

September 20: the Wasteland

Gather: Bible, paper, writing utensil

Introduction:

Many times in our lives can make us feel as though we are trapped in the middle of a wasteland, a place that is barren with nothing growing or overgrown with weeds.

Reflective Exercise: Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a wasteland. You are standing in the middle and the land around you is dry and lifeless. On all sides, that barren land is all you can see. The air is dry and hot. You have been walking through this wasteland for a while and are feeling the weight of exhaustion and thirst. There is no end in sight. There is no way of knowing how long you will be stuck in this land or what other dangers and complications might come.

What are you feeling? What is your response? Do you sit down and give up, or do you keep walking? Do you cry out to God or do you focus on the problems before you?

Have you felt like you've been in a wasteland before? Perhaps there was a time when it felt like you were trapped in situations that drained you of your energy, caused you fear, anxiety, or sorrow.

Or maybe you felt like you were in a spiritual wasteland?

How do you normally respond in those situations? Do you tend to shut-down, stay positive, seek help?

God doesn't want us to be stuck in the wastelands of life, but he does allow us to be sometimes. In what ways can we learn or grow while experiencing these times? In what ways have you grown through your own times of wasteland?

- Patience to wait for the good times to come, to wait for God's blessings amongst the hardships, and for the way out.
- Endurance to push on through the hardest times, to take things in stride and to refuse to give up.
- Strength to fight the weariness and stand strong when we don't feel like it anymore.
- Reliance on God is vital for us to make it out of these times well. We find that we cannot make it without help. God provides us with what we need to pull through, whether he's the proverbial compass, water or maybe even a horse to carry to us out!

What do we do about the wasteland?

Sometimes we need to be reminded to turn to God during the wasteland times. We need reminding to stay strong, to press on or to remember that there is hope. One of the ways we can do these things is to remember God's Word.

There are verses that are sometimes referred to as “fighter verses.” These verses are simply ones that are chosen to help us remember a specific promise, characteristic of God or concept. In this case, the verses listed below are chosen to remind us that God is with us in the wasteland days. Look up the verses and read through them:

- Zephaniah 3:17
- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Isaiah 41:10
- Matthew 28:20

Choose one of the above verses (or a different one) and write it out as your Fighter Verse for the Wasteland. Put it somewhere you will see it often or have it with you as a reminder. Use it to help you to keep relying on God.

If you are going through a wasteland right now, stay strong and be patient! Remember to rely on God and wait for the relief and blessings to come.

Memory Verse: Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Prayer: If you feel like you're in the wasteland right now, tell God about it! Be honest about your feelings and struggles and ask him for help through it. If you aren't in that time of life, spend some time praying for those who are. Pray for the preparation to stay strong when those times do come.

Challenge: Recite your “fighter verse” every day until you know it by heart.