

- I. ONE THING—The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

II. MEDITATION

A. Review your class notes from Tuesday.

- Take some time to think about the main ideas of the lesson. Find the audio message on our website under the Resources tab. (www.DivineDesignDiscipleship.com).
- Which of the scriptures referenced were particularly meaningful to you? Write out those verses below and spend some time studying them this week.

B. Rewrite your One Thing into a prayer, expressing your heart's desire for God to make this truth become your experience.

C. Sing about what you're learning. It's helpful in connecting emotionally to the truth.

- Listen to the songs from this week's playlist:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw5HDkJTS7I&list=PLBL8waErHIN59ZoFMZa64W4MNEwX_u4KD

- Enjoy this year's songs on Spotify or on our DDD You Tube channel (see handout):
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBL8waErHIN6ncxj-5uV0AXyVObmZeAL>

III. PRINCIPLES

These principles will help you understand God's purposes for your Wilderness areas:

A. GOD'S PURPOSES IN THE WILDERNESS

- So far we've discovered these purposes of a God-appointed Wilderness:
 1. Testing
 2. Time Out
 3. Therapeutic
 4. Transformation
 5. Preparation
 6. Power
 7. Worship
 8. Hunger and Thirst for God and His Word
 9. Humility
- Now we'll look deeper into the transformative work of God by seeing how He shapes our character in The Wilderness.

Insights:

B. LEARNING CURVE

- Early in our journey with the Lord, He treats us as infants: 1 Cor 3:2 NLT-- I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger.
- As we grow, we are invited to partake of something more substantial: Heb 5:14 MSG-- Milk is for beginners, inexperienced in God's ways; solid food is for the mature, who have some practice in telling right from wrong.
- We see this exemplified in the life of Joseph. He enjoyed a nurturing environment early in life: Gen 37:3 NLT-- Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe.
- This "...coat of many colors (KJV), or a coat with long sleeves...set him in a class apart and exempted him from the menial tasks of farming." (Joyce G. Baldwin, Intervarsity Press)
- God had designs on Joseph's life. He allowed difficulty to come as a means of shaping his character. Joseph had multiple Wilderness opportunities for growth!
- Character = to be engraved or inscribed upon
- Our character is determined by our choices and habits over time. Godly character requires "a long obedience in the same direction." (F. Nietzsche)
- God is committed to molding us to become more and more like Him! (Rom 8:29)
- Joseph's first recorded Wilderness was of a relational nature: Gen 37:4 NLT-- But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him.
- God spoke directly to these relationships through Joseph's dreams (Gen 37:5, 9). The Lord revealed that Joseph would have authority and leadership in his family.
- Scholars differ widely on Joseph's motivation for sharing the dreams. He might have been prideful or he may have simply been expressing youthful zeal and naivety.
- Though the Bible never tells Joseph's motives, it does show us the way his brothers responded: Gen 37:11 NLT--But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.
- The Bible indicates much distrust within the family. That's probably why Jacob sent Joseph to find his brothers in Shechem (site of rape and revenge of Dinah, Gen 34).
- When they saw Joseph in the distance, they schemed against him: Gen 37:20-22 NLT--"Come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns. We can tell our

father, 'A wild animal has eaten him.' Then we'll see what becomes of his dreams!" ²¹ But when Reuben heard of their scheme, he came to Joseph's rescue. "Let's not kill him," he said. ²² "Why should we shed any blood? Let's just throw him into this empty cistern here in the wilderness. Then he'll die without our laying a hand on him." Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.

- Firstborn Reuben left and Judah suggested selling Joseph to traders passing by. Reuben returned to find Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver (vv. 26-30).
- They deceived their father by bringing him Joseph's special robe covered in blood. Jacob mourned the loss of his favorite son as the brothers watched and knew better: Gen 37:34-35 NLT—(Jacob) mourned deeply for his son for a long time. ³⁵ His family all tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "I will go to my grave mourning for my son," he would say, and then he would weep.
- How do you think it felt when the brothers saw their father's deep grief? How do you think they coped with this Wilderness of their own making?
- LISTENING EXERCISE: *Lord, please reveal any relational Wilderness in my life that has come about due to dysfunction, rivalry, injustice, unforgiveness or other issues.*

Insights:

C. LONELINESS IN THE WILDERNESS

- One way God grows godly character in us is through times when He feels distant. In the isolation of The Wilderness, His principles and promises seem impossible: Is 45:15 NIV—Truly you are a God who has been hiding himself, the God and Savior of Israel.
- This relative quiet in The Wilderness allows us to focus on the things God has already spoken. Will we continue to believe Him in the waiting?
- God chose Joseph and put a dream in his heart. Yet He allowed 17-year-old Joseph to become a slave in Egypt far from his family and his dreams (Gen 37:36): Ps 105:19 NLT-- Until the time came to fulfill his dreams, the LORD tested Joseph's character.
- He spent approximately 10 prime years of his life waiting on God in Potiphar's house: Gen 39:1-2 NLT--When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master.
- In retrospect we can see this Wilderness time as valuable preparation for the future. Joseph learned the language and culture of Egypt. He also found he was not alone!
- Joseph leaned on God in his Wilderness while God was transforming Joseph into a man of godly character: Gen 39:3-6 NLT--Potiphar noticed this and realized that the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. ⁴ This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned. ⁵ From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household

and property, the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. ⁶ So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat!

- Joseph found God to be trustworthy. He imitated that trustworthiness when tempted to betray Potiphar's trust by sleeping with his wife: Gen 39:8-9 NLT-- Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "My master trusts me with everything in his entire household. No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."
- The reward for integrity and obedience did not come immediately. Yet again, Joseph's life veered away from God's promise into the Wilderness of prison (v. 20).
- In this place of betrayal and injustice, God engraved His faithfulness upon Joseph's heart: Gen 39:21-23 NLT-- But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. ²² Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. ²³ The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.
- Joseph displayed a heart for ministry and using his gifts while in jail: Gen 40:5-8-- Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who *were* confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night *and* each man's dream with its *own* interpretation. ⁶ And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they *were* sad. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who *were* with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?" ⁸ And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and *there is* no interpreter of it." So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *them* to me, please."
- The Lord gave the interpretation of these dreams through Joseph and both proved true. Despite this, Joseph was forgotten in prison for an additional 2 years (40:1).
- Surely Joseph had to battle doubt and despair as he continued to wait on God. Despite this, he allowed God to grow the fruit of patient endurance in his character.
- Finally, at the age of 30, Joseph was remembered and released from prison. Pharaoh gave him a high position because he saw God was with him (40:39-46).
- Joseph allowed God to etch His ways deep into his character. He humbled himself before the Lord and testified of God's steadfastness: Gen 41:51-52 AMP-- Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh (causing to forget), for *he said*, "God has made me forget all my trouble *and* hardship and all [the sorrow of the loss of] my father's household." He named the second [son] Ephraim (fruitfulness), for "God has caused me to be fruitful *and* very successful in the land of my suffering."

Insights:

D. LEANING

- As we lean on Him, God brings fruit into our isolated, confusing Wilderness: Is 51:3 NIV--You can be sure that I will comfort Zion's people. I will look with loving concern on all their destroyed buildings. I will make their deserts like Eden. I will make their dry and empty land like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be there. People will sing and give thanks to me.
- Joseph entered The Wilderness a naïve kid but came forth transformed. Humble dependence on the Lord's word and leaning on God's love made this possible.
- Lean = to support oneself, lie, rely, rest, or stay (Strong's H8172)
- Here are some practical ways we can develop a lifestyle of leaning on our Beloved:
 1. Foundation—Stand firm in The Wilderness by knowing God will never violate His character: Num 23:19-- God *is* not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
 2. Formation—Align with the purposes of the Lord by allowing the pain and pressure of The Wilderness to mold our character: Is 64:8 NLT-- O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand.
 3. Focus
 - Never lose sight of God's call by holding the promises and the dreams He has given above our circumstances: Heb 10:36 AMP-- For you have need of patient endurance [to bear up under difficult circumstances without compromising], so that when you have carried out the will of God, you may receive *and* enjoy to the full what is promised.
 - Remember that sometimes God is quiet in The Wilderness so that we can fully embrace and experience what He has already revealed to us.
 4. Forgiveness
 - Let go of everything in our past that has caused a wound or setback.
 - Joseph had an example of this in the forgiveness his father Jacob received from his brother Esau: Gen 33:10 AMP-- Jacob replied, Now, I beg of you, if now I have found favor in your sight, receive my gift that I am presenting; for truly to see your face is to me as if I had seen the face of God, and you have received me favorably.
 - We forgive according to the command of God so that we may become more free and more like Him: Col 3:12-13 NLT-- Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.
 5. Favor
 - Believing and receiving the Father's goodness as we walk in our identity as His flawed, favored, and forgiven children: Ps 130:3-4 AMP-- If You, Lord, should keep an account of our sins *and* treat us accordingly, O Lord, who could stand [before you in judgment and claim innocence]? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared *and* worshiped [with submissive wonder].
 - Joseph found that sometimes favor looks like betrayal or prison. By faith, let's give thanks in all things knowing that God is working them together for good: Ps 119:90-96 MSG-- What you say goes, God, and *stays*, as permanent as the heavens. Your truth never goes out of fashion; it's as up-to-date as the earth when the sun comes up. Your Word and truth are dependable as ever; that's what you ordered—you set the earth

going. If your revelation hadn't delighted me so, I would have given up when the hard times came. But I'll never forget the advice you gave me; you saved my life with those wise words. Save me! I'm all yours. I look high and low for your words of wisdom. The wicked lie in ambush to destroy me, but I'm only concerned with your plans for me. I see the limits to everything human, but the horizons can't contain your commands!

- Turning toward the Lord during our Wilderness will cause our hearts to become more and more one. His character becomes etched within us: Rom 5:3-5 JBP--We can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles. Taken in the right spirit these very things will give us patient endurance; this in turn will develop a mature character, and a character of this sort produces a steady hope, a hope that will never disappoint us. Already we have some experience of the love of God flooding through our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us.

Insights:

II. CONTINUE TO PRACTICE

- Practice recognizing your Wilderness and its beneficial purposes. Be on the alert for any seeds of pride that begin to spring up.
- Set aside some time to let God feed and fuel you with His Word. Use these suggested steps to help you get started:
 - Pray for God to open the eyes of your heart to see and know Him.
 - Pour out your heart to Him verbally or in your journal.
 - Go to Scriptures that are relevant to your issue (use a concordance, topical Bible, or a search engine such as Bible Gateway).
 - Write down the verses that speak to you most. Pray them back to God.
 - Listen for His response, as you are silent before Him.
 - Keep a written record of your dialogue and be sure to review it often.
 - Use the handout "Tools & Techniques: Listening to God" for practical help and Scriptural support. Contact your leader if you have questions.
- Practice Wilderness Worship to grow in intimacy with God during this season using Supplication, Silence, Song, and Surrender.
- Our challenge on this journey through The Wilderness is to stay focused on our Rock, Jesus, and not on our circumstances
- May we be so changed in God's presence in this season that this will be the testimony spoken about us: Song 8:5-- Who *is* this coming up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?