Forty Days in the Wilderness
"Purpose"
March 8-9

Introduction
Welcome back to, *Forty Days in the Wilderness!* I'm Mark and I'm so blessed that you're here. In this series we're seeing how God turns trials into triumphs, how our greatest tests often become our greatest testimonies because we serve a God who brings purpose out of pain. Our setbacks are God's setups.

Scripture shows us that the wilderness is not a place of abandonment or punishment, but a necessary period of testing, preparation, and transformation in the life of every believer. God uses wilderness seasons to prepare us and to transform us into people who reflect *His* image and contend for *His* Kingdom to come and *His* will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. So the wilderness strips us of everything that does not reflect Him or come in alignment with His will. This includes *our* plans, *our* purposes, even a sense of personhood that does not reflect Him.

Re-Purpose
Last week Pastor Theresa delivered a powerful and timely message on how God uses the wilderness to redefine our personhood. Through life we start to take on many lies about our identity and who we are and God uses the wilderness to strip away all of those false identities and restore us back to who *He* says we are.

Last week we talked about *Personhood*, today we're talking about *Purpose*.

Because the more God restores who you we were created to *be,* the more He reveals what you were created to *do*. The Wilderness not only reveals who we are but why we're here! Today you're going to hear some powerful testimonies of how God uses the wilderness to reveal His divine purpose for our lives.

My son Judah is something of a pack rat. After a Costco run, my wife and I have to dispose of any boxes and packages quickly, otherwise my son will grab them and hoard them in his room. Every Christmas or birthday he'll throw a fit if you try to throw away the boxes or packaging. His response is always the same, "Don't throw that away! I'm going to use that!" And sure enough, you'll find him creating all sorts of things with the trash that he's salvaged. Of course I don't make the mistake of calling it trash to his face. One day I'd had enough. He was pulling a bunch of boxes and cartons out of our garbage and I snapped. I said, "Judah, that is trash!" He looked at me defiantly and said, "It's NOT trash! I'm using this!" And in that moment I felt like a got a glimpse into the Father's heart. We serve a God who rescues, restores, and repurposes. Where the world sees trash, God sees treasure. He looks at our broken pieces—the pain, the failures, the regrets—and says, "Don't throw that away! I'm going to use that!" I often wondered why my son would find more delight in the packaging than the actual toy. Then it dawned on me — he loves to create. The toy is fun for a while but it's already complete. This box, on the other hand, has limitless potential! Think of all the things this box could be! And when the creation is finished we praise him. In the same way, God does some of His best work when we're down in the dumps. He picks us up and says, "Look at all this limitless potential! You just need a little here, some off the top here." And when He's finished we praise Him.

Joseph
Joseph was one of those who felt discarded on the garbage heap of life. Sure, he'd had a dream once upon a time, but those dreams seemed buried under a mountain of betrayals, false accusations, and imprisonment. But God was not finished with Joseph.

Where the world saw trash in a prison, God saw treasure fit for a palace. And because Joseph trusted the process, he was eventually able to find purpose in his pain.

Toward the end of the story, Joseph was able to confront his betrayers. These so-called "brothers" were the architects of all of his pain. They'd thrown in him in a pit, sold him into slavery, where he'd spend years rotting in prison. Yet, in this moment of confrontation, it's not pain we hear in his voice but purpose,

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! 5 And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. 6 For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. 7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt," (Genesis 45:4-8).

Later he says to them,

20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives," (Genesis 50:20).

Joseph's wilderness was not a place of punishment or abandonment. It was a place of tremendous purpose! What the enemy intended for evil God was redeeming for His purpose!

Group Discussion Questions

1. **Reflecting on Joseph's story**, how can we begin to see our own struggles as part of God's bigger purpose? Have you ever experienced a season where you later realized God was working behind the scenes?

2. **God repurposes what the world rejects.** What are some areas of your life where you've felt discarded, overlooked, or broken? How can you surrender those areas to God and allow Him to use them for His glory?

3. **The wilderness is a place of transformation.** How has God used difficult seasons in your life to reshape your identity or reveal your purpose? What did you learn about Him in the process?