

The Encourager

Helping People Live Courageously

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A Publication of Dave Dravecky's Outreach of Hope

How long, Lord? Where are you, Lord? Have you forgotten me, Lord?

How often those of us who have spent lonely, desperate days in the wilderness of pain or loss have lifted these cries to God! King David did. Jan and I did. And so have many others. It doesn't matter who we are, but time in the wilderness seems to demand more than we have to give. It leaves us feeling helpless and utterly alone. It leaves us wondering if even God has abandoned us.

Jan and I have learned that the wilderness is part of the landscape of faith, every bit as essential as the mountaintop. On the mountaintop we are overwhelmed by God's presence. In the wilderness we are overwhelmed by his absence. Both places should bring us to our knees: the one, in utter awe; the other, in utter dependence.

One by one the wilderness took from us everything we had depended upon in place of God. It took away our physical health, our mental and emotional health, our church, our friends, and even took us away from each other. Everything we relied on for our source of strength was gone. We were forced to turn to God because there was nowhere else to turn. But at times in the wilderness he seemed to be distant, if not absent altogether.

But just when our mouths were parched and Jan and I felt we would die of thirst, he provided a well—Dr. McGowen. Just when we were completely disoriented, he provided a sign pointing the way—Dr. Townsend. Just when it looked as if every trace of him had vanished, he provided a flower—Sealy Yates. Just when it felt as if I were going to die from sunstroke, he provided shade—Atlee Hammaker.

Through them we learned that God was not absent in the wilderness. He was there. We saw him. In the caring eyes of a family doctor. In the sympathetic voice of a psychologist. In the helping hands of a friend. In the comfortable presence of a fellow ballplayer.

As Jan and I reflect on our time in the wilderness, we learned a lot. We learned to walk by faith rather than by sight. We learned to trust God, even though at times every visible trace of him had vanished. And we finally came to the point that the Old Testament prophet, Habakkuk, did when he prayed: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful to God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

Jan and I can't say we had the feet of a deer as we went through the wilderness. Ours were a lot more clumsy than that. But I can honestly say we had the will to walk. In our heart of hearts we wanted to please God, to trust him, to love him, to obey him.

And I truly believe he was pleased.

Even with our stumbles.

Our prayer is that the words and images in this issue will bring refreshment to you in your wilderness journey.

From *When You Can't Come Back* by
Dave & Jan Dravecky.

*How long, O Lord? Will you
forget me forever?*

*How long will you hide your
face from me?*

*How long must I wrestle with
my thoughts*

*and every day have sorrow in
my heart?*

*How long will my enemy
triumph over me?*

*Look on me and answer, O
Lord my God.*

*Give light to my eyes, or I
will sleep in death;
my enemy will say, "I have
overcome him,"*

*and my foes will rejoice
when I fall*

*But I trust in your unfailing
love;*

*my heart rejoices in your
salvation.*

*I will sing to the Lord,
for he has been good to me.*

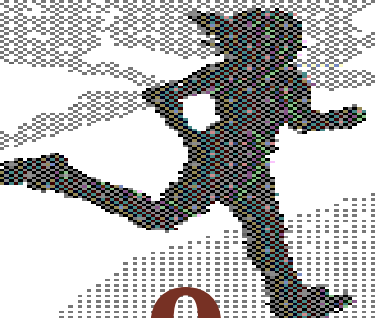
Psalm 13 (NIV), a psalm of David

THE WILDERNESS
JOURNEY

A WILDERNESS RUN

by Melanie Cooper

For the past five years, Melanie Cooper has battled a cancerous tumor in her arm. She has faced the wilderness of pain, fatigue, and uncertainty. During the summer of 1995, she could take no more. Physically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted, she was beginning, as she says, "to lose hope that these powerful medicines would destroy the tumor without destroying me first." So she took a six-month break from chemotherapy in order to rest and restore her health. Her health-restoration plan included running with Betsy, a friend from nursing school.



On our first run in September, I could barely finish two miles. I stopped several times. Betsy could have labeled me a "hopeless case" and called it quits, but she didn't. We continued to run and soon began training for a 10K (6.2 miles) race scheduled for early November. A few days before the race, I learned that Betsy would not be able to run with me. But I was determined to run, even if I had to do it by myself.

When I awoke on the day of the race, I was surprised to see blizzard-like conditions. As I joined the pack of runners at the starting line, the wind howled eerily. It whipped through my layers of sweat-shirt, turtle-neck, lined running warm-ups, running spandex, and ear muffs. The starting line was just a line scraped into the accumulating snow. No one cheered us from the sidelines—it was too cold. It was just us crazy runners and the man with the starting gun.

With the gunshot, we took off. Thick snow splashed beneath our fast-paced feet. The wind, although very cold, was traveling with us the first two miles. The gravel trail was lined with snow-kissed trees. It was breathtaking to see how God could make something so beautiful.

For a while another runner ran at my pace. We chatted and laughed—mostly about running—but she ran ahead and I was left alone. Soon I rounded a corner and met the bone-chilling wind. Suddenly I realized that the race would be difficult. My long hair formed into what felt like icicles and my cheeks became numb. Visibility was very poor. I squinted into the distance, seeking the flashing light that marked the next corner. I realized that the course yet to come would be even tougher, but I believed I could do it.

Gradually the tall trees lining the road became sparse. I was getting colder. A runner who had been some distance behind me suddenly appeared at my heels. As she sped up to pass me, she yelled through the wind, "This is the hardest race I have ever run." I wanted to quit, but I kept following her.

It seemed that the wind blew harder across every farmer's field that I ran beside and over every hill I crested. Sometimes I closed my eyes to avoid the pelting snow. I barely saw the two bundled-up people at the side of the road who yelled out my time and waved two fingers in the air: two miles to the finish line!

With wide open fields on both sides of the road, the course became even more difficult. The wind whipped wildly, the snow blew ferociously. I couldn't even see the runner in front of me. I wanted with all of my heart to cry, but the tears would not come. I kept telling myself to be strong.

Just when I thought I would surely pass out in the road and become Frosty's wife, I rounded a corner. The wind was at my back! With no one else around, I became my own cheering section. With each stride I shouted, "Run!" or "You can do it!" or "C'mon me!" or "You're almost there!" I flew down the road, feeling great.

Then I rounded the next corner to fight a terrible wind. That last mile was the hardest I have ever had to endure. The

race had become so much more than just the run that I had anticipated; it had become a parallel of my life's journey with God. Cars with the people who had been at the mile markers slowly passed me. When I glanced behind me, I saw the rescue truck at my heels, its four-way flashers on. My spirits sank. I was the last runner. I felt really alone, so I started talking to God. I kept saying, "Please, God . . . Please don't leave me." I couldn't hear Him answer me, and I began to wonder where He was. I kept running and continued talking to Him, begging Him to help me and give me strength to persevere.

At that point, my eyes closed. How my feet guided me I still don't know. With each tug of the wind I swayed from side to side in the road. I began to wonder when the rescue people would give up on me and snatch me into their truck. I worried that they would not let me finish the race.

Loneliness engulfed me. I kept asking God not to leave me. I just wanted someone to run with me—anyone—and I knew that God must be there even though I couldn't see or feel Him.

Suddenly I saw two people at the next corner. I was almost done! One of them approached me with a big smile, saying, "That can't be Melanie Cooper running the 10K of her life . . . It is!" He was a fellow runner who had crossed the finish line long before me. My feet kept trodding, but I began to sob. It wasn't so

I glanced behind me and saw the rescue truck at my heels, its four-way flashers on. I began to wonder when the rescue people would give up on me and snatch me into their truck.

much the fact that I was tired and cold as it was that God had heard my cries and sent this person to encourage me.

"This is so hard," I gasped.

"I know," he answered as he began running beside me. "This part is a little tough, but you've already come six miles. You're almost done. See that person ahead bundled up in blankets? As soon as you round that corner, you're going to feel like Superman with the wind at your back. You're just going to fly over that finish line!"

He was right. I did cross the finish line, and I did feel like Superman. Five people waited in the blowing snow. They didn't give up on me even though I was the last runner. As I finished the race, tears streamed down my face. My body had completed a 10K, but my soul felt like it had run a marathon.

Recently that race has come to mind many times.

Following my six-month respite from chemotherapy, my doctors ordered a more aggressive program to resolve the desmoid tumor in my arm. So in January I found myself at the starting line of a new semester in college and a new round of treatments. Unsure of what I would encounter, I began the race before me. I was well-conditioned for the race of college life, but nothing could have prepared me for the forceful wind of aggressive chemotherapy.

For the first few weeks, God was like a fellow runner that I could talk with easily as we made our way down the trail together. At the point where I realized that the course would be tougher, I could barely hear the encouraging voices of others. But I believed God was beside me, and I gave myself little pep talks.

But by March, during my third round of chemo, I felt the full force of the wind against me. I had lost all of my long, golden-brown hair. I was weak and nauseated. My class work and nurse's training seemed overwhelming. I didn't know how I could go on. I wondered if I should drop out of college even though I was finishing my junior year. For the first time

since the race began, I felt utterly alone and wondered where God was.

When it seemed that I couldn't go on, the race became even more demanding. I was admitted to the hospital with a serious infection. During my eight-day stay, doctors ordered an MRI to assess the size of the tumor. While the machine made its noisy racket, I turned another corner. Like a little child approaching her daddy, I took all the desires of my heart and voiced them to God. "Please don't leave my side," I prayed. "I know that my healing ultimately must come from you, not from my efforts, not from physicians, nurses, or chemotherapy alone. I know that you alone are in control, but please, I want you to heal me."

That simple act of pouring out the desires of my heart to God and choosing to rely on His strength made a difference.

The race has not become easier. I don't know what is going to happen to my arm—what winds and blowing snows I have yet to run through—but I know that, just as He has promised, God is with me. No matter what trials I face, I can call out to Him for help. I can place my hope in Him because He will renew my strength.

I'm still in the midst of my chemotherapy treatments, and I cannot see the finish line yet. At times I feel like I am running against the wind; I feel so weak and so weary that I can't even cry. Sometimes I just want to quit; I feel as if I cannot pick my feet up to take another step.

But recently another runner has stepped out from the sidelines to run with me. It is Dave Dravecky, a more experienced runner. Having run this race before me, he is encouraging me not to give up. His presence helps me remember that God is beside me as well. When God runs the race of life with us, it isn't that the race won't be hard or that the distance won't be long, but He knows the course we are running and will help us run. With that encouragement, I keep going, looking ahead, hoping to fly across the finish line.



Melanie Cooper

**Tears
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but my soul felt like
it had run a marathon.**

"He gives strength to the weary, and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary; and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:29-31).

WHEN A FRIEND IS IN THE WILDERNESS

by Dave Biebel

Once upon a time there lived a young pastor and his lovely family. The pastor and his wife loved each other very much. They were happy in their work and very devoted to their children, Jonathan and Allison.

The path they walked together seemed so good. The future seemed bright and secure. But late in the summer of Jonathan's fourth year, he got sick—very sick. Five weeks later, the beautiful, blond-haired, blue-eyed boy died of an undiagnosed illness. . .

That's how I entered the wilderness called heartbreak. It's a lonely, confusing, scary place. If only I'd had a friend to walk with me on this journey, perhaps I might have made it through in less than 15 years.

If you have a friend who is where I once was and you want to help, let me say two things. First, God bless you for caring. If you didn't care, nothing you could say or do would be very helpful. Second, be assured that you can help and that your help makes a difference. Now let me suggest three ways in which you can walk with a hurting friend.

Be There

Your friend needs to know that she's not alone because you are, and will be, with her. Your friend needs to know that you won't abandon her—no matter how long it takes, how deep it gets, or how well she follows the expectations of "good grieving."

From many others she will receive mostly words; from you she will receive yourself, a companion who will sit in the dark and share her pain, perhaps without saying a word. Spoken words are seldom remembered, but the person who came,

who stayed,
who wept,
who cared
is never
forgotten.

Listen

For most people, the wilderness of heartbreak is uncharted territory—a confusing place without roads, maps, or compass. Few guides really know the way through this wilderness, although many think they do. Those who think they know rush in, offer their pat answers and pious platitudes, answer questions that no one is asking, and leave, smugly assured that they have fulfilled their duty.

True listening, in contrast, involves learning to ask questions, not necessarily to answer them. Ask questions that encourage your friend to delve deeper, discover, face, and perhaps resolve the real issue. Through this process, your friend may express questions or doubts that seem out of character. Even a deeply religious person may express great anger at God, and the intensity with which that anger is expressed may shock you.

If this level of truthful but raw communication occurs, don't judge your friend, regardless of how uncomfortable you feel at the moment. Take a deep breath and say, "I'm sorry you are feeling such deep pain. These feelings are confusing and hard for us to express. Thank you for trusting me enough to show me what is inside your soul. By sharing this, you have given me a very special gift." When you validate your friend's pain, you may be surprised by what she says next.

Touch the Heart

When given the opportunity, your friend may express her true feelings. Those feelings—whether fear, anger, doubt, or guilt—are an open door to your friend's heart. It's important that you accept, not deny, those feelings. Only



Left to right: Christopher, Dana, Allison and Dave Biebel

then
can you step through the open door to
touch your friend's hurting heart.

For me, guilt was the open door. I felt responsible for Jonathan's death, and nothing anyone said could change that. Logically, I knew I wasn't responsible, but logic didn't matter because the guilt was in my heart. If someone had simply accepted and validated that guilt for what it was, that person would have touched my heart.

Many people who are sick, for example, express concern that they are a burden to others. They give their family and friends this open door, but instead of walking through it, family and friends often deny the truth. "Oh, no," they say, "you're not a burden." A better response would be, "Yes, this disease is a burden, but it is a burden I freely choose to bear because I love you."

A sorrow shared is a sorrow diminished. The way to truly share another's sorrow and thus to diminish it is to love that person. It sounds simple, but love is life's most difficult—and rewarding—task. If you ask for His help, God can and will give you the love and strength you need to walk with a friend in the wilderness.

Dave Biebel is an ordained minister, speaker, and author of numerous books including *Jonathan, You Left Too Soon; If God Is So Good, Why Do I Hurt So Bad?*; and *How to Help a Heartbroken Friend*. To order Dave's books, visit your local Christian bookstore or write to Liberty

PSALMS FOR THE WILDERNESS JOURNEY

At one time or another, wilderness travelers experience the desperate feeling of being utterly alone and lost. King David, who spent years living in the wilderness, was one of those travelers. His heartfelt cries to God, as well as the cries of others, are recorded in the Psalms. The Psalms remind us that others have suffered through the wilderness and have discovered that God is faithful. May these selected Psalms bring refreshment, comfort, and the hope that no matter how barren the landscape or how weary you become, God will never abandon you.

Others have journeyed through the wilderness before us.

Lord, have mercy. I am in misery.
My eyes are weak from so much crying.
My whole being is tired from grief.
My life is ending in sadness.
My years are spent in crying.
My troubles are using up my strength.
My bones are getting weaker.
Because of all my troubles, my enemies hate me.
Even my neighbors look down on me.
When my friends see me, they are afraid and run.
I am like a piece of a broken pot.
I am forgotten as if I were dead.
Psalm 31:9-12 *ncv*

God will not reject those who suffer.

For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him.
But has listened to his cry for help.
Psalm 22:24 *niv*

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
The Lord redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.
Psalm 34:18, 22 *niv*

Scriptures quoted from The Holy Bible, New Century Version, (1987, 1988, 1991 by Word Publishing; The Holy Bible, New International Version, (1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

Take heart! We can safely place our confidence in God.

Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, Lord, I will seek.
Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper
Do not reject me or forsake me,
O God my Savior. . . .
I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.
Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.
Psalm 27: 7-9,13-14 *niv*

God's love for us cannot even be measured.

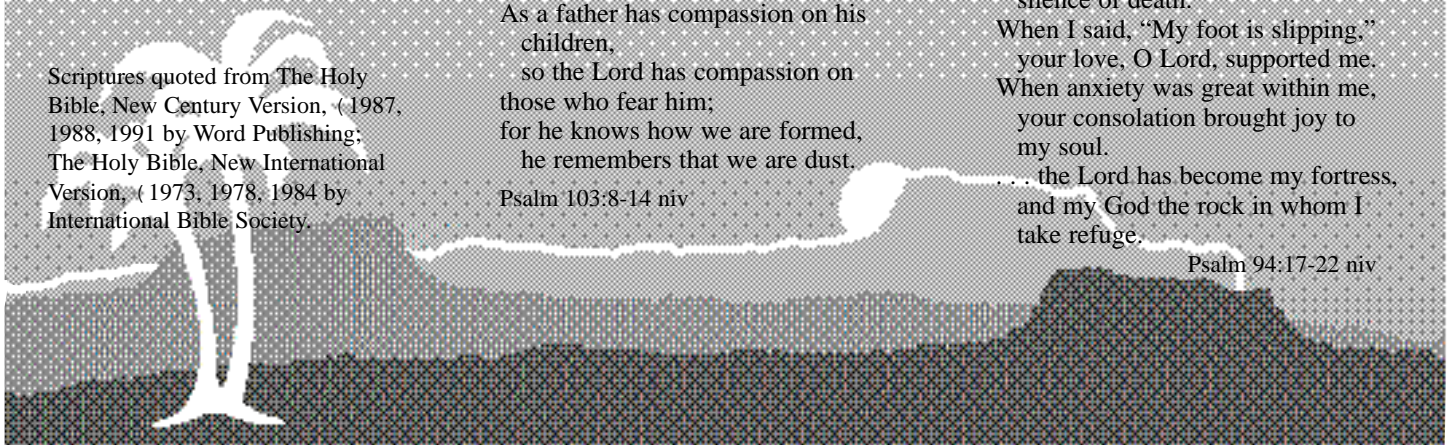
The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.
He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.
Psalm 103:8-14 *niv*

We can call out to God and share our deepest needs.

God, save me.
The water has risen to my neck.
I'm sinking down into the mud.
There is nothing to stand on.
I am in deep water.
The flood covers me.
I am tired from calling for help.
My throat is sore.
My eyes are tired from waiting for God to help me. . . .
But I pray to you, Lord.
I pray that you will accept me.
God, because of your great love, answer me.
You are truly able to save.
Pull me from the mud.
Do not let me sink.
Save me from those who hate me and from the deep water.
Do not let the flood drown me.
Do not let the deep water swallow me.
Do not let the grave close its mouth over me.
Lord, answer me because your love is so good.
Because of your great kindness, turn to me.
Do not hide from me, your servant.
I am in trouble. Hurry to help me!
Psalm 69:1-3; 13-17 *ncv*

God's love is a secure refuge.

Unless the Lord had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.
When I said, "My foot is slipping," your love, O Lord, supported me.
When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.
. . . the Lord has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.
Psalm 94:17-22 *niv*



WILDERNESS SURVIVAL GUIDE

This issue of The Encourager is about being in the wilderness. Whether that wilderness is the great outdoors or the wilderness of pain experience. What do you need? How can you prepare? Our Wilderness Survival Guide highlights the necessary requirements for surviving a wilderness journey.



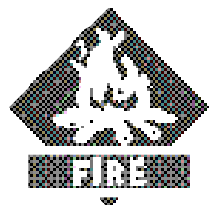
The wilderness outdoors: The first rule of survival is to build a shelter. If you don't have a tent or tarp, use branches or other natural materials to build one. Choose a site a safe distance from water. Avoid open and low areas where wind could damage your shelter or rain water could form a puddle around or in your shelter.

The wilderness of the heart: God wants to be our shelter. During danger he will keep me safe in his shelter. He will hide me in his Holy Tent, or he will keep me safe on a high mountain. Psalm 27:5 NCV. For you have been my refuge . . . I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings. Psalm 61:3-4 NIV. You protect the helpless when they are in danger. You are like a shelter from storms, like a shade that protects them from the heat. Isaiah 25:4 NCV.



The wilderness outdoors: If you get lost, you will need a signal to let rescuers know where you are.

You should carry three types of signals: a moving signal such as a flare or mirror, a contrast signal such as a colored cloth or blanket, and an audible signal such as a whistle.



The wilderness outdoors: Keep yourself warm and dry. A fire warms you, makes you more visible to rescuers, and calms your fears. Stock your survival kit with wooden matches in a waterproof container (empty film canisters work great). For a cheap fire starter, pack lint from your dryer in a ziplock bag. Children, please never start a fire without your parents' supervision.

The wilderness of the heart: God gives us His Word, the Bible, to help us find our way when we feel lost. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105 NIV. The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:130 NIV. "Is not my word like fire?" declares the Lord. Jeremiah 23:29 NASB.

The wilderness of the heart: God, our loving Father, is always looking out for His children, always watching for our signals and cries for help.

"But if I were you, I would call on God and bring my problem before him. God does wonders that cannot be understood; he does so many miracles they cannot be counted. . . . He makes the humble person important and lifts the sad to places of safety." Job 5:8-11 NCV.

And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me. Psalm 50:15 NASB.

The Lord is close to everyone who prays to him He listens when they cry, and he saves them. Psalm 145:18-19 NCV.



The wilderness outdoors: We must drink water to survive. Not all water that looks good is safe to drink. Always carry water with you, and keep water purification tablets handy. Never let your water supply get low.

The wilderness of the heart:

God wants to nourish our souls as well as our bodies. When we drink water, we will thirst again, but God wants to give us the living water of His Holy Spirit, which will last forever. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Psalm 42:1-2 NCV.

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14 NCV.



The wilderness outdoors: Never give up hope! Those who keep hope, who keep on doing everything they can to survive and be rescued, often live through seemingly impossible situations.

The wilderness of the heart: Never give up hope! Even when painful circumstances do not change, even when God seems to be working too slowly or not at all, He is faithful. He knows your pain, He listens to your cries for help, and He will never abandon you.

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. Psalm 62:5 NIV. Blessed is he . . . whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—the Lord, who remains faithful forever. Psalm 146:5-6 NIV.

Therefore I have hope: because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. Lamentations 3:21-22 NIV.

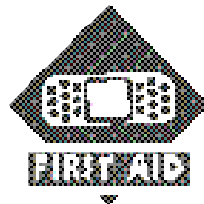


The wilderness outdoors: Think energy. Think calories. Try instant soup, hot chocolate, high energy bars, dried fruit, freeze dried meals, and MREs (Meals Ready to Eat, which are at most outdoor supply stores). Avoid foods that are heavy to carry or require lots of cooking.

The wilderness of the heart: God knows our physical need for food and promises to meet our basic needs. But our greatest need is a relationship with Him, the Source of Life.

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psalm 119:103 NIV.

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4 NIV.



The wilderness outdoors: When the unexpected happens, a first aid kit is a must. Make your own kit with bandages, pain reliever, scissors, safety pins, a triangular or wrap bandage, gauze, antiseptic, blister pads, or buy a ready-made kit.

The wilderness of the heart: Physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds are a part of life. God's first aid kit is overflowing. He brings healing through His personal touch; His Word, the Bible; and through special people he brings into our lives. Although those who face the battle for their lives may not receive healing in this life, God will bring healing in the next life to everyone who comes to Him. I have suffered for a long time. Lord, give me life by your word. Psalm 119:107 NCV.

He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds." Psalm 147:3 NCV. The tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18 NIV.

Sources: *The Gazette Telegraph*, April 25, 1996, "Preparation Ensures Worry-Free Adventure," by Deb Acord; Greg Wiggins, Quest Survival School, Monument, CO. Bible versions used: *New Century Version*, *New International Version*, and *New American Standard Bible*.

Just off the press!

LESSONS FROM THE WILDERNESS

The Encourager is free, a gift from us to you. Now that you've read it, become an encourager yourself and share this gift with someone you know who needs uplifting. Don't throw the gift away . . . pass it along!

PRESIDENT Dave Dravecky

EDITORS Stephen & Amanda
Sorenson

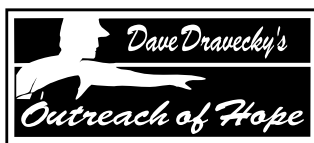
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How long, Lord? Where are you, Lord? Have you forgotten me, Lord?

How often those of us who have spent lonely, desperate days in the wilderness of pain or loss have lifted these cries to God! King David did. Jan and I did. And so have many others. It doesn't matter who we are, but time in the wilderness seems to demand more than we have to give. It leaves us feeling helpless and utterly alone. It leaves us wondering if even God has abandoned us.

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One by one the wilderness took from us everything we had depended upon in place of God. It took away our physical health, our mental and emotional health, our church, our friends, and even took us away from each other. Everything we relied on for our source of strength was gone. We were forced to turn to God because there was nowhere else to turn. But at times in the wilderness he seemed to be distant, if not absent altogether.

But just when our mouths were parched and Jan and I felt we would die of thirst, he provided a well—Dr. McGowen. Just when we were completely disoriented, he provided a sign pointing the way—Dr. Townsend. Just when it looked as if every trace of him had vanished, he provided a flower—Sealy Yates. Just when it felt as if I were going to die from sunstroke, he provided shade—Atlee Hammaker.

Through them we learned that God was not absent in the wilderness. He was there. We saw him. In the caring eyes of a family doctor. In the sympathetic voice of a psychologist. In the helping hands of a friend. In the comfortable presence of a fellow ballplayer.

As Jan and I reflect on our time in the wilderness, we learned a lot. We learned to walk by faith rather than by sight. We learned to trust God, even though at times every visible trace of him had vanished. And we finally came to the point that the Old Testament prophet, Habakkuk, did when he prayed: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and

the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful to God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

Jan and I can't say we had the feet of a deer as we went through the wilderness. Ours were a lot more clumsy than that. But I can honestly say we had the will to walk. In our heart of hearts we wanted to please God, to trust him, to love him, to obey him.

And I truly believe he was pleased.

Even with our stumbles.

Our prayer is that the words and images in this issue will bring refreshment to you in your wilderness journey.

From *When You Can't Come Back* by Dave & Jan Dravecky.