

Life in the Desert from [A Prayer Life](#)" by Paul E. Miller (pp. 184-85)

The hardest part of being in the desert is that there is no way out. You don't know when it will end. There is no relief in sight.

A desert can be almost anything. It can be a child who has gone astray, a difficult boss, or even your own sin or foolishness. Maybe you married your desert.

God customizes deserts for each of us, Joseph's desert was being betrayed and forgotten in an Egyptian Jail, Moses lived in the Midian desert as an outcast for forty years. The Israelites lived in the desert for forty years. David hid in the desert while fleeing from Saul.

The theme of the desert is so strong in Scripture that Jesus reenacts Israel's desert journey at the beginning of his ministry by fasting for forty days in the desert. He lived with the hope of resurrection but faced the reality of his Father's face turning from him at the cross.

The Father turning his face against you is the heart of the desert experience. Life has ended. It no longer has any point. Death would be a relief.

God takes everyone he loves through a desert. It is his cure for our wandering hearts, restlessly searching for a new Eden.

The first thing that happens is we slowly give up the fight. Our wills are broken by the reality of our circumstances. Things that brought us life gradually die. Our idols die for lack of food.

The still, dry air of the desert brings the sense of helplessness that is so crucial to the spirit of prayer. You come face-to-face with your inability to live, to have joy, to do anything of lasting worth.

Suffering burns away the false selves created by cynicism or pride or lust. You stop caring about what people think of you. The desert is God's best hope for the creation of an authentic self.

Desert life sanctifies you. You have no idea you are changing. You simply notice after you've been in the desert awhile that you are different. Things that used to be important no longer matter.

After a while you notice your real thirsts. While in the desert David wrote, 'O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water (Ps, 63:1).

The desert becomes a window to the heart of God, He finally gets your attention because he's the only game in town

You cry out to God so long and so often that a channel begins to open up between you and God. When driving, you turn off the radio just to be with God. The clear, fresh water of God's presence that you discover in the desert becomes a well inside your own heart.

The best gift of the desert is God's presence. We see this in Psalm 23 where we read that the Shepherd 'leads me' (v. 2) and is 'with me' (v. 4).