

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:1



Freshly baptized, Jesus is led out into the wilderness for a purpose. It is in the wilderness where Jesus will be tempted. But our story today isn't about those temptations. It is about where those temptations take place. Let's talk about wilderness for a moment.

What does the word "Wilderness" mean to you?

Where are some wilderness places you have experienced?

What was the most difficult thing about being in those wilderness places?

Often times, wilderness spaces today are actually quite tamed. Think about going into a national park, it is certainly wilderness—but it has developed roads and trails that are within a stone's throw of a parking lot. How can we truly experience wilderness spaces that are free from any sort of development?

Jesus is led by the Spirit to the wilderness. This is not an accident. There is intention here.

Why do you think the Spirit intentionally leads Jesus into the wilderness?

The story tells us it is about temptations. Is the wilderness the only place where temptations occur?

What is unique about wilderness spaces that allows for one to confront temptation full on?

What kind of dangers might Jesus have faced while he was in the wilderness, that were not temptation related?

Jesus used this wilderness experience to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting. How does practicing spiritual disciplines, whether fasting or others, draw us closer to God?

Do you think the Spirit knew the outcome of Jesus' time in the wilderness, or do you think Jesus had the opportunity to succumb to any temptation or any danger he might have faced while in the wilderness?

Tremendous Value Rests in Untamed Places

“In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is hereby declared to be the policy of the Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness.”

-Excerpt from [The Wilderness Act of 1964](#)

[The National Wilderness Preservation System](#) is a network of over 109 million acres – more area than the state of California - of public land comprised of more than 760 wilderness areas administered for the American people by the federal government. These are special places where nature still calls the shots. Places where people like you, with an appetite for adventure, can find a sense of true self-reliance and experience solitude. They are final holdout refuges for a long list of rare, threatened, and endangered species, forced to the edges by modern development. They are the headwaters of critical, life-infusing rivers and streams. They are places where law mandates above all else that *wildness* be retained for our current generation, and those who will follow.

There are 8 designated wilderness areas in Illinois, all in southern Illinois, nearer to the Ohio River Valley.

These are:

Clear Springs; Bald Knob; Crab Orchard; Panther Den; Burden Falls; Bay Creek; Lusk Creek; Garden of the Gods

Go to the website: wilderness.net

Click on the interactive map button to locate these wilderness areas. The interactive map also allows you to identify wilderness areas across the US. Click on the different wilderness areas to learn more about each.

Use the other buttons on the home page to learn what you can and cannot do in wilderness areas.

For instance—what are the rules about drones in wilderness areas?

If you would plan a trip to one of these designated areas, what preparations would you need to take?

Do you have proper hiking gear?

Do you have enough water supply?

Does your camera/phone have enough charge for your pictures?

Do you have a first aid kit?

As we think what it means to visit a wilderness area today, and all the intentional preparations we undertake before heading into the wilderness, what do you think it took Jesus to be prepared to simply go from baptism in civilization to walking out to the wilderness with just himself for 40 days and nights?