

THE BIG STORY

FROM CREATION TO CHRIST

WEEK 6

The Wilderness Way: Rebellion, Promise, and a New Heart

DAILY READING – Feb 23rd-27th

Mon – Numbers 11

Tue – Numbers 14

Wed – Deuteronomy 2:7; 8:2–3

Thu – Deuteronomy 29:2–4

Fri – Deuteronomy 30:1–10

DEVOTIONAL

The Wilderness Way: Rebellion, Promise & a New Heart

Memory Verse: “And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness... that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart.”

Deuteronomy 8:2

Story Thread: The wilderness reveals the problem of the heart and points to God’s promise of a new one.

Israel is free—but not yet transformed. By the time we reach Numbers, God’s people have witnessed miracles: the Red Sea parted, Pharaoh defeated, daily provision from heaven. Yet in the wilderness, they grumble. They long for Egypt. They question God’s goodness.

“Would that we had died in the land of Egypt!” (Numbers 14:2). How could a rescued people long for slavery?

Because freedom from oppression does not automatically produce trust in God. Egypt was cruel—but it was familiar. The wilderness feels uncertain. And uncertainty exposes what lives inside the heart.

Deuteronomy tells us something surprising: God led them into the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2). It was not punishment—it was revelation. The wilderness did not create Israel’s rebellion; it revealed it. Pressure does not invent what is in us. It exposes it.

The wilderness shows what we trust when comfort is removed. It reveals whether we want God’s presence or only His provision. It teaches that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Yet even in Israel’s failure, God remains faithful. “The LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing” (Deuteronomy 2:7). His covenant love does not collapse when His people struggle.

As Moses prepares the next generation to enter the Promised Land, he speaks of something greater still: “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart... so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 30:6).

The Law could guide them. The wilderness could reveal them. But only God could transform them.

This promise points forward to Jesus. Where Israel failed in the wilderness, Jesus trusted the Father (Matthew 4:1–11). Where the Law exposed the heart, Jesus fulfills it. Through the New Covenant, God does what His people could not—He gives a new heart.

The wilderness is not wasted space in the story. It is where God prepares His people for what comes next. What feels like delay may actually be formation.

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

TALK Have you ever had to wait for something important? Why is waiting sometimes hard?

READ Deuteronomy 8:2–3

PRAYER God, thank You for staying with us even in seasons that feel slow or uncertain. Help our family trust You and listen to Your Word. Shape our hearts to love You more each day. Amen.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

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The Wilderness Way: Rebellion, Promise, and New Heart

1. **In Numbers 11 and 14, Israel complains even after experiencing God’s rescue.** What does this reveal about the human heart?
2. **Deuteronomy 8:2 says God led Israel through the wilderness to reveal what was in their hearts.** Why is it important to see the wilderness as formation rather than punishment?
3. **“Man does not live by bread alone” (Deuteronomy 8:3).** What does this teach us about dependence on God?
4. **Despite Israel’s struggles, Deuteronomy 2:7 says they “lacked nothing.”** What does this show about God’s faithfulness?
5. **Deuteronomy 30:6 promises that God will give His people a new heart.** Why is inner transformation more important than changed circumstances?
6. **Jesus succeeds in the wilderness where Israel failed (Matthew 4:1–11).** How does this help us see Him as the fulfillment of this part of the story?

