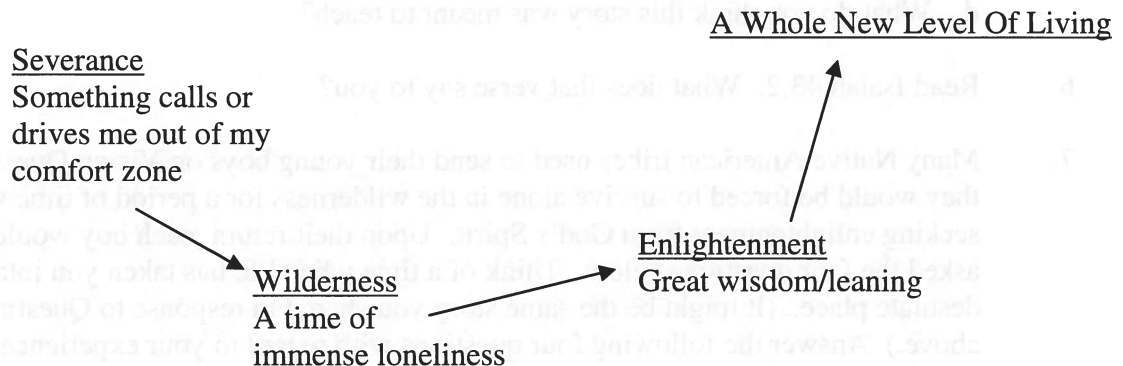


Fear Of Being Alone

On Sunday, we resumed our sermon series called “Fear Less” by exploring our fear of being alone.

1. Warm up question: As a kid, did you ever run away or get lost? What happened? How did you feel?
2. Our fear of being alone begins at an early age and continues, in various forms, throughout life. From cradle to grave, the prospect of being alone can be frightening. Tolstoy’s short story “The Lament” tells about an old man who lost his son, but had no one to tell about his grief. So he ended up talking to his horse. It’s possible to be surrounded by people – even wonderful, loving people – but still feel immense loneliness, as we face challenges that only we ourselves can conquer – like David facing Goliath. Examples for us might include illness, divorce, addiction, loss of loved ones, loss of community, or even death. Looking back across life, when did you feel most alone? How did that affect you?
3. The stories of many of the Bible’s heroes often seem to follow a certain pattern – sometimes called a “narrative arc.” Joseph Campbell calls this “the hero’s journey.” The pattern looks like this:



- a. Read Genesis 12:1-9. How do you think Abraham and Sarah felt at each stage of their journey: when they left their home, as they traveled alone to a strange new place, as they settled in and found their destiny?
- b. Blaise Pascal said, “The whole problem with humanity is that we don’t know how to be alone with ourselves in our room.” What do you think he meant? Do you agree?
- c. John Ortberg said, “Every [chapter] of great spiritual development in the Scripture is marked by solitude.” Why do you think that is? Why is solitude and aloneness so important?

4. Read Matthew 4:1-11.
 - a. Why couldn't Jesus have had this same experience while living in Nazareth? Why did he have to go into the wilderness?
 - b. What emotions do you think Jesus felt while being confronted by the devil?
 - c. How was Jesus' experience in the wilderness essential to the subsequent launch of his public ministry?
5. Jeff said, "It's in the quiet, most desolate places in life – when we feel most alone – that we have the opportunity to make transcendent leaps, to break through to whole new levels of life, to become all God intended us to be." On Sunday Jeff shared an ancient Lakota fable about a Little Mouse meant to illustrate that point. As a group, briefly retell the story, so it's fresh in your minds.
 - a. What do you think the roaring in Little Mouse's ear represents?
 - b. What does the great river represent?
 - c. What do the sacred mountains represent?
 - d. What do you think this story was meant to teach?
6. Read Isaiah 43:2. What does that verse say to you?
7. Many Native American tribes used to send their young boys on Vision Quests, where they would be forced to survive alone in the wilderness for a period of time while seeking enlightenment from God's Spirit. Upon their return, each boy would be asked the four questions below. Think of a time when life has taken you into a desolate place. (It might be the same story you shared in response to Question 2 above.) Answer the following four questions with regard to your experience:
 - a. Who went out? (Meaning: Who were you when you left?)
 - b. What did you see? (Meaning: What did you experience on your journey?)
 - c. Who came back? (Meaning: How were you changed by your journey?)
 - d. What did you bring? (Meaning: What gifts can you share with others from your journey?)
8. Right now in your life, name a struggle you face that you alone must endure, no matter how many loving people surround you. How has the material we've covered affected how you see that struggle?