

Our God who blesses us by leading us through the wilderness

‘Where might a person full of the Holy Spirit end up? The wilderness might not be our first choice, but that is what happens to Jesus. As he made his way through a hard landscape, the tempter disclosed his hand and Jesus spoiled his tactics. Satan was trying to prevent Jesus continuing the journey begun at his baptism (3:21-22), knowing that he would face defeat if he could not get Jesus off this path (John 12: 31). Jesus would have none of it....

Like Jesus himself, we will be exposed to the reality of our vulnerability and human fragility, resulting in temptation and distorting visions of reality....

Only if we surrender our self-centred view of reality...can we be open to the Spirit, who longs to disclose our true nature as children of the will and kingdom of God.’ (John Rackley in BRF ‘Guidelines’).

1. Why did Jesus face these particular temptations at this particular time? What particular temptations do we face, because of where we are in life at this time?
2. How did Jesus defeat them, and what can we learn from his methods, to help us overcome temptation? Read Psalm 119: 9 – 16. See also Ephes. 6:10 - 18
3. The third temptation was particularly devilish - hence the saying, ‘Even the Devil can quote scripture for his purpose.’ What checks and safeguards do we have, to avoid twisting scripture to suit our purposes?
4. In Matthew’s version, see what happens when the Devil leaves him (Matt 4:11). What encouragements may we receive through this wilderness experience? See 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 4:14-16. How are we blessed through this?
5. There are of course other kinds of wilderness experience, as well as battling with temptation. Share with one another as you feel able, and pray for one another. The prayers of other Christians, to whom we make ourselves accountable, are of great value.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o’er us, all our weakness Thou dost know.

Thou didst tread this earth before us, Thou didst feel its keenest woe.

Lone and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert Thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy...

Thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.