

## The Wilderness Experience

I have been in the wilderness in Wishek, North Dakota for 12 days now. I knew coming into this 3 week experience that:

- I would find myself in the middle of nowhere.
- I knew that I would not have the ordinary comforts of internet access and tv (to watch godly movies/sermons).
- I knew that the closest walmart was 1.5 hours away.
- I knew that I wouldn't have a vehicle during the long days my husband was working.
- I knew that I would not have another soul to talk to except if I called someone on the phone.
- I knew I would be alone, and would not be able to have access to the grocery store anytime I needed something.
- I knew that the water here was well water, and that it was not clean to drink.
- I knew that I wouldn't be able to make tea anytime I felt like it because we needed to preserve our bottled water for as long as we could.
- I knew that I would have to live off of bagels, pb&j, oatmeal, and cereal.
- I knew that I wouldn't have access to a vacuum cleaner and my normal cleaning supplies that assist in my high standard of cleanliness.
- I knew that the place I would be staying at was old, and not in the best shape, and not exactly what I would choose to stay in if I had the choice.

The Goals for this time were:

- Seek God with all my heart.
- Write posts for the blog, and save them for when I return home.
- Spend the time with my husband, as it is our first real time "alone" since we have been married.
- Learn everything I could about being a godly mom

## WEEK ONE:

The first day I spent in North Dakota was with my husband. We spent the 4th of July lying around watching movies all day. He was so excited to have me here. It was much needed time to get re-acquainted since I hadn't seen him in over a month.

It was also a bit romantic, being that the power went off due to a really bad rain storm! We were FORCED to spend the time together, and forced to trust in God to let the power come back on!!! And that He did, only an hour later! It was a much needed test. I learned that when you don't have any of the technologies and distractions, losing the power isn't really that big of a deal. All you need there is food, water, and clothes, and the power of God flooding your heart!

My husband graciously allowed me to ask him some questions about masculinity and how he would like for me as his wife to be.

He shared his heart with me and told me that all he really wanted was for me to be at peace---whether I'm here, or whether I'm at home, or anywhere, in any situation---he wanted me to be at peace.

He told me that he wants to see me be content in my life, and to just be relaxed and at peace with everything, all the time.

I was a bit shocked because I always assumed he wanted me to do a lot of other things besides be peaceful and content.

He also shared with me that all I can do with my son is correct him, and then how he acts is up to him, I can't control him.

I observed the beautiful country land all around the place we are staying, and I was amazed at the beauty of God's creation! Everyday I hear the birds chirping outside all day long, and the wind blowing. The sky is amazingly open and the sun shines so brightly. The tall grass swaying in the field is breathtaking.

There is so much room for my soul to just breathe here. Compared to the hustle and bustle of a noisy road, or the constant interruption from a child, or the distractions of technology----this place is truly relaxing and peaceful.

There are actually trucks and cars that pass by all day, just not CONSTANTLY.

Out here, I can immediately realize my thoughts because there is no other distraction. I can hear myself think, and actually think about what I'm thinking all the time.

I can also see more clearly what sin I have had hidden in my heart, and I have had the time to confess it and seek God in those things in order for repentance and true heart change.

It seems that when there are very few distractions, you are much more aware of what is going on inside your mind and heart. Without all the extra noise, you can feel the things that you normally cover up, and you can see the things you are normally blinded to when the cares of life are in the constant forefront of your life/mind.

This leads me to believe that people from the 1600's and times like those in the past, were much more able to hear from God and seek God without all the hustle and bustle of the 21st century. Perhaps it is even why there are so many more devoted Christians in other countries where there are no luxuries and technologies like that of America.

There is simplicity here.

You are able to see that you really don't NEED all those things you have at home. You actually are better off without them because all they do is distract you and keep you focused on the things of this life, instead of what is above.

I read this loud and clear this week, "It is so easy to lose sight of God when 'goods' increase". WOW. That is SO true. Our life in Christ, and our destination heaven-ward is much more easy to recognize and rely on in the wilderness. It is SO easy to rely on yourself, and all the luxuries of the 21st century when you are not in the wilderness. You have all the 'goods' at home, and you feel comfortable and

confident that those things will be there for you anytime you need them. When the store is 5 minutes away, and all you could virtually need and more is only minutes away----you don't need to rely on God. You start to rely on the store, and the car. You aren't learning to delay gratification when things are so close----you are not learning to prioritize when everything is within your reach.

But in the wilderness----priorities, reliance upon God, and grace are what comes first. In the wilderness, you have to make wise decisions about how much food to eat each day, to make sure you don't run out before you get that one chance to go to the store. And you have to make sure you remember what you needed because multiple trips to the store isn't possible.

In the wilderness, you also have to adjust to the fact that you probably won't be able to access all the things you want or even need for that matter. If the only store in town is only open until 8pm, and your husband gets home late, your out of luck for the day.

During the first week, I spent a little time cleaning up the place, doing laundry, and just putting the female touch on the home where my husband had left his male marks. And I also enjoyed some walks down the long flat road, enjoying the scenery of farmland and cows and clouds.

Thankfully, the landlord came by to drop off a vacuum after I insisted my husband ask him for one. And while the landlord was here, he offered to bring me a bicycle!!!! (THAT WAS GOD, ACTUALLY)!

The main theme in the time reading during the first week was focused on being broken and how God breaks us, and wants to break us, in order that His Spirit would be able to flow in and out of us!

My attention was also brought to the fact of how God wants to teach us to trust Him, and that is why we face many trials, storms, temptations, etc. I was reminded in that reading time how God uses the things we don't understand and situations that make us feel hopeless in order that we will actively choose to Trust Him over all the doubt!

I could see quite quite clearly that in order to actually grow in Christ, we NEED trial, hardship, temptations, difficulties, etc. We can't grow when there is no valley to walk through!!!!

And that was a main thing He revealed to me the first week----- that during the time a month ago when my husband quit his job, and then got offered a job this far away, when I was struggling and battling doubt and fear and trusting God----- it was all to bring me to this wilderness experience. Wow. Although I believe the circumstances were not orchestrated and authored by God Himself, I believe He sovereignly allowed it to happen, and used it for the good in that I was able to come out here to spend much needed time with Him and my husband! What mercy, what Love!!!

He immediately showed me that my ongoing battle for my son to have a father figure around ALL the time would need to cease. I would have to willingly accept the fact that my son may not be able to have that male presence all the time, and that I would indeed need to raise him alone possibly for a time. It was like a flash of lighting when the Lord spoke to my heart and said He is allowing me to go through this (raising my son alone) in order that I will see first hand the impact of not having a father figure around and how much it truly effects the child, especially the son. He has given me a burden to see fathers step up and for mothers to submit to the fathers and empower their influence by submitting to them! I believe God is going to use this in the future for His purposes. And I just want to point out that He was not the author of this situation. But He allowed it for His own reasons. I can trust Him fully and in His wisdom, and lean on Him and rest and hope in His mercy to work all of it for the good and for His purposes!

During the first week, I was able to use my phone internet connection on the computer, and was able to still connect with my Peacefulwife blog family, and stay connected that way. We had some awesome conversations that week, and I was brought into contact with a woman who God used me to share what I had been through in order to comfort and help her in her situation! It's amazing how God can orchestrate and link two people up who are literally countries away at His perfect timing for the ministering of Christ to one another!

I was also given a very life-changing revelation about my marriage. Talking with April from Peacefulwife, God spoke to me through her, and opened my eyes to see that I don't have to talk to my husband all the time! He is an introvert! And I have Jesus! And this healthy separation keeps me from idolizing my husband! I had previously found myself longing and longing to be able to have long, deep, intimate discussions with my husband in order to feel connected to him. But he was just not really into that. Even though I respected his wishes and personality, I still desired it. But God plainly showed me that I DON'T NEED THAT IN ORDER TO BE CONTENT!!! Wow! Freedom!

The first week I also found myself laughing hysterically to the point of crying when my husband and I got to actually sit down when he came home from work and talk and he told me stories that made me die laughing. We haven't done that since we got married 2.5 years ago. The times at night when we ate dinner and talked and laughed and watched movies are priceless.

There are no distractions here. We can sit on the couch, eat off our paper plates, and enjoy each other's company without the constant fight for his attention from the computer, phone, etc. He is just as stripped of all comforts as I am, and we are forced to interact and enjoy each other's company.

Does this not seem like another sure reason why there is so much lack of intimacy these days especially in marriages? There are so many distractions that are killing our marriages. Internet. Phones. Game systems. Gym memberships. Hobbies. None of these things are bad in and of themselves, but when they are what eats up ALL our time and our husband's time, leaving little to NO time for true interaction and intimacy-----they are a huge hindrance and a major issue. How many arguments are started over the husband being taken up by the phone, computer, or television?

When in the wilderness, there is nothing but hard work for a man, food to eat, and a couch to sit on. He can't just hide in the bedroom surfing the internet all day long. He has no choice but to talk with me. THIS IS A BLESSING IN AND OF ITSELF!!!

I can imagine people living here have dinner together, family time, and lots of intimacy. Sure, other people might have internet and things here, but when you are only surrounded by land and peacefulness----it's really hard to get distracted for long! Things that are important move into focus, and you begin to see that all those things you have at home are not really making your life better, they are actually stealing your time and your relationships.

This week also I realized that it is a lot easier NOT to sin when no one is around you. But that no matter where you are, you are still there with your own mind, and the mind alone is a battleground. I found that even in the wilderness I was not exempt from trials when the winds of adversity, literally, hit me on a bike ride that took 2 minutes to get to the stop sign, and an hour to get back to the house as I fought against 20 mph winds! That was a spiritual experience in a practical way!!

#### WEEK TWO:

This week, my husband had his day off and we spent it sleeping, eating, going to a store 30 minutes away, and hanging out! It was a nice day and we enjoyed the time together watching movies as well after we found a gas station in town where they rent out movies! 5 for \$5 for 5 days---can't really beat that deal :)

Another special gift from God came the next day, when after the WORST thunder storm I'd ever experienced happened, where it literally lightening'ed all night long to the point where I didn't fall to sleep until 3 am. My husband left for work the next morning, but was called off due to so much rain flooding where he worked. BLESSING IN DISGUISE, AND A GIFT FROM GOD!

We spent that day watching more movies and cooking and hanging around. We also used some of our internet from our phone to watch some youtube videos that interested my husband. I found I was able to freely express my feelings, and that he and I were talking easily and actually having a normal relationship. Once I realized I don't need him to be the source for all my needs to be met, it was like I

saw him in a whole new light!!!! All of a sudden, he seemed like the most amazing man ever! He is strong, cool, calm, collected, peaceful, and he loves me! For the first time, I actually knew in my heart that he truly loves to just be with me, doing nothing. He wants to be around me. He always has, I just never realized it!

During this past week, another theme started to emerge from all the reading I have been doing----- watching and praying unto the keeping of your mind. I started learning more and more about how the enemy tries to take our minds captive and to bring us back into bondage of fear, worry, etc.

As the week has gone by, however, I found myself getting more and more restless.....unsure if I was even really spending all the time I've had, rightly. Because at the end of the day, I felt I had done absolutely nothing.

But then the Lord showed me that even from this wilderness, I can learn, and be disciplined, and be used by God to reach others (through the internet)!

The revelation and answer to my prayers came this week too as I read the book "Breaking Free" by Beth Moore. The Lord spoke to me through that book to show me all the things I was struggling with my son, were the very same things that my parents had taught me and struggled against with me.

I was able to recognize negative behaviors and attitudes my parents passed down to me that have been strongholds, and that I am unknowingly passing on to my own son. I am desperately ready to "rebuild the ancient ruins", and repent of all those destructive ways, and seek God and to live godly in front of my child more than ever before. I became aware of the enemy's scheme to try what worked on my parents on me. So far it has worked. I was a very rebellious strongwilled child, and the enemy used me every last bit to oppose and provoke my parents into utter helplessness and all kinds of sin. And the enemy has tried the same thing on me, and for a while it worked. But by the grace of God and His Mighty power which worketh in me, He has shown me the ancient ruins and He has given me everything I need to live godly in this life, and the power to bring down those strongholds and choose His will and His way over my own!



All of a sudden, I am realizing that a lot of things I thought I needed don't really matter that much. People place so much emphasis on being involved in all these activities and things, but do those things really help your life?

Aren't there tons of people who wish they could just have some time alone or away to refresh and relax? Yet no one thinks to just shut the tv, put off the phones, and go outside or to the park or somewhere desolate in order to do this. Instead, we are completely bombarded up to our heads with things to do, people to see, places to go, technologies to occupy us, and tons of stuff that really in the end is not going to matter!!!!!!

We are supposed to be using the time wisely!

And I know this all might not apply to people who work for a living.....I get that. All I'm trying to do is share what I've learned out here in this wilderness experience. I think the truth that the more we have the more problems we have is true.

And I believe that the more we have, the more we can do, the more we can buy, the more we can see....the more DISCONTENT WE ARE!

There have been times when I had everything I could ever want and need at my very fingertips at home.....yet I was not satisfied! I complained often. I had EVERYTHING, yet I was not happy! Wow.

Here I am, no car, no people, no tv, no internet, no food really....just water, air, bike, couch, sun, books, notebook. And I am more content here then I have ever been anywhere else in my life, EVER.

There is a cute bunny that lives around the outside of the house that I see everyday. My husband played a funny joke on it by banging the window one day and the bunny just stayed still, totally still. The amusement in the wilderness is simple :)

Out here, I am seeing just how much my husband cares for me. After having a bit of a disagreement one night, he tried to make up for things by going to the store to get me some more milk and bread after work. When I reacted upset instead of

eternally grateful, he was confused and rather offended. I tried to explain that I thought he would be coming home first, so that I could go to the store since I don't leave the house all day! But after I ate dinner and got my mind right, I thanked him for going out of his way for me and for doing such a kind thing. It wasn't often that he got the chance to take care of me like that, since I always had the store at my own fingertips at home. Now, I am forced to rely on my husband since he has the car all day. I can trust him to do what's best for me! He wants to make me happy! He is gaining trust in me again. Before, he was skeptical and scarcely would do such things because he felt he couldn't make me happy no matter what he did. But after I've been on my journey to respecting him and becoming a godly, satisfied wife, he has been able to trust me more because he is learning that I won't be upset or react wrongly to his kind gestures like I did in the past! What a blessing!

Today, I also tried to find any relation to my situation in the Bible. I read the story about Joseph, but realized that he didn't purposefully go sit in a dungeon, he was forced into isolation like that. Paul was also forced into prison, so not sure he can really relate to what I'm going through. I was trying to understand what a person is to do in such a desolate place and time. What is a person to do in complete solitude for 12+ hours a day???

The only thing keeping me sane is the Presence of God and reading. But even in between---- I can LITERALLY hear my own heartbeat. Just being here. It's that quiet all the time. There is no place for fear and anxiety in the wilderness when you have all your trust in God to meet your needs! There is no need to rush in the wilderness. There is no need to keep yourself occupied with vain things. The only thing that matters here is your relationship with God. That's it.

It is all about your faith and trust and hope in God. Without Him, none of this makes sense. Without Him, there would be no point whatsoever for this time here or life as it is.

Then, today, I find out that my husband has to work late from this day forth due to the boss's greed. His boss wants them to work extra hours eachday in order to

get the job done quicker. I'm not exactly happy about this. Now I'll be spending even MORE time alone, here, in the wilderness. What's a girl to do?

The wilderness is the place where God humbles you and proves you, to show you what is truly in your heart. The wilderness is the place where you have no other choice but to rely on Him. It is where He shows you that HE IS GOD ALONE, and that HE IS SOVEREIGN. It is the place where He reveals Himself to you, and shows you His glory. I saw the Glory of God in the sky last night as the lightning struck and repeatedly lit up the sky. It was amazing. And the actual experience coincided with my spiritual experience just that morning----God had shown me that in order to come into His Presence, we have to BELIEVE Him. If we are doubting, and looking at things from a natural point of view, then we can no longer see Him. But when in the middle of the darkest night, you believe-----He lights up the sky like never before, and takes your breath away!

The last day off with my husband was a little upsetting. I became overwhelmed with having to leave him again.

The wilderness is a place of wrestling with God. It's just you and God. And he asks, will you trust me? No matter what happens?

The wilderness is a place of prayer. It is the place where you are alone with your mind and heart. Where what is important starts to surface in your heart.

The wilderness is a place to see that the only way for your family to be a family is if you give up the city life and live off your own land somehow. Otherwise the city life steals your husband away all in the name of providing a good life for the family.

In the wilderness, the question starts to surface, "who will have ALL of you? God or X?"

And it is here that I have discovered all over again that I have not loved the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I have loved my husband and my

family more than I have loved Him. I have wanted my husband and my family life more than I have wanted Him.

That was tough to face. But once I faced it, I was able to let it go, and I realized that in the end, all we are going to have is our faith. In the end of all things, our name will either be in the book of life or it won't. And in the end, we will not be married to our spouse and have families and live like we did on earth. Nothing of earth will matter. It will all be about the Lord. One thing becomes certain: we neither brought anything into the world, and we will bring nothing out of it.

In the wilderness, the Lord wants to take us alone, and get us to realize that the earth and all that is in it is going to perish. He wants to teach us how to live on the earth, but not attached to the earth. He wants to reveal what we are really clinging to in our hearts when we are in the wilderness with Him.

WEEK THREE: The last week has been flying by, I don't even know where it went. All I know is that I had a lot of rough times thinking about how much I don't want to be separated from my husband. I had to really seek God to understand what is going on with it, and what I need to do in the situation. I grew more and more upset as the days went by, and my husband ended up having to wake up extra early and he came home late each day except one. At this point, I feel alone out here. Literally, all I have is Jesus, and some books. I almost ran out of internet so I had to cut my communication off in that way. I talked to my mom and my son here and there, but there is only so much you can talk about when you have nothing going on.

But then the Lord started leading me to see that when Paul was in prison in Rome, at the end of his life, when the earthly representation of the church was falling apart all around in Asia and all had deserted him, he saw the heavenly church as the body of Christ, and he rejoiced over it, realizing that it was not a thing of THIS EARTH or time. It was an eternal thing and it was being formed in heaven, whether it was together in earth or not.

I started seeing that the things on earth right now..marriage...family...things of this life...are really only a shadow of what is heavenly. And in heaven, we will not have families and marriages, we will all be one in the Lord Jesus. And even though the revealed will of God is not what my life looks like right now for marriage, I am believing that God is allowing it for a purpose, and when the purpose is fulfilled, my husband and I will be brought back together. There really is nothing more I can do except submit to God and all Him to do what only He can do in my heart and marriage and life for His purposes. He is not a liar. He will accomplish His purposes one way or another.

I must choose to have faith, and stand on His Word.

Nearing the end of my stay here, I am truly wondering if all the things we go through and all the experiences that leave us baffled are really just the training of God. If my whole life is under His sovereign Hand, then all the things I experience must have a lesson in them. Something to learn of Christ. Just like Paul, when he had that thorn and asked the Lord to remove it, and the Lord said His grace was sufficient for him..... He got to know Christ in that His grace is sufficient under that suffering to get him through it. The riches of His grace!!

In this wilderness, I have been brought to see so many ways the enemy attacks ever so subtly. It is amazing to me to read books from someone over 100 years ago and he is describing what I go through in my prayer time, for example, being attacked by the enemy with a rushing amount of thoughts that I cared nothing about until the moment I am going to pray..... things that he has obviously experienced and that I experience all the time...just shows how TRUE this battle is, and how God is bringing His people into the same experiences throughout time in order to shape and mold us into the image of Christ inwardly. That really is amazing.

And at some point, it has been made clear to me that all the things we go through God is using to knit together His Body in spirit. All the attacks and all the sufferings are pushing His children closer together in spirit and fellowship, and it is having the opposite effect that the enemy intended it to have when he set out to destroy each member of the Body one by one.

So what HAVE I learned here? I've learned that the way I act and how I talk and how good I handle myself and my own emotions, etc. really does affect how my husband sees me/treats me. If I am in a grumpy, negative, complaining, sad state of being, he is automatically uninterested in my life. If I am taking care of my life and emotions and am peaceful and content in his presence, he is all about me and my life. I have learned that you really do NEED people to live. Maybe not a whole city, but you need fellowship and interaction with human beings to survive and remain semi-sane. But even if you spend most of the time literally alone, you still have Jesus and books where you can connect with others whom you never met. It is like that. I've learned that you don't need all that fancy life stuff to survive. You don't really even need to go anywhere or be involved in anything outside your home. It is actually pretty relaxing and peaceful not to be running around all the time. I've learned that everything I've ever actually LEARNED has not been by merely reading about something, it has only been by what I have actually experienced. And usually I have only come to find out what exactly the Lord was teaching me AFTER the experience is over. That is His way. Life has natural consequences, and so does the spiritual life.

The last day before I left, GOD WORKED in my husband's life by allowing him to be rained out again!!!!!! We got to spend the whole day together. I was grateful! We took a road trip and just enjoyed each other's presence one last day. A few days before, I had gotten a random phone call for a job interview that I had applied for months ago when my husband quit his job. I had set up an appointment with the lady, but was feeling very anxious about that. I talked to my husband about it and I knew I had to make a decision. The day I left, my husband and I had a nice ride to the airport and we said our goodbyes! I knew it would all be ok because the Lord is with me. He didn't want to see me go, for he loves having a wife.

The plane rides were ok. Until I got to the last airport in Detroit Michigan. The plane was delayed an hour or so. During that time, I started seeking God for wisdom about whether I should go on a job interview. I started seeking wisdom from respected pastors online about it. The main thing I was concerned about is whether leaving my son to start a job was really the right thing to do. God opened my eyes and led me to the conclusion that if I was going to take a job just to have

a better life or more money, then that is not God honoring at all. But If I were in a dire need and my family was in need, then there would be grace for that situation from the Lord. I concluded that I would not be working for any other reason other than to get my husband home or to save more money to buy our own house so that he won't have to travel anymore. Those motives were my own, and not from God or for God alone. After talking to my husband about it again, he told me that I didn't need to take a job and that he wanted me to focus on being content in life and on not 'freaking out' about anything. Wow. God is leading me through my husband!!!

Eventually, the plane out of Detroit kept being delayed, until finally, at around 11 pm, they announced that the flight was totally cancelled. Panic erupted all around me, along with anger. I watched as most of the passengers on the flight started taking out their anger on the employees, and freaking out about the delay. God kept my mind in perfect peace and I focused on His sovereignty and trusted in Him. The airline set us all up in hotels in the area, and there were shuttle busses to the hotels. I met a woman named Maryann who I asked if I could stay near to her. I was scared. I was in a dangerous city and knew no one. But thankfully, the Lord provided this woman to stay with me through it all. We finally caught the shuttle at around 12:30 am, and made it to a Hampton Inn. The accommodations were very pleasant. I couldn't sleep, however, due to all the anticipation and thoughts about when I would actually be leaving. The flight was rescheduled the next day at 6 pm. This was hard to think about and accept, but I had no choice. The next morning, I got up early, and sought the Lord. I had just finished praying about the Lord moving in the situation to get us home sooner--- when a knock at the door. It was Maryann--she had been on the phone with the airlines all morning, and finally got through and found us 2 seats on a straight flight in the next 2 hours!!!!!!! WOW!!! God is SO GOOD!

I got ready very quickly, we took a cab to the airport, and we got through with an hour to spare. I got to talk to Maryann and it was nice to have someone nearby through it all! We got on the plane and made it back to our hometown by 11:20 am!!!

The Lord is so good!!!

The next day I went home to my house with my son, and got settled back in.

It is weird being back here now. After having nothing for 3 weeks to distract me, I am not used to it all yet! There is so much here that distracts.

But I look back on the last thing that happened, and I see how the Lord provided a sure opportunity to practice contentment! I chose to trust God and I believed that there was definitely a reason for things falling out the way they did. All Glory be to Him!

And now, after being home only a few short days, I got a call from my husband----  
---HE IS COMING HOME!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He got offered another job at home, and he is taking it!!!! WOW!!

I am speechless at the way the Lord rules! He allowed all things to happen the way they did in order to work something out in my heart----- to purge my heart and to refine me inwardly! I am amazed and I give Him all the glory!!!!!!

Also, coming back to my own home, I am able to really relate to my son----his heart is broken that he had to leave his grandparents. I talked to him about being content in Christ alone and that no matter what, we can decide to be happy even if we feel sad.

I can see the Lord working in our lives and it is truly amazing.

I miss the wilderness-----it is a place of peace and quiet----it is the place where the Lord meets you, and where He works in your heart and refines you. I am so grateful for this experience!!!