

# THE INVITATION

Surviving the Wilderness



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*How to manage when God calls you into a place of isolation*

**Michael A C Maynard**

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*I dedicate this book to all who accept God's invitation to a closer walk with Him.*

## **Acknowledgement**

My main thanks has to be to God, as cliché as that sounds I just recognize how much he was and is there for me. I thank Him for His friendship and care, yes His God but he doesn't always show up as God. Sometimes He comes as a friend, shoulder to cry on and a drier of tears.

## Book Chapters

<b>Series 1 – The invitation</b>	<b>Series 2 – Jehovah Jireh</b>	<b>Series 3 - Rehoboth</b>
Setting the Scene, Popcorn Ready	Have you got what it takes?	Brighter Days Are Coming
The Object	A friend's sacrifice	What About Isaac
Let the games begin	More than a sacrifice	Max the Man
Spiritual Insight	Reality did more than kick in	What about Isaac Part 2
Miracles vs Attacks	Testing Times continued	Promises, Promises
The Blessing in the Storm		It's up to me
Eat, Sleep and Repeat		The enemy's plan
The Aftermath of the Storm		Born Lost
Jess and the Dove		The invitation
A New Direction		Wilderness Matrix
Learning points		
Testing Times		
Faith in the Wilderness		
The Twins		
Milly's Journey		

# Introduction

When we accept Christ into our lives, we all start out with different expectations of what will happen, who we will become and how we are required to conduct ourselves. Whilst there is only one way to be saved, there are many versions of what salvation looks like once you are saved. This version of salvation often depends on your road to getting saved or the church/Christian who introduced you. It's only natural to cling to those around us to either teach us or guide us in our early days/months. We therefore adopt the beliefs or practices of those who introduce us.

Now in the grand scheme of it, this is ok as its very important to become grounded in our new belief, and the bible (the ultimate aid) is supposed to be the common denominator between all of these nuances, it takes over from those who introduced us to Christ and as we read it more the Holy Spirit steps in as a teacher to reveal its hidden truths. Therefore, the wilderness (like the many dominations of Christians) has many names (desert, isolation, lonely time, stripping, valley experience, testing, etc). It's a period of time when God requires your attention so much that He calls you away from everyone and everything to a place where it is just you and Him. What happens in that period is up to Him, but most commonly, it will be used to:

- test you
- draw you closer to Him
- increase your reliance on Him
- improve your faith
- cause you to change direction
- save your life

Despite what many will say, when you're in the wilderness, it's not a means to punish you, especially when you seem to lose everything at the same time. People will say, it's because he/she sins that God has stripped them, don't get me wrong, sin may have been the reason for the wilderness, but its aim is never to punish you. The Spirit of God is who leads us into the Wilderness, and because He promises never to leave us or forsake us, He is right there with us. How can spending more time with God be a punishment? If He calls us to meet with Him,

that's not a punishment, that's discipline, and as the scripture tells us, "He disciplines those whom he loves. So if God has called you into the deserted place, it's because He wants to speak to you. If you have found yourself isolated from all that you know, seek Him as He is there with you. The Scripture is literally full of wilderness experiences; even Jesus faced one before he began his ministry. No one is exempt.

Finally, anyone who is called to do something great for Him will go through a wilderness period, sometimes it's to test us, to ensure we are ready for what He is leading us into. Sometimes it's to transition us from one place or function to another. Embrace the process, no matter how painful it may seem. God only does what is good for us. His will is not to harm us but to give us a great future. See this as a journey, a critical part of where He is taking you. Don't give up, stay in faith and you'll make it.

Enjoy travelling



## **Series 1 – The Invitation**

## Setting the Scene – Popcorn Ready?

The journey to my Midbar started just over 2 years ago. If I'm honest, it wasn't a journey I wanted to take or was prepared to take. It was and has been a very long journey one of the great sacrifice and pain, the sort of journey (experience) you read about in the bible but never thought would happen to you; to help explain my experience and to stop you getting bored (we all get bored at some point in every journey) I have written this book from 3 different angles. I have used personal narrative (my viewpoint), the introduction of fictional stories (as sometimes stories paint a better picture) and finally biblical teaching (scriptures you can refer to and digest)

The aim of this book isn't to dish the dirt on anyone in my life or embarrass anyone who knows me. If you know me and you're reading this and that's what you think, then you have missed the point. The aim of the book is simply to:

- 1) Describe my own personal wilderness journey, the things I faced and how I felt whilst facing them.

- 2) Articulate some common themes I believe are applicable to all who face a wilderness experience (I have used a number of biblical wilderness examples to reiterate this)

- 3) To allow God to speak to you in a different format and provide understanding and revelation to you of His purpose for your life. Ultimately, if you experience a wilderness, it's because He loves you and is trying to get you somewhere and ultimately wants your attention. He calls us out into an unknown place, so all we hear is His voice. We have no choice but to seek Him. The reality is our world is too noisy, it's filled with too many things that compete for our attention, God loves us too much to let us go. He therefore calls us to a place where only His voice matters.

- 4) This book highlights 3 spiritual places we must journey to (although there are many more). I have included the 3 places I visited.... The wilderness, Jehovah Jireh, and Rehoboth. We need the Holy Spirit to access any of these places. Therefore, our walk with Him in particular is crucial. He is the one who leads us to each place. He helps us navigate each terrain and what we should do while in that place. Without the Holy Spirit, we are lost (eternally and daily). We must make it habitual to invite Him into our day and listen for His prompting at all times.

How to read this book!

This book is written solely for the purpose of encouragement. To help the reader, I have written it from 3 points of view.

1) My own experience throughout its text, I have used myself as an example and my own journey, what I learnt, felt, and experienced.

2) I have included biblical teachings to reinforce my own learning experience, but as an aid for your own journey, when you experience something similar, you will have access to the words that I was given. These teachings are in green.

3) I have included several fictional stories along the way to articulate a point or provide context to the reader. These stories are written in blue text.

Whilst, like any book, it's advisable to read from cover to cover, some of the chapters can be read in isolation due to the type of content.

If you are entering into a place of isolation, remember it's for you, not against you. God is calling you into a higher place of Trust, which requires your full attention. For me, I believe my wilderness was a personal intervention; I was going one way and God wanted me/needed me to go another. There were things in my life that had to go, that had to change, and the only way that was going to happen was for me to get lost, to be taken into the depths of nothingness, and stripped of all I knew. It was the journey I never knew I needed, but the one that was necessary, and I am and will be forever grateful to Him for leading me there.

Now that you understand what this book is about and why you're reading it, let me first explain to you what a Midbar is.

### **Understanding Midbar**

Midbar, as you have probably guessed, is a Hebrew/Jewish word, often used in its full term as Yahiya Midbar- its literal translation means "The Lord speaks," and as with most words, it has a root word or dual meaning. In this case, Midbar shares a dual meaning with the word wilderness or desert.

Its root origin is from a word "Davar" which means "to speak" or le-bar (another durative) meaning to speak. Hopefully, I haven't lost you through the many definitions, but essentially wilderness (Midbar) originates from the root word debar/devar (to speak),

suggesting that the wilderness is a place where God speaks and the place where we hear His voice the clearest.

Now this isn't a new concept, as the bible is full of many examples of God calling people away from their surroundings so He can speak to them. It's interesting because one thing we know is that God is all-powerful (omnipotent) and is omnipresent, so surely, He can't be limited to only speaking in a desert? No, the reality is the problem lies with us; God can and does speak all the time, the challenge is our listening. One of the first examples we have of this is found in the bible (Genesis 12), God telling Abram to leave his father's house to travel to a land that God will show Him. In fact, when God spoke to Him, He gave Him several promises of His intentions; however, it wasn't until Abraham fully left his father's house was the full promise was revealed. I don't believe God was holding back on him. He could have told him everything before he moved out, but perhaps there was something about Abram's family environment that would have inhibited him from believing everything God wanted him to hear. God needed him to leave first and along the journey, all would be revealed. Abram's action to leave took faith. He was voyaging into the unknown, leaving the comfort of a family and stable home for a life on the road with no physical guarantees. Abram's act of courage and faith led him to a place of covenant, and that covenant (with God) changed the world forever. In fact, anyone who ever approaches God by faith is somehow tied to Abraham's decision, his decision paved the way.

In my own life I have, I have had so many experiences of hearing God's voice much clearer whilst in a different environment from my normal one. Perhaps it's because the everyday environment is too familiar to use. There are many reasons for this that I won't go into at this point, but even Jesus was limited from doing many miracles in his hometown due to familiarity.

If you are struggling to hear God or His guidance, maybe you need to relocate temporarily to a place where you can hear his voice, change it up a little (praying in a different room, at a different time) to shake things up. The reality is, He is always speaking; it's us that doesn't always listen. One of my favourite quoted scriptures is in Isaiah 55 v 3, it reminds us to come before God with our ears wide open, in other words, come ready to hear without distractions.

Warning: it would be wrong of me if I didn't issue a brief warning here. Sometimes God will call you to a place of solitude, but we don't always listen. It's like He sends us an invite to an audience with Him or a party for two, and we keep rejecting the invitation. I'm too

busy, God. I can't come now, work is really crazy right now, I have a holiday booked, I'll see you when I get back. For some of us, God has been calling for months, perhaps even years, and our excuses become even more elaborate. But God is a patient God; He is also a very intentional one. I didn't heed the call. I was stuck in my life, struggling with my issues. I often cried out to Him but failed to take any action for deliverance. His last invitation to me was a little more forceful (or intentional, shall we say). He invited me into a boat on a journey I was unaware of. Somewhere on that journey, there was a storm, the tool of choice to get me away from the land I have become so familiar with. The storm sent, like the Apostle Paul experienced in Acts 27, caused a shipwreck. When I finally made it to shore, I was in the land of Midbar.

***If this chapter has spoken to you and you're ready to go deeper, continue the journey by purchasing Chapter 2 of Wilderness- The Invitation***

## **About the Author**

Michael Maynard is an author, entrepreneur, and businessperson. His claim to fame is that he loves God and submits every area of his life to Him. Michael is a divorced father of four, three of whom reside with him. He believes in living a purpose-filled life and makes it his goal to help others become all that God has called them to be, primarily through the use of their God-given gifts.

He was properly saved at the age of 15 (his first few salvation attempts were questionable), filled with the Holy Spirit, and now operates in the gifts God has bestowed upon him. He lives a life of purpose, which he believes is to help others fulfill theirs, and he prays that this book aids in that mission.

Michael is a four-time author, making this his fifth book (praise God). God has truly been good to him throughout his journey, and despite the ups and downs of life—like many of us—he is committed to the end, by God’s grace.

**Michael A.C. Maynard**

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