

GROWING IN THE WILDERNESS

LENT 2022 | DIOCESE OF ATLANTA

WEEK 4: APPRECIATION GROWING IN COMPASSION

These reflection guides are designed to supplement the videos, for use in a small group Bible study. They are created for the leader's ease of use, and with links to free web-based resources.

REFLECTION

This story tempts us to choose one son over the other and to validate one son's pain over the other's; that's the trap!

The only person for whom the family wilderness does not result in growth is the older brother. He seems only able to appreciate his own pain. And while his pain is legitimate, so is the pain of others.

The freedom and new life comes in the wilderness of their time apart. Both seem to gain a new appreciation for one another.

How can we use family wilderness times to grow in appreciation for one another?

~Bishop Wright

SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 15:1-3, 11-32: the parable of the prodigal son and the compassionate father.

Read Other Stories of Jesus' Compassion. Every time Jesus is moved with compassion, it leads him to do something about it. What other similarities do you hear in all these stories about Jesus' compassion?

- [Matthew 9:36](#)
- [Matthew 14:14](#)
- [Mark 6:34](#)
- [Luke 7:13](#)
- [Luke 10:33](#)

Explore more about the Greek word for compassion and where it's used:
https://biblehub.com/greek/esplanc_hnisthe_4697.htm

DISCUSSION

- Share about a time when you have been "in the wilderness of strife" with a family member or someone close to you.
- In that season, has wilderness time apart helped you grow in compassion or appreciation for each other? How might it?
- In what ways might we be tempted to prioritize one person's pain over another's? How might we learn from the examples of Jesus' compassion?
- How might you use the remainder of this Lent as an opportunity to grow in compassion? What practices will help? (The articles below have some ideas).

ARTICLES

For Further Reading:

Infographic on the scientific benefits of compassion:

<https://charterforcompassion.org/defining-and-understanding-compassion/top-10-scientific-benefits-of-compassion>

More details on the benefits of compassion:

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/the-compassionate-mind>

PRAYER

*In the wilderness of family strife, Lord, help us to grow in appreciation for all we have and those we love, especially those we struggle to love.
Amen.*

TAKE-AWAY

If you're in the wilderness with someone close to you, commit to praying for them for 40 days. Pray that God would enlighten you both. Pray that you would be able to own your part, and that God would give you compassion and appreciation for that person.