

BEFORE THE WILDERNESS

THE EVENT | Session One

Every great adventure requires a little preparation.

Some adventures require little more than a pocketful of snacks or a full tank of gas. Others require a little more planning and foresight - tickets bought, passports acquired, reservations made...

Some adventures may require some gear also- a tent, a Swiss Army Knife, a sleeping bag, maybe a cooler or packs of food.

But nearly every adventure requires a route. Some direction the journeyer is headed. Or at the very least, a GPS to get you back home.

-What's your favorite kind of adventure?

-What are some of your adventure essentials?

SCRIPTURE

Today, we're learning about Joshua, who was on a crazy adventure with God, Moses, and the Israelites.

JOSHUA 1:1-3,5-6:

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them - to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them."

In the Old Testament, God's "chosen people" are the Israelites. They're freed from slavery in Egypt, and God chooses a man named Moses to lead them through the Wilderness. They wander for 40 years! It's a journey that's only supposed to take a couple weeks

Joshua is chosen to be the leader after Moses dies. Joshua, the one who will take the Israelites into the Promised Land after this 40-year journey.

-How would you feel if you were Joshua?

Circle the words that answer this question, or write in your own.

Scared	Confused	Confident	Hopeful
	Skeptical	Courageous	Afraid
Ready	Able	Hesitant	Other:_____

God says to Joshua, "Have I not commanded you be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

- Joshua 1:9

Before entering the wilderness,
God has a plan

Through the journey, God led them - as a pillar of light when they traveled at night, and as a cloud when they traveled during the day. When God moved, they moved. When they were hungry, God fed them. When they were in danger, God protected them. On this epic adventure toward the Promised Land, God goes before them.

That's not to say that the journey wasn't hard. The Israelites were tired of journeying. They questioned Moses' leadership. At one point, while Moses was talking to God on Mount Sinai, the Israelites built a false god to worship in the form of a Golden Calf. As much as they grumbled, they also got to see God's faithfulness up close and personal. It was hard, but it wasn't all bad.

Remember, hard things come in many forms. And what's hard for you might not be hard for someone else, and that's okay. **If you are experiencing hard things that are causing harm to yourself or others, please talk to a trusted adult and find help.**

Read the list below. As you read, pause at each of the things you've navigated your way through (*you could also add your own*).

With each pause, say "In the Wilderness, God is Faithful":

Choosing a College	Navigating Divorce	Being Bullied or Abused
Working through a Breakup	Living with a Disability or Medical Concern	Preparing for an Audition, Try-Outs, or Interview
Navigating Depression, Anxiety, or other Mental Health Concerns	Completing Driver's Ed. Requirements/ Getting Your Permit/License	Navigating Addiction (<i>your own, a family member, or a friend</i>)
Experiencing Racism	Studying for an Important Test	Unhealthy Friendships
Public Speaking/ Performance	Playing in a Meet/ Championship	Going on a Mission Trip
Enduring a Pandemic	_____	

Joshua had his work cut out for him. He needed to lead the Israelites into the thing after the hard thing. He had journeyed with them through the wilderness, but now he was tasked with leading them into a new unknown: **The Promised Land.**

The thing after the hard thing doesn't always come easily. You made the team or the cast or the ensemble - now you have to perform. You got your Driver's License - now you have to drive safely and be more responsible for your transportation. You got the job - now you have to balance your schedule between school and work. You acknowledge your depression - now you have to choose how to best manage it.

The good news is that God is faithful. God is faithful through the wilderness and into the thing after the hard thing. We'll explore this further in the next few sessions as we learn more about God's love and something we call Grace.

ACTIVITIES

Supplies:

-Stickers

We are promised that hard things will happen in life. What if you could take time to prepare for the hard things that would come your way? What would you do? What would you bring into the wilderness? What are your necessary journey items for the wilderness you will enter? Both of these activities are to prepare you for when the journey becomes difficult or unsure.

1. Journey Essentials:

Put a sticker on anything you think will help you remember that God has a plan when you prepare to go through hard times. (*examples; Bible- to better understand God, Phone- to call friends, a picture of family, etc.*)

2. The Five:

Using the space below- list out 5 people who are "The Five." These are those people, other than you family, who you can call anytime, no matter what.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
4. _____ 5. _____

ALL ABOUT THAT GRACE - PREVENIENT GRACE

Though those stories are hundreds of years old, God still guides, protects, and feeds us, today. God goes before us on our journey. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, called this **Prevenient Grace**, or "**the grace that goes before.**"

Think of your life like a map - an essential for any adventure. On a map, you can see *every* possible path. But the path goes before you in your journey. That's what God's grace is like. Any way you're going, God's grace goes before you. The invitation to step onto that path - into that adventure with God - is always there.

Wesley understood grace as God's active presence in our lives. This presence is not dependent on human actions or human response. God's grace stirs up within us a desire to know God and empowers us to respond to God's invitation to be in relationship with God. God's grace enables us to discern differences between good and evil and makes it possible for us to choose good. In this dimension of God's grace we see the initiative that God takes in relating to humanity. We do not have to beg and plead for God's love and grace. God actively seeks us!

What are some adventures God has invited you to? Maybe taking a mission trip, going to camp, stepping into a leadership role, using your talents as part of a worship service... Can you think of others?

In the same way you prepare for a trip - you get things ready, you make plans, you pack the right things - we can prepare our hearts for the work of God. We can ready ourselves for holy lives. We pray, we read scripture, we go to church and youth group, we're part of a confirmation class - we prepare and learn more about God and the church. We see all the paths before us and chat a course for the way we're going to live holy lives.

Sources: <http://rumcweb.org/worship/sermons/sundays-message-john-wesley-and-three-aspects-of-grace/>
<https://www.gofirst.org/about-the-umc/theology-of-the-methodist-church/grace/>