

## Sermon: Through the Wilderness: Facing Our Fears

### **IN** *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. Pastor Ashwin described the 'wilderness experience' as a place of God-appointed testing and trial. It is a season of preparation for what God is about to do in your life.  
When have you had a 'wilderness' time in your life? What happened?  
How did this experience transform you?
2. Who has been a 'Moses' to you, giving guidance and encouragement when you were in your wilderness?

### **UP** *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Review the story of where the Israelites were as they listened to Moses speak. Ask your participants to read excerpts from study Bibles that give background about this biblical period.  
Consult a map to understand where they had been and where they now stood.
2. Who was the 'evil generation'? (v.35)  
What happened? Why were they considered 'evil'?  
Of what significance is it that the 'evil generation' (v.35) died, yet 40 years later, Moses referred to the crowd as if they were directly involved?
3. Go over the story of the 'spies.'  
Compare Numbers 13:1-3, 31-33 and Deut 1:22-28.  
How did the story from the 10 spies about the 'promised land' increase the people's fears?  
Was there any validity to their fears? What had they forgotten, denied and/or dismissed?
4. What three images does Moses give to remove their fears?  
How does each picture support His commands to them in Dt 1:21 and Dt 1:29?  
What image is most encouraging for you?

### **OUT** *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. Pastor Ashwin said, 'The opposite of fear is not faith; it is love.' (1 John 4:18)  
How can you apply this to a 'promised land' that God might call you to 'take possession of'?
2. 'What we fear the most is where we trust God the least.' (Pastor Ashwin)  
What is your biggest fear this coming week? How can the group pray/support you in turning this fear into trust?

*UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).*

### **THE WORD (NIV)**

#### **Deuteronomy 1:19-36**

<sup>19</sup>Then, as the LORD our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful wilderness that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea. <sup>20</sup>Then I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. <sup>21</sup>See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

<sup>22</sup>Then all of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to."

<sup>23</sup>The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. <sup>24</sup>They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshkol and explored it. <sup>25</sup>Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us."

<sup>26</sup>But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. <sup>27</sup>You grumbled in your tents and said, "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. <sup>28</sup>Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'" <sup>29</sup>Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. <sup>30</sup>The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, <sup>31</sup>and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place." <sup>32</sup>In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, <sup>33</sup>who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. <sup>34</sup>When the LORD heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: <sup>35</sup>"No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, <sup>36</sup>except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly."

#### **1 John 4:18**

<sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

# Sermon Study Summary

A single sentence can change the terrain of your life. *Your position has been eliminated. You have cancer. I want a divorce. Mom had a stroke.* We suddenly find ourselves in a “wilderness.” God places us in these situations, not for us to remain there, but to prepare us for what He has in store for us, if only we step out in faith and obedience.

But how do we journey through the wilderness and come out victorious? In this sermon, Pastor Ashwin shares how we can navigate through the wilderness by learning from the mistakes of the Israelites in not trusting God, as recounted by Moses in Deuteronomy 1. The Israelites witnessed miracle upon miracle before and after leaving Egypt; yet at the threshold of the Promise Land, being told to “go up and take possession” of the land (Deut 1: 21), they were afraid and needing human evidence, sent spies into the Promise Land.

Fear is a normal human reaction; however, it weakens our reasoning and causes us to exaggerate our problems. With the Israelites, 10 out of 12 of the spies reported on “walls up to skies” (Deut 1:28) and people of great sizes that the Israelites “seemed like grasshoppers” (Numbers 13:31-33). The Israelites believed the report. Their hearts melted in fear and caused them to rebel against God’s command to take possession of the land (Deut 1:26-28).

**Stepping out in obedience to God, we will be faced with two different bodies of evidence – God’s calling and His promises versus human perspective when we rationalize the situation with our fears. Will we trust God, or will we allow our fears to paralyze us from trusting Him — thus squandering the opportunity to serve God and advance His mission?**

Moses uses three pictures to describe God (Deut 1:30-33), which we can find relevant today when navigating through our own wilderness.

**God is a warrior who fights our battles.** “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exodus 14:14). When we think we are out of options, we need to remind ourselves of God’s great acts in history. He who parted the Red Sea is fully capable of fighting the giants. Victory is guaranteed because He fights our battles.

**God is a caring Father who is trustworthy.** Imagine a parent comforting a child after a nightmare. More so, our fears are needless when we are under the protective care of a loving Father. “Perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). He provided for the Israelites’ needs while they were in the wilderness. Similarly, He will carry us through (Deut 1:31).

**God is a dependable guide who will not mislead.** God does not promise an easy path, but He promises to faithfully walk with us. As He led the Israelites, He will also guide us and “search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go” (Deut 1:33). Knowing God will walk with us makes all the difference.

Despite these reassuring images of who God was, the Israelites rejected God’s offer to take them into the Promise Land. Faced with a spiritual battle, they allowed their fears to overcome them instead of trusting God. The most formidable giant they faced was not the Anakites or the fortifications of the city, but their own fear. What a missed opportunity as they were unable to receive God’s blessings! An entire generation of Israelites died in the wilderness except for Caleb and Joshua who entered the Promise Land. They were the only 2 spies out of the 12 who looked toward God rather than at the problems.

What is our biggest fear today? Is it an area where we trust God the least? Are we willing to let God handle this for us? Let us not be slaves to fear nor allow it to become a stronghold in our lives.