

# When the Brook Dries Up: Finding God in the Wilderness

Life has a way of leading us into unexpected wilderness seasons - times when everything feels dry, uncertain, and challenging. The story of Elijah at the Kerith Ravine offers profound insights into why God sometimes leads us into these difficult seasons and what we can learn when we find ourselves there.

## Why Does God Send Us Into the Wilderness?

After Elijah boldly proclaimed to King Ahab that it wouldn't rain except at his word, we might expect God to thrust him into the spotlight for a dramatic showdown. Instead, God gave him an unexpected command: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there" (1 Kings 17:3-4 ESV).

The word "Kerith" in Hebrew means "to cut" or "to whittle away." This reveals God's purpose - before Elijah's public ministry could truly begin, God needed to shape his character in isolation.

## God's Pattern of Wilderness Preparation

This isn't unique to Elijah. Throughout Scripture, we see God sending His servants into wilderness seasons:

- Moses spent 40 years as a shepherd in Midian before leading Israel
- David spent years hiding in caves after being anointed king
- Jesus "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matthew 4:1 ESV)

The pattern is clear: God is always willing to sacrifice our comfort in order to form our character.

## What Does God Test in the Wilderness?

### Our Obedience

The first thing God tests in wilderness seasons is whether we'll obey Him even when it's difficult. As Samuel told King Saul, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22 ESV).

Obedience isn't complicated, but that doesn't mean it's easy. God wants to know: Will you follow Him even when you don't understand what's happening around you?

## **Our Contentment**

God also tests whether He alone is enough for us. Notice how God provided for Elijah: "The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook" (1 Kings 17:6 ESV).

This wasn't gourmet dining - just enough for each day. God was teaching Elijah contentment with daily provision. The question becomes: Do you love the Provider or just the provision?

Paul understood this principle: "But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8 ESV).

## **Our Faith**

Perhaps most importantly, God tests our faith. The text tells us that "some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land" (1 Kings 17:7 ESV).

## **What Happens When the Brook Dries Up?**

Every one of us will face seasons when our "brook dries up" - when finances get tight, relationships struggle, health fails, or dreams seem impossible. The critical question is: What do you do when the brook dries up?

## **Two Ways to Respond**

You can either:

1. Allow the dried-up brook to affect your view of God
2. Allow your view of God to affect how you see the dried-up brook

If you choose the first option, you'll begin questioning God's faithfulness and purpose. But if you choose the second, you'll remember that God is always working, especially when you can't see it.

## **How to Wait in the Wilderness**

The answer is beautifully simple yet profoundly difficult: you wait. You wait patiently on the Lord, with the Lord, and for the Lord.

Notice that Elijah didn't just go to Kerith - "he went to the Kerith Ravine east of the Jordan and stayed there" (1 Kings 17:5 ESV). Most theologians believe he stayed there for about two years. Finding Kerith wasn't necessarily hard, but staying there required faith and patience.

The psalmist encourages us: "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14 ESV). And Isaiah reminds us: "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31 ESV).

## God's Purpose in the Wilderness

Remember Moses' words to Israel: "And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not" (Deuteronomy 8:2 ESV).

Wilderness seasons aren't punishment - they're preparation. God uses these times to:

- Strip away idols from our hearts
- Develop our character
- Deepen our dependence on Him
- Prepare us for what He has ahead

## Life Application

This week, examine your own wilderness seasons with fresh eyes. Instead of asking "Why me?" or "What did I do wrong?", ask "What is God trying to teach me?" and "How can I grow in obedience, contentment, and faith during this time?"

Consider creating a gratitude list of everything you're thankful for, recognizing God's daily provision in your life. Practice contentment with what you have rather than longing for what you lack.

Most importantly, if you're in a wilderness season right now, choose to wait on the Lord. Stay where He has placed you, trust His timing, and remember that He is always working - especially when you can't see it.

Questions for Reflection:

- Is there an area of your life where God is calling you to greater obedience?
- Are you content with God's daily provision, or are you constantly longing for more?
- When your "brook dries up," do you question God's faithfulness or trust His character?
- How can you practice waiting on the Lord in your current circumstances?