

“Embrace the Journey”
Navigating Through the Desert Part 1
Pastor Jeff Burkholder
July 13, 2008

I. What is a desert experience?

Those seasons of our lives that are characterized by trials and suffering.

“Coming to Christ means more suffering, not less, in this world. I am persuaded that suffering is normal and not exceptional. We all will suffer; we all must suffer; and most American Christians are not prepared in mind or heart to believe or experience this.”

“Counseling with Suffering People” by John Piper
The Journal of Biblical Counseling, Winter 2003 p. 19.

“We must talk so as to make suffering seem normal and purposeful, and not surprising in this fallen age. The forces of American culture are almost all designed to build the opposite worldview into our minds. Maximize comfort, ease, and security. Avoid all choices that might bring discomfort, trouble, difficulty, pain, or suffering. And this cultural force to our natural desire for immediate gratification and fleeting pleasures, and the combined power to undermine the superior satisfaction of the soul in the glory of God through suffering is huge.

“Counseling with Suffering People” by John Piper
The Journal of Biblical Counseling, Winter 2003 p. 18.

II. Three reasons why we should embrace the journey through the desert:

Reason 1: God is sovereign. (Deuteronomy 8:2)

“When God made you, He did so with a purpose and a plan. He saw all your days before you lived one of them and placed over you the covering of His protective love. He has allowed nothing to come into your life that has not first been screened through that love. His hand has remained on you to this very day. He calls you by name. You are His beloved child...the apple of His eye...the delight of His heart. Today you are in the exact place He wants you to be, and tomorrow He will be with you as He has always been—in goodness, in kindness, in faithfulness.”

From Birthday Card, DaySpring Cards,
Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

II. Three reasons why we should embrace the journey through the desert:

Reason 2: God is humbling us and desiring to test and expose our hearts. (Deuteronomy 8:2)

“Supposing you eliminated suffering,’ wrote Malcolm Muggeridge. ‘What a dreadful place the world would be because everything that corrects the tendency of man to feel over-important and over-pleased with himself would disappear. He’s bad enough now, but he would be absolutely intolerable if he never suffered.’”

A Path through Suffering by Elisabeth Elliot,
Copyright © 1990 by Servant Publications, p. 78.

Reason 3: God has our best interest at heart.
(Deuteronomy 8:15-17)

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”
Genesis 50:20

III. Our response: In order to embrace the journey through the desert, we must...

- A. Submit to and surrender to God.
- B. Accept what God has purposed and planned.

“I ask You neither for health nor for sickness, for life nor for death; but that You may dispose of my health and my sickness, my life and my death, for Your glory... You alone know what is expedient for me. You are the Sovereign Master; do with me according to Your will. Give to me, or take away from me, only conform my will to Yours. I know but one thing, Lord, that it is good to follow You, and bad to offend You. Apart from that, I know not what is good or bad in anything. I know not which is most profitable to me, health or sickness, wealth or poverty, nor anything else in the world. That discernment is beyond the power of men or angels, and is hidden among the secrets of Your Providence, which I adore, but do not seek to fathom.”

Blaise Pascal