

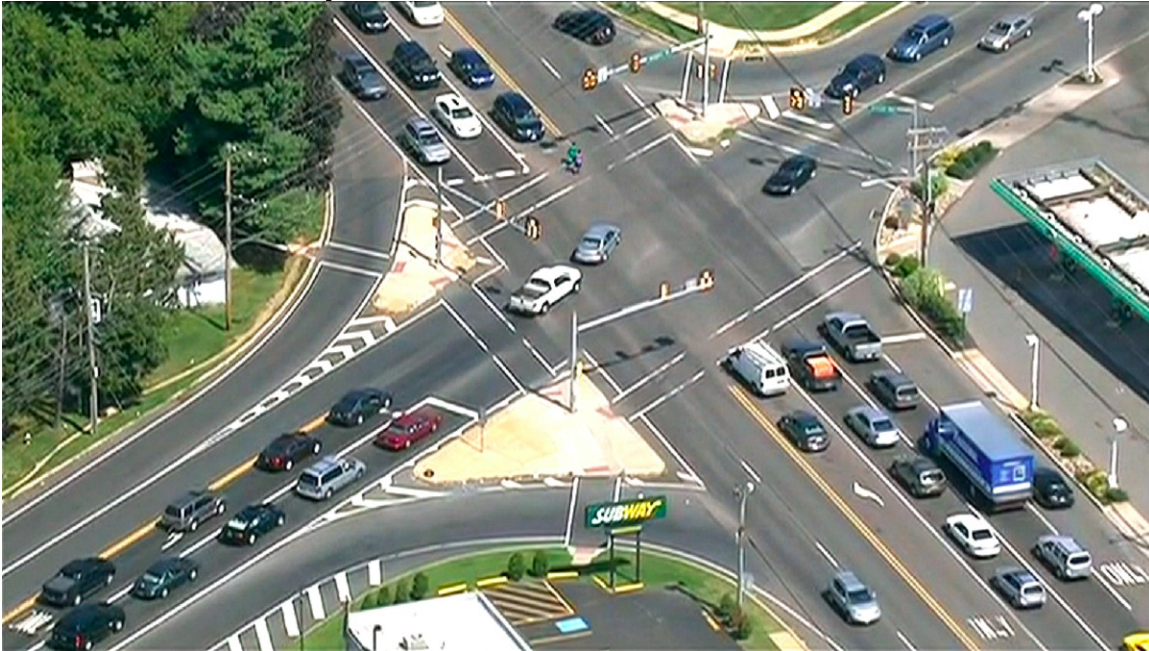
What To Do In The Wilderness

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Attitude, Perspective & Effort

***What is the most dangerous intersection in America?
You want to see a picture? Here it is...***



If you ever travel in PA Time magazine recently declared that it was the intersection of Knights Road and Street Road in Bensalem, PA – plagued by poor lighting, poor signage, discontinuous sidewalks, aggressive drivers and jaywalkers.

In two years there were 144 crashes at this site, and 170 were injured or fatally wounded. More than 36,000 vehicles, including buses that carry some 500 people a day travel on Street Road daily. Watch out PA travelers!

What is the most dangerous intersection for us as Christians?

Well I don't know if it is **THE** most dangerous, but one of the hardest things for us to navigate is the intersection between **what we know**

God is calling us to do on the one hand, and our wilderness experience on the other. (have a diagram of this – these two things intersecting – the words)

I know for myself when circumstances hit that I am not fond of, I tend, like the Israelites, to complain and grumble.

And I know that's not what God is calling me to do. But

I have a tendency to think negatively.

I am a person who sees the glass half empty to begin with...

negativity is my MO

I have a tendency to want to escape the current circumstances and to blame God for my life.

These are the glasses I tend to wear when I am in the wilderness.

When things aren't going my way...

They are dark Glasses – *I easily put them on in the wilderness...*they

fit well in the wilderness...glasses of discouragement, negativity, futility, *god has abandoned me glasses, I can't trust him, glasses.*

It will never work out unless I worry about it glasses...

That's what the children of Israel did, right? They grumbled and complained.

God why did you bring us out here – to die?

As Rosalie explained last week, they were so negative in their out look, they couldn't even trust God enough to claim the promised land that was right in front of them.

They were too scared to even see it and that inability to see God at work –to trust him in the wilderness– made it necessary for them to wander in the wilderness – and take another 40 year detour.

Sometimes I wonder how many detours I have taken in my life

because I have worn these dark dreary down in the dumps glasses

See that's why the intersection of the wilderness vs. God's call is so dangerous

We can miss it, if we focus on the wilderness

We can miss it and up taking a lot of detours in our lives

Now you might say, Kim, that is not a fair analogy.

Because if I had a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night guiding me, like the Israelites, I would be in the best mood!
I would trust God no matter what.
I wouldn't see the world through dark glasses...I'd be encouraged to praise God all the time

Well today... WVPC I want you to be encouraged.

We have been in a kind of wilderness time as a church, going through this denominational stuff.

I am so tired of it.

I so want this to be over.

This has been the hardest time for me professionally as a pastor - and all of this has gotten to me at certain times, on certain days and I have become rather discouraged.

There have been days when I have put on these glasses...and seen things in a dark dark way...

You know what I am talking about...

Its been a wilderness time...but today I want you to be encouraged. I want you to throw these glasses away (break them in half or toss them in waste basket)

Because despite the wilderness,
despite the difficulties...I want to point out to you the cloud and the pillar of fire already here at wvpc... ..leading us guiding us all the way...

I want you to be encouraged today!

I want you to know that during this period of time – this wilderness of denominational chaos and confusion

I have never had so many remarkable stories coming to me from people like you - telling me stories of what God has done in their life – and they don't give credit to any denomination or system of thought that has brought about this transformation...

No... ..these people give all the credit to Jesus...

Never ever before have I heard so many amazing things in a year, doing ministry for 33 years, as this year...

We have had more people coming to Christ...
Many people have either asked Jesus into their heart, or rededicated themselves to Christ in a whole new way

Telling me...things like...God is all that matters. I want to follow him and give my life to him in ministry.
Two people in the last three months...wanting to get into ministry

Remarkable choices have been made for the kingdom
People have shared with me visions they have had of Jesus
Dreams about Jesus
Next week we have a baptism – an amazing story right there...of someone transformed

If that isn't a sign of God's guidance and presence leading us through this time, I don't know what is
Amazing volunteerism and
Tremendous servant hood –
One story I am able to share with you
And I have permission to share this from all parties involved

One of the things that has happened recently is that
Doug and Connie Rowe (long time members here) have agreed to be one of our Crash Zone kids foster parents,
A young man, who needed a place to go...Sarah called them they took this young man in

They stepped up and said we'll do it.
We've got two extra bedrooms...
We know how much Daniel (the Crash Zone student) loves the church, finds this place a safe and inspiring place to be
We want him to be able to be here at this church – our church; we want to provide a home for him
We want this to be a safe place, and our home to be a safe place for him
And they have been amazing...

This story was video taped but it is too dark to show, but just listen to Doug Rowe – the way he describes this for a minute...

AUDIO OF DOUG: 8:20-9:30

In the wilderness of this time here WVPC...there has been such richness...such God centered giving and transformation of lives
You can't force these things to happen
No amount of programming, or staff, or money makes these things take place
You can't make someone open their home, reach out, be willing to sacrifice for another
These kinds of things happen when the Holy Spirit begins to move among us

These are the signs of God's presence – the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that we have
I want you to be encouraged WVPC

If you are in your own wilderness today, there's a lot of things you can't control – that's right
You can't control the circumstances around you
You can't control what other people do or think
You can't control circumstances tomorrow or yesterday

But **you can control you right now...in the present...**and you can, if you want, take these glasses off and start seeing God at work – the cloud and the pillar of fire are right here

How do you do that? How do you see God in the wilderness?
How do take off the dark glasses and see with faith?

Well it isn't always easy...
it takes a little intentionality, but you can do it.
Especially with the power of the Holy Spirit – you can do anything.
But sometimes we have to make an intentional choice and start moving in the direction of faith before we begin to feel like it...

That's where intentional choice, and discipline comes in...

What do you do in the wilderness to take off these dark glasses. Well
The first step is:

Choose Your Attitude: The Israelites grumbled and missed the promised land. When the enemy tries to get you to put on the dark glasses...

Instead, start praising God...start remembering the promises (God is for me, who can be against me...he is at my right hand...Give thanks to the Lord for he is good)

Just purely on a psychological level, **studies show that if you don't feel great...but you choose to be positive anyway**, you choose to sing instead of complain purely through an act of will... ... **your feelings will eventually follow.**

Fake it til you make it as AA says...

We don't want to live in denial...it doesn't mean that sometimes we don't cry, or mourn, or experience sorrow.

BUT when we are in a wilderness time, if we want to see God at work, stop complaining and worrying & start praising,
Stop grumbling & start thanking,
Stop looking around at everybody else & look up and start worshipping...

Turn your eyes upon Jesus...Look full in his wonderful face
And you will see your attitude begin to shift to gratitude in the wilderness

2. You Can Choose to Have A Big Perspective: Now this is related to Attitude. But it's a little different...

We were in Michigan this past weekend because Jonathan, my youngest child, is going there for college
And as many of you know he is going to play baseball there

So we got to sit with the head coach of the baseball team – coach Bakitch is his name - and the other recruits for about an hour and we

listened to him talk to us and in the hour he shared with us a story about *his own* baseball coach.

Bakitch's coach was a guy named Keith Le Clair.(PICTURE OF HEALTHY KEITH)

Keith LeClair was a baseball legend in his time.

He was a great baseball player himself, signed with Atlanta Braves, did a spring training with SF Giants,

And then became the head baseball coach at East Carolina University where he guided the Pirates to four straight NCAA Regional appearances, three Athletic Association championships and one Conference USA title.

And then he got ALS. This incredible athlete and coach had his body just paralyzed by this terrible disease.

It got so bad, that Keith couldn't move anything except his eyes.

He was on a ventilator, and he chose that because he had two small children and he wanted to stay alive for as long as he could to be with them. And because of this diagnosis he began to pour through scripture...and he found Jesus.

He couldn't do much in the last few years, but he could do one thing.

He could blink his eyes. That's how he communicated.

In his last year or two, through blinking his eyes, Keith LeClaire decided he would use what he had to bless others; and so he wrote devotionals by blinking – and they are published in a book called “Coaching Third” – and these devotionals are all about Jesus.

How wonderful Jesus is, and how Keith learned to depend on the Lord through his illness in a way he had never done before.

Here's a quote from one of his devotionals. He writes,

“All my trophies that I won will one day rust away and no longer have any meaning....All the goals and prizes we strive for in this

life will have no significance in our lives, unless we put the prize of Jesus Christ first.”

Another time he writes,

“If I have given one person hope through my illness it will have been worth it all.”

What a perspective folks!

And coach Bakitch told that group of young recruits that day...that all of them needed to make what he called a perspective poster to keep them in the right place mentally.

He himself had one, and on that perspective poster which he showed us, there was a picture of Keith LeClaire. And coach Bakitch said to all of us, “When I think I am having a bad day I look at this picture of Keith LeClaire – my friend and coach – and I think again and realize, I am not having such a bad day.”

If Keith LeClaire once a specimen of an athlete, now physically paralyzed, can inspire hundreds of athletes by blinking his eyes and in so doing writing devotionals of hope...Bakitch said...certainly I can lift my eyes up off of my own problems and start inspiring others too.

I can walk, I can breathe without a ventilator, I can talk, I can live this day to the fullest.

3. EFFORT: We can Choose to Make Mor of An Effort To Go Deeper In Our Faith:

Some people say...well I'm saved by grace, and I believe in Jesus so la dee dah...I am getting' into heaven when I die so who cares? I'm good...I'm saved...I'm slippin' into heaven by the skin of my teeth... but I'm in there...

Bonhoeffer calls this “cheap grace” – kind of taking advantage of God's goodness and not giving back – not sacrificing. Bonhoeffer was imprisoned for his faith during WWII and knew a lot about sacrifice and it was from prison that he wrote about cheap grace.

I am teaching the spiritual disciplines...to a bunch of students at a seminary in Oakland. *(I know I've told you this before but I keep mentioning it because I am so inspired by them).*

No cheap grace in that class.

Nobody is cutting corners with God trying to slip into heaven easily.

I've never seen a group so enthusiastic about getting to know Jesus better.

I've got kids fasting for 2-3 days at a time for other people, for their school, for God's blessing on a mission trip they are going on...

They pour over scripture– and then they quote it back to me...

Many of them are serving too, working with low income children who need tutoring and mentoring – they are serving in churches, they are passionate about their faith – they get so excited when God answers their prayers...

They love the Lord

It encourages me to be with them because they get thrilled about God and the things of God...and they are intentionally making sacrifices to go deeper in their faith and get to know him better...

As Keith LeClaire said, there is no greater prize then getting to know Jesus.

Sometimes it means a sacrifice...sometimes it means giving up some time, being inconvenienced, walking through a wilderness period

But if it brings me closer to you Lord, then I'm all in

And by the way...there are...

So many ways to serve here WVPC – the window is full of volunteer opportunities...Nominating is going to be elected at the meeting...and When nominating calls, consider serving...don't say no right away... at least pray about it

Operation Christmas Child – donate, help, be a part of the party today after the meeting

Be a Service Worship Project Leader (November)

Come pray with us on Tuesdays, or before worship in my office at 8:30AM – just started...join up
Delve into scripture after the sermons by going to Adult Ed

And let Jesus be your greatest treasure...pursue him first above all else...

That's what you do in the wilderness.

You take off these glasses...these dark glasses of worry and doubt and fear...

BY

choosing your **ATTITUDE** of gratitude, choosing your big **PERSPECTIVE**, and by making an intentional **EFFORT** to seek the Lord first in all things – even if it means sacrifice.

And you will see the Lord...