longest wilderness adventure away from work/school? See if anyone has pictures saved in their phone to share some of those amazing experiences and/or breathtaking views!

If you met last week, you can also use this Daily Encounter check-in question to share how committing to daily prayer went for your group.

Scripture and Discussion Questions:

The flow of this week lesson is:

- 1 Kings 19|1-18
 - Be sure to pause and point to the experience and emotions of Elijah in this story. Guide the discussion to the realness of this experience with the group. Though we all may have not experienced this exactly, many will be able to relate to the loneliness, anxieties, and feelings of Elijah's circumstances
- Psalm 34:18
 - This simple verse is jam-packed with truth about WHO God is and His very nature. Reflect as a group about the times when we've forgotten this truth, how we circled back to it, and how it can be very comforting!

Small Group Interactive:

In having the group share their favorite Bible characters/stories, have fun comparing the stories and the lessons learned. (Example: Who was a bigger hero? Who made bigger mistakes that God had to fix?) Somewhat playfully examining these stories will naturally reveal the truth of them. THEN, you'll be able to apply the principles of why these stories are so relatable!

You'll most likely find that everyone in your group has experienced similar "wilderness" type of experiences in their faith. Don't be afraid to point out that your group pretty much has everything covered - and that this is why Small Group community is can be so rich and supportive. Encourage people to partner up and pray for each other based on the experiences and lessons from scripture they shared about. Offer the idea of the pairs agreeing to continue to pray for each other and hold each other accountable in these areas.

Next Steps:

With just a couple weeks before the busyness of Christmas, challenge your group to a commitment to engage in a Daily Encounter through the Holidays. Consider choosing a YouVersion Bible Reading Plan ahead of Small Group and invite others to read along with you!



242 small groups

Week of December 12 | God With Us In the Wilderness

Ice Breaker Question:

What was your best outdoor adventure?

Weekly Check In

What has God been showing you in your Daily Encounter Time as we get close to Christmas?

This Week's Big Idea: We often enjoy God on the mountain tops, get to know Him in the valleys, and **EXPERIENCE** God in the wilderness.

What do you remember most, or what stuck with you from the weekend's teaching?

Scripture and Discussion Questions:

1 Kings 19|1-18

1. What is the most remote place you've ever been?
2. What are some ways that you've experienced God's presence in the past?
3. Be sure to have read through all eighteen of these verses together. Ask the group specifically about the following:
 - a. How did God communicate with Elijah? What was Elijah's response?
 - b. How do you need to adjust your life to hear from God in similar ways?

Psalm 34|18

4. How does this simple truth encourage you in your relationship with God?
5. What is your plan to cling to God the next time you encounter a time in the wilderness?

Small Group Interactive: 15-20 minutes

When we go through “wilderness experiences,” it’s important to look to the Bible for direction on how we can continue to believe God is still with us.

Discuss as a group:

What are your favorite places/people in scripture you often think of when circumstances in your life turn into “wilderness experiences?”

What about that particular Bible story resonates with you and your experiences?

After sharing your favorite stories, partner up with another person to pray for each other.

Pray for each other’s current challenging circumstances or perhaps specific prayer requests going into the last part of December and Christmas-time.

Next Steps:



Daily Encounter: Time spent reading Scripture

With the next couple of weeks providing time with family, perhaps time off work, holiday get togethers, and etc, carve out some alone time with God. The little extra margin that many of us have this time of year is a great opportunity to spend some time reading from the Bible.

How will you commit to spending time with God?