

# RETURNING FROM THE WILDERNESS

## THE EVENT | Session Four

**Every adventure comes to an end.**

Eventually, you run out of snacks. Or time. Or gas. Or money. Or clean clothes. The tent gets a hole in it. Your sleeping bag starts to smell. You're sick of your playlists.

And you face the inevitable return home. (And home might not be a place, but a schedule, a set of people, an everyday rhythm of 'normal'.)

**"In the hero's journey, a character has to want something and overcome obstacles to get it."** (Donald Miller, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*)

You are the hero. And you have been in the wilderness.

You have faced challenges and obstacles – internal and external.

You have explored an unknown space, or maybe seen a familiar space with a new understanding.

You have taken a step of faith. Faced the challenge head on.

And you have changed because of it.

### SCRIPTURE

#### JOSHUA 23:1-3, 10

After a long time had passed and the Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man, summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: "I am very old. You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done... the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. So be very careful to love the Lord your God."

Joshua reminds the Israelites what they have been through, and all the ways God has been faithful. And reminds them, plain and clear, to Love God.

We're faced with the same challenge. Sometimes, we aren't sure if God is walking with us. Our prayers go unanswered. Hard things are still hard. Relationships with friends and family have tension. We still experience fear and depression and anxiety and sadness.

In the wilderness, God is faithful.

In each of the lines below, write *God is Faithful*. If one of the statements really resonates with you, put a star by it.

When things are hard \_\_\_\_\_

In the unknown \_\_\_\_\_

When I'm faced with challenges \_\_\_\_\_

When I'm at a crossroads \_\_\_\_\_

When I don't know what to do \_\_\_\_\_

When I fail \_\_\_\_\_

When I succeed \_\_\_\_\_

When things change \_\_\_\_\_

When I don't feel strong \_\_\_\_\_

In the wilderness \_\_\_\_\_

The next adventure is waiting for you. There are hard things ahead, and there are things after the hard things that will require you to stand at the edge of the unknown and take a step forward.

Hard things are sometimes bad things. But hard things aren't *always* bad things. You will get through the hard things.

And though the thing after the hard thing may not be easy, you will encounter God, and people, and the world with all its beautiful and challenging things, and you will pack your things and set off on the next adventure.

*"To live will be an awfully big adventure" - Peter Pan*

## ACTIVITIES

After the hard thing is over, the results of the experience stay with you. It is up to you how you will use the lessons you learned and become better because of it. But how will you prepare for what lies ahead? What new tools do you need to prepare? How well have you used the journey essentials you identified in Session One? In this activity, the challenge is simply to make a plan.

1. Make a Plan: look back at the Journey Essentials you identified in Session One, and make a plan for each item by filling out the chart below.

ITEM Identified in Session One	WHY? Why is this an important item? What does it do for you?	PLAN How do you plan to use this item regularly in preparation for when you need it?

2. Check In: As this devotional comes to a close as final activity we want to say this; sometimes the hard thing is a bad thing. If this is the case for you, we ask you to please talk to one of the Five you identified in Session One. God gives us others to walk alongside of us in the journey so that we don't need to carry all of the weight of the hard things alone.

## ALL ABOUT THAT GRACE: MEANS OF GRACE

For Wesley, growing as a Christian is all about being filled with love, which happens by the grace of God. We may not be there yet; but by God's grace, as United Methodists say, "we're going on to perfection!"

As we adventure – we pack and prepare, we set a course, we take bold and courageous (and sometimes very new) steps, encounter challenges, and return to a regular rhythm.

We're invited to do the same as we engage with God and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We prepare, we set a course, we make a plan, we take bold and courageous (and sometimes new) steps, and find a regular rhythm of engaging with God. **Wesley calls this the Means of Grace.**

Take a look at these Means of Grace below and underline some things you already do. Then, circle one thing that might be really outside of your comfort zone that you're willing to try. Feel free to add your own ideas

	Individual Practices- things you could do by yourself	Communal Practices- things you could do with others
Works of Piety (Piety: reverence for God)	Reading, meditating and studying the scriptures  Prayer  Fasting  Regularly attending worship  Healthy living  Sharing your faith with others  _____	regularly share in the sacraments:  Communion, Baptism  Christian conferencing ( <i>accountability to one another</i> )  Bible study  _____
Works of Mercy (Mercy: act of kindness / compassion)	doing good works  visiting the sick  visiting those in prison  feeding the hungry  giving generously to the needs of others  _____	seeking justice  ending oppression and discrimination  addressing the needs of the poor  _____

Joshua's final plea to the Israelites is that they remember God's faithfulness and practice their love of God. He warns them to be careful that they don't get lazy now that they're home, and to be careful to love the Lord.

It's no different for us. We have to be careful to love the Lord. To work the love of God and others into our daily rhythms, whether we're in the wilderness or in the comfort of our homes – we must remember that God is faithful, and to daily celebrate the faithfulness of God.