

Week 4 Bible Study outline

Read John of the Cross's poem "The Dark Night of the Soul"

The Dark Night of the Soul

St John Of the Cross

On a dark night,
Kindled in love with yearnings—oh,
happy chance!—
I went forth without being observed,
My house being now at rest.
In darkness and secure,
By the secret ladder, disguised—oh,
happy chance!—
In darkness and in concealment,
My house being now at rest.
In the happy night,
In secret, when none saw me,
Nor I beheld aught,
Without light or guide, save that
which burned in my
heart.
This light guided me
More surely than the light of noonday

To the place where he (well I knew
who!) was awaiting me—
A place where none appeared.
Oh, night that guided me,
Oh, night more lovely than the dawn,
Oh, night that joined Beloved with
lover,
Lover transformed in the Beloved!
Upon my flowery breast,
Kept wholly for himself alone,
There he stayed sleeping, and I
caressed him,
And the fanning of the cedars made a
breeze.
The breeze blew from the turret
As I parted his locks;
With his gentle hand, he wounded my
neck
And caused all my senses to be
suspended.
I remained, lost in oblivion;
My face I reclined on the Beloved.
All ceased and I abandoned myself,
Leaving my cares forgotten among
the lilies.

As you read the poem, what thoughts come to your mind about walking with God in the wilderness?

Walking with God is not easy, nor should it be. In the wilderness, its encounter, its outcome is assured.

The Dark Night of the soul is a journey filled with unknowns, where all seems lost, where darkness takes you to the deep abyss of your soul. A spiritual wasteland where you are an orphan. Like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, anguish overpowers. Where the battle between the old and new self-rips you from your unconscious and exposes the darkness within. Seeking release from this spiritual depression, you cry out, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me, only to hear nothingness. Its duration unknown, the darkness overpowering, exposing our crippling ego, revealing wounds in need of healing.

Staying in the wilderness is a time of discovering trust, faith, and obedience, and the presence of God.

What do you think happens during the Dark Night of the Soul?

Read Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28, Matthew 28:20, and 2 Corinthians 5:7

What do you think you will discover in the wilderness about walking with God?

Read Number 14:1-10

What is the danger of leaving the wilderness too soon?

Read Isaiah 40:1-11, Matthews 6: 25-34 Can you think of other faith scriptures?

How does worrying not depending on God affect our faith? And how can you overcome worrying?

Read: Ephesian 6:10-20

How does Ephesians talk about faith? What is required for us to do?

Read Hebrews 13:5, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 4:10-13

How do these speak about faith?

Read Matthew 6:25-34, Matthew 17:20

What do these scriptures say about faith?

Walking with God requires obedience. It's hardest to be obedient in times of pain and suffering because we tend to look for a way out. So, of those ways are succumbing to temptations: drink, drugs, pornography, spending sprees, even affairs.

You will discover that avoiding the pain, escaping the wilderness only leads to more suffering.

Read James 1:2-4

What does James say about suffering?

Read Exodus 33:12-13a.

How can the wilderness teach us obedience?

Walking with God in the wilderness is standing in God's presence.

It's in the wilderness when things are dry and barren, even silent, you intentionally seek God and open your life.

Read Exodus 33: 1-3

What can separate us from the presence of God?

Read Exodus 33:15, -23, Psalm 84:10. Psalm 27:4

What do these scriptures say should be our desire?

The wilderness will expose your desires. Of our desires, Moses says, staying in the wilderness with God, far excess living in the promised land without God. To experience God, you must make time for God.

How do you make time for God? What is the purpose?

Read Psalm 51:10

What is God's purpose in taking us to the wilderness?

