

When Life Throws You A Curve

1 Samuel 18-20

ILLUSTRATION: James Merritt says, “Life starts out easy enough.”

Things are good - your world is safe and secure. You are bathed in warm liquid, cushioned from shock. You do nothing for yourself; you are fed automatically, and a murmuring heartbeat assures you that someone larger than you meets all your needs. Your life consists of simple waiting--you're not sure what to wait for, but any change seems far away and distant. You meet no sharp objects, no pain, no threatening adventures. A fine existence it is.

Till, one day, you feel a tug, and the walls are falling in on you. Those soft cushions are now pulsing and beating against you, crushing you downwards. Your body is bent double, your limbs twisted and wrenched. You're falling upside down. For the first time in your life, you feel pain. You are in a sea of rolling matter. There is more pressure, almost too intense to bear. Your head is squeezed flat, and you are pushed harder, harder into a dark tunnel. Oh, the pain. The noise. More pressure. You hurt all over. You heard blood-curdling screams all around you. Then, a deep groan sounds, and an awful, sudden fear rushes in on you. It is happening--your world is collapsing. You're sure it's the end. Suddenly, you see a piercing, blinding light. Cold, rough hands begin to pull at you. Then, it all culminates with a painful slap.

Congratulations! You've just been born.

You went through a trial coming into this world; your mother went through a trial bringing you into this world, and your father went through a trial paying for it.

From the time you are born to the time you die, you walk in a world whose highways are littered with potholes of troubles, trials, tragedies, and tribulations - curveballs.

Someone said, “You are either in a storm, about to be in a storm, or just coming out of a storm.”

There is something about life and about marriage for which you can prepare all you want to prepare, but life will throw you a curveball you simply could not anticipate.

- **Perhaps an illness or injury** (of a parent, child, or close family member)
- **Mental health struggles** (depression, anxiety, or trauma)
- **Unexpected disability** from an accident or diagnosis
- **Sudden unemployment** or a career setback
- **Business failure**

- **Unexpected expenses** (e.g., major repairs, medical bills)
- **Loss of a parent, child, or spouse**
- **Grieving process disrupting family dynamics**
- **Infidelity or broken trust**
- **Separation or divorce**
- **Job transfer or military deployment**
- **Custody battles**
- **Lawsuits**
- **Rebellion or behavioral challenges in a child**
- **Addiction or Substance Abuse**
- **Natural disasters - Hurricanes, fires, floods, or car accidents that change everything overnight**
- **When a family member questions or walks away from their faith, especially in a ministry family**

Even in the midst of those storms - God is at work. He's doing something.

In Scripture, those curveballs of life are often experienced in the wilderness.

Every child of God must gain his or her degree from Wilderness University.

- Her wise professors must train us
- We must sit in her lonely classes of solitude
- There and only there will we learn to look to and lean upon our Master

Examples:

- **Joseph** learned this lesson in the pit and a prison.
- **Moses** learned this lesson on the back side of Midian.
- **Elijah** learned this lesson, fleeing from the wicked Queen Jezebel.
- Even **our Lord** Himself was proven in the desert as he fasted 40 days and was tempted by Satan.

CONTEXT: The passage before us finds David living in the sweet spot. Things are going his way. God has elevated him to a place of great significance.

With God's help,

- David, a mere Shepherd boy, had slain the Giant Goliath;
- He had been exalted to a position as a lieutenant in the army of Israel.
- He married an Israeli Princess.
- In Jonathan, David had met the best human friend he would ever have.
- He had the favor of the King and the guidance of the Prophet Samuel.

David had it made.

Not only did he have all the money he would ever need, but he was famous. Women sang songs about him. David was in the lap of luxury. ***It was there, in that place of great comfort and security, that David was summoned to Wilderness University.***

There are at least three things you must learn from the Wilderness.

1. You Enter the Wilderness by God's Direction

It is as if God were one by one knocking every **crutch** out from under David so that he might not lean on anything but God's everlasting arms.

Notice that David's lesson begins with

a. David Lost the Good Graces of King Saul

1 Samuel 18:6–8 (ESV)

⁶ As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. ⁷ And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." ⁸ And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?"

Saul was becoming hyper-paranoid, hyper-sensitive, and overly jealous.

1 Samuel 18:9 (ESV)

⁹ And Saul eyed David from that day on.

That word, eyed, is the Hebrew Word AVON, which means he viewed David through sinful lenses. He was looking for a reason to attack David.

1 Samuel 18:10–12 (ESV)

¹⁰ The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day.

Remember that the **Holy** Spirit RUSHED upon David
Here, a **Harmful** Spirit RUSHED upon Saul

It's the Hebrew word for Rushed is invaded... Saul invited the spirit through Jealousy and Anger, and the harmful spirit responded to the invitation with an invasion. Let me advise you to deal with envy.

Proverbs 27:4 (ESV)

⁴ Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

Saul had his spear in his hand. ¹¹ And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David evaded him twice. ¹² Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul.

So now this King that David loved was bent against David.

If that were not enough...

b. God Lost the Intimacy of a Wife

In Chapter 19:20, David married Michal, Saul's daughter. Saul figured that she could use Michal to trap David. But Michal allowed David to escape when she discovered that her father was coming to kill David.

1 Samuel 19:11–12 (ESV)

¹¹ Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, “If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.” ¹² So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped.

Saul comes looking for David and finds that he has escaped, and rather than defend David to her father, look what Michal says in verse 17 –

1 Samuel 19:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ So Saul said to Michal, “Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?” And Michal said to Saul, “**He said to me, ‘Let me go! Why should I put you to death?’**”

She betrayed David, accusing him of threatening her life.

So now the King has turned on David, he wife has betrayed him...Where will David run next? To his Pastor, the Prophet Samuel.

c. David Lost the Advice of the Prophet

1 Samuel 19:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. ²¹ When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied.

Now, keep in mind that prophesying doesn't necessarily mean they were foretelling future events. It may mean they were speaking of God's mighty deeds. The key here is that they were overcome with God's presence and fell down before the prophet.

1 Samuel 19:22–24 (ESV)

22 Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu. And he asked, “Where are Samuel and David?” And one said, “Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah.” 23 And he went there to Naioth in Ramah. And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Thus it is said, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

So David has no refuge in Saul, Michal, or Samuel...His last hope is his best friend, Jonathan...

d. David Lost the Companionship of a Friend

1 Samuel 20:1 (ESV)

1 Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah and came and said before Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?”

They work out a deal so that Jonathan could signal David with arrows.

1 Samuel 20:41–42 (ESV)

41 And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. 42 Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.’ ” And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.

That was the last time they ever saw each other.

So David has nowhere else to turn but to the Lord.

There, you see the terrible, loving hand of God. A love that is so great that it will knock every crutch out from under you so that you will lean on nothing but Christ.

Chuck Swindoll said that God has at least three purposes for removing crutches:

- 1. Crutches become substitutes for God –**
 - a. Have you found yourself turning to others before God?
 - b. Have you trusted your abilities more than God?
- 2. Crutches offer only temporary relief**

- a. You will find yourself going from crutch to crutch, and you will become angry at the crutches because they don't fix things! It's not their job!

3. Crutches keep our focus horizontal

- a. Like Peter on the raging sea, to walk on water you must keep your eyes and faith on Jesus.

1 Samuel 22:1 (NASB95)

¹ So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; So God had brought him from the heights of security and popularity to hiding in a cave like an animal.

David entered the Wilderness by God's Direction...

2. You Experience the Wilderness by God's Design

PSALMS - What do you suppose was going through David's mind at this point? How was he feeling? We don't have to wonder about that.... While David was in the cave he composed a few hymns. Nothing gives us insight into David's emotional condition as these hymns.

That is why so often we turn to the Psalms when we go through difficulties, because so many were written from very difficult situations.

a. In the Wilderness, David learned of God's Protection

Turn to Psalm 57:title-1 (ESV)

To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave. ¹ Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by.

I remember as a boy. My cousins and I had a large cave that we used to climb around in. I remember that I didn't matter what the weather was outside it was always the same in the cave.

- *It could be a tornado outside, but in the rock, it was peaceful.*
- *It could be freezing outside or burning up, but the temp. in the rock was around 50 year around.*

There was something about being in that great cave cut out of stone that made a person feel so protected, so safe.

Not only did David learn to trust God's Protection...

b. In the Wilderness, David longed for God's Glory

Psalm 57:5–11 (ESV)

⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! ⁶ They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down. They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves. *Selah* ⁷ My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody! ⁸ Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! ⁹ I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. ¹⁰ For your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. ¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!

ILLUSTRATION:

If you and I had a chance to talk about it, you would probably say that you felt the closest to God in the darkest caves of your life.

- For Julie and I it was during the season surrounding a miscarriage. God carried us through. The loss of a father.

While I wouldn't wish those things on my worst enemy, I learned of God through them.

You Enter the Wilderness at God's Direction...

You Experience the Wilderness at God's Design...

3. You Exit the Wilderness ready for God's Destiny

Some really interesting things happened in that cave...

a. David was Reunited with his Family

1 Samuel 22:1 (ESV)

¹ David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.

Sometimes when you are in the wilderness, friendships that have suffered are reborn. What really matters in life becomes clear.

b. David met his Future Companions

² Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

As if things weren't bad enough, David is stuck in this cave and a lot of guys who are depressed and in debt climb in there with him.

It must have looked like an episode of Springer!

But it was those men who became known as David's Mighty Men.

INVITATION:

I really enjoy Photography. I love capturing a moment, with the perfect lighting and the right angles, but I am limited to the use of a digital camera. I wish that I knew enough about a regular 35mm Camera to really take advantage of all you can do with a camera.

Steve Wagners says, "That the key to successful photography is the developing process. In order to properly develop the film, it must first be taken into a darkroom. Then, several different chemicals are added to enhance the quality of those prints. Only after the proper steps have been taken, and all the right chemicals added, is it then safe to expose that film to the light, in order to produce the final beauty of those prints. The amazing thing is that the light, which at first would have greatly damaged that film, is now the key to bring out its final beauty."

In much the same way, there are various in our Christian life, that we find ourselves in the darkroom of God. It is there that all of the right things are added to enhance and develop our spiritual life.

Dr. H.B. Smith explained it well by saying, "It is in God's darkroom that the true test *and the validity of our spirituality is made known. Faith is like film: IT ONLY DEVELOPS IN THE DARK!!*

***ILLUSTRATION:** Perhaps the most difficult year of my life was 2012. I won't tell you all that happened, but it was soul-crushing. I thought about that verse where God said, "Everything that can be shaken will be shaken so that only that which cannot be shaken will remain. Ironically, the same year that I was going through the toughest wilderness of my life... Seven hours south, you decided to build this building where one day I would serve, and God would work in such marvelous ways.*

Dear friend, if I could have seen these days then, I would have laughed. Perhaps today - God is preparing a future for you, that would cause you to laugh at today.