

5-Day Lenten Devotional: Dust and Hunger

Day 1: Beloved Before Proving

Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Devotional: Before Jesus faced any wilderness, before any test or trial, the heavens opened, and God declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Notice the timing—God's pleasure came before Jesus performed a single miracle or endured any hardship. Your belovedness isn't earned through achievement or proven through capability. It's spoken over you before you step into the wilderness. Today, whatever limitations you're facing, whatever you can no longer do, remember: your identity was never built on your capacity. It was breathed into you by the God who makes living beings from dust. You are beloved—not because of what you accomplish, but because of whose you are. Let that truth anchor you today.

Day 2: The Landscape of Limitation

Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Devotional: Paul discovered something profound about his "thorn in the flesh"—his limitation became the very place where God's power was perfected. The wilderness isn't emptiness; it's a landscape of possibility. When we can no longer rely on our own strength, we discover a deeper dependence on God and community. Your oxygen unit, your walker, your diagnosis, your aging body—these aren't just constraints. They're invitations to discover what couldn't be found in self-sufficiency. In vulnerability, we open doors for others to show up, to be present, to be needed. We learn to ask not "What can't I do anymore?" but "What can I do right here, with what I've been given?" God's grace is truly sufficient, and His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Day 3: Resisting the Voice of Deficit

Reading: Genesis 3:1-7

Devotional: The serpent's genius was making a single boundary feel like a cage, transforming abundance into perceived lack. Adam and Eve had everything—yet

the tempter whispered that they were missing something essential. This same voice speaks to us today: "You used to be whole, now you're losing pieces." It defines us by what we can do, by our independence, by our capacity to prove worth. But this voice lies. It sees every limitation as diminishment rather than transformation. When we listen to it, we end up like Adam and Eve—covering ourselves in shame, unable to bear being seen as we are. Lent invites us to recognize this voice and refuse it. Our limitations don't define us. God's claim on our lives does.

Day 4: Standing in the Dust

Reading: Matthew 4:1-4

Devotional: Jesus in the wilderness was genuinely hungry—the limitation was real, not theoretical. The temptation to turn stones to bread wasn't absurd; it was reasonable. He had the power. Why not use it? But Jesus chose to stay hungry, stay vulnerable, stay human. He quoted the words of wandering people: "One does not live by bread alone." His identity held not because he performed it or proved it, but because it had already been spoken over him. The wilderness doesn't establish who we are; it reveals what we already know. Today, resist the urge to escape your vulnerability through performance or proof. Stand in your dust. Your humanity isn't something to transcend—it's the very place where God meets you.

Day 5: Breath in the Dust

Reading: Genesis 2:4-7

Devotional: God's first creative act was breathing life into dust—into limitation itself, into the most basic, humble, ordinary material there is. What came from that dust was a living being made in God's image, beloved before earning anything. This is where our story begins: not with triumph over limitations, but with God showing up within them. The same God who breathed life into dust is breathing still—in your body, in this moment, in the landscape your limitations have created. The wilderness is not a detour; it's the road. Lent teaches us to pay attention to these wilderness places and ask a different question: "What is God doing here?" The answer may surprise you. God generates new life precisely where we thought there was only emptiness.