

**Psalm 107: 1-10 (NIV)**

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; his love endures forever.

2 Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

3 those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

4 **Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.**

5 They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

6 Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

7 He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.

8 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind,

9 for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.



*I'VE BEEN THROUGH THE DESERT ON A .....*



## ***Desert:***

- 1. a large area of land, usually in a hot region, where there is almost no water, rain, trees, or plants, e.g. the Simpson /Sahara Desert.*
- 2. refers to a place or situation thought of as bad for people because it is not interesting, exciting, or useful in any way.*

***Often used metaphorically by Christians as a lament of their spiritual journey, status or relationship with God.***

***E.g. I'm feeling;***

- dry***
- alone***
- uncomfortable***
- lost***



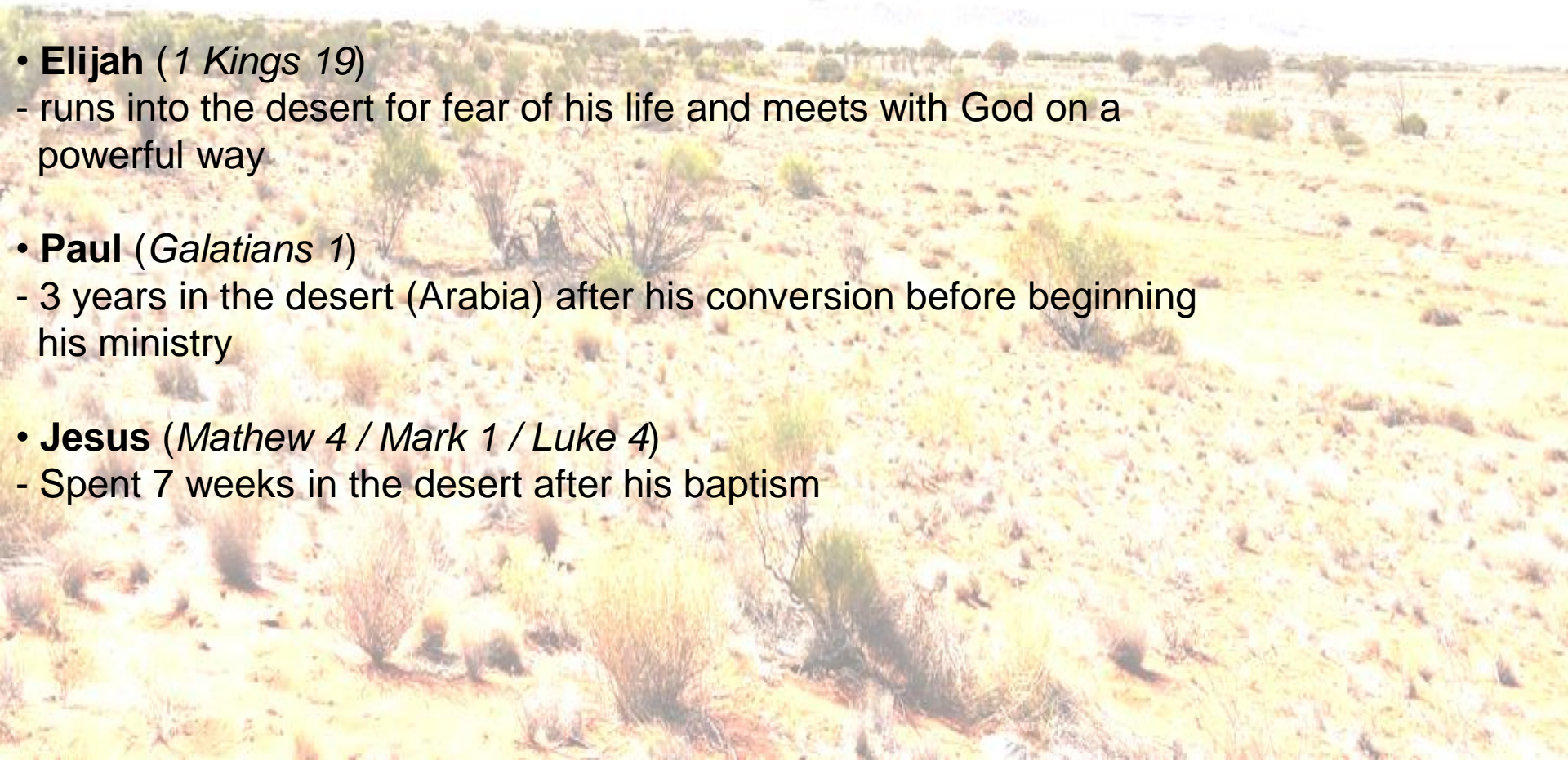
***“The desert serves as a common metaphor for a space or time of confusion, transition and growth”.***

**Whyalla often seen as a “desert experience” .**

- **People come here for a time and find God in a new / deeper way or for the first time**
- **Return to where they came from or move on to other places the better for it**
- **This has been the testimony of this church in particular**

## The desert experience in the Bible:

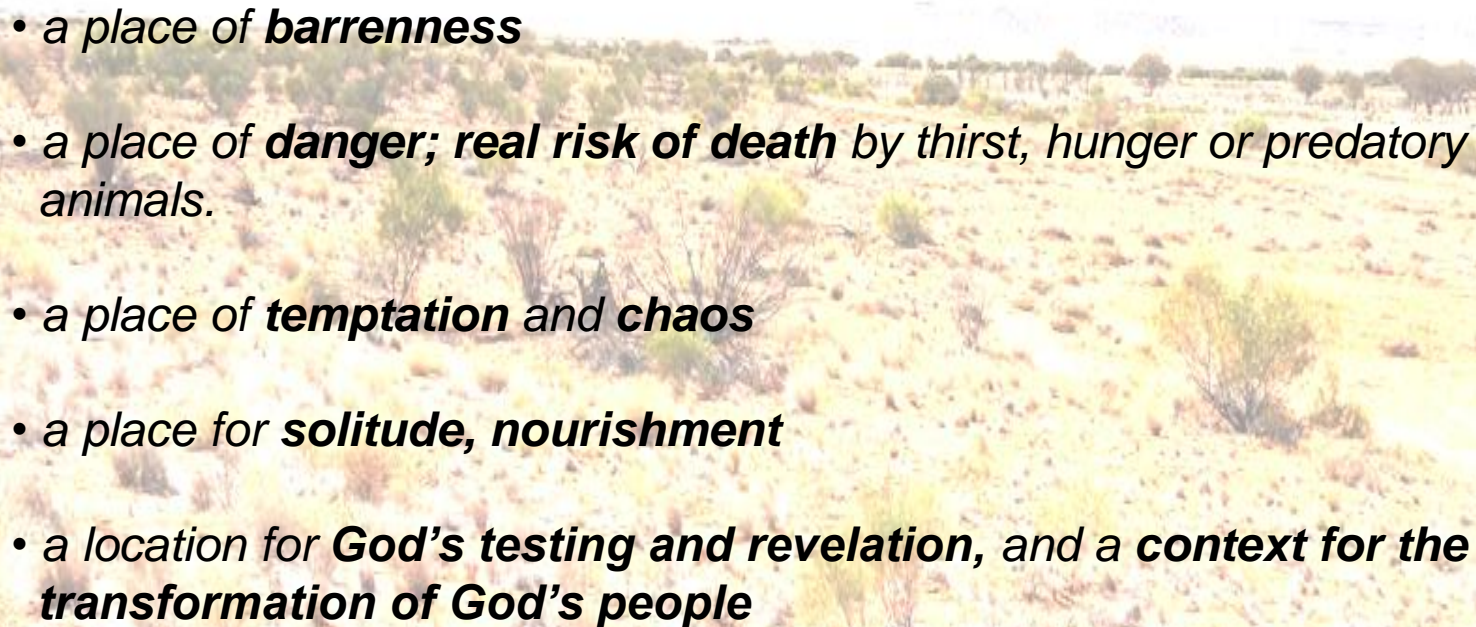
- **Moses and the Israelites** (*Exodus 12 through Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*)
  - 40 years in the desert after exile in Egypt on their way to Cana.
- **Elijah** (*1 Kings 19*)
  - runs into the desert for fear of his life and meets with God on a powerful way
- **Paul** (*Galatians 1*)
  - 3 years in the desert (Arabia) after his conversion before beginning his ministry
- **Jesus** (*Mathew 4 / Mark 1 / Luke 4*)
  - Spent 7 weeks in the desert after his baptism



# Why the desert?

**Jenny Phillips (Author/Theologian):**

*The wilderness of the Bible is a **liminal space**—an **in-between place where ordinary life is suspended, identity shifts, and new possibilities emerge.***

- a place of **barrenness**
  - a place of **danger; real risk of death** by thirst, hunger or predatory animals.
  - a place of **temptation and chaos**
  - a place for **solitude, nourishment**
  - a location for **God's testing and revelation, and a context for the transformation of God's people**
- 

## Why the desert?

***Clifford M. Yea*** (American author/commentator):

- *the very places where God finally **finds us and calls us back to life in him.***
- ***an opportunity to reflect on our relationship to God.***





## How do we get there?

- **Run away** from something/somebody to the desert (***Psalm 55:7***)
- **Run to/directed to** the desert in search off something (***Psalm 63:1***)
- We get there seemingly unintentionally (**Lost**) (***Proverbs 4: 20-27***)



# What happens when we're there?

## 1. Faced with a new **Perspective**

### **Physically**

- Immensity of land and sky; sparse flora/fauna
- Isolation - Hundreds of kilometres from towns/cities







# What happens when we're there?

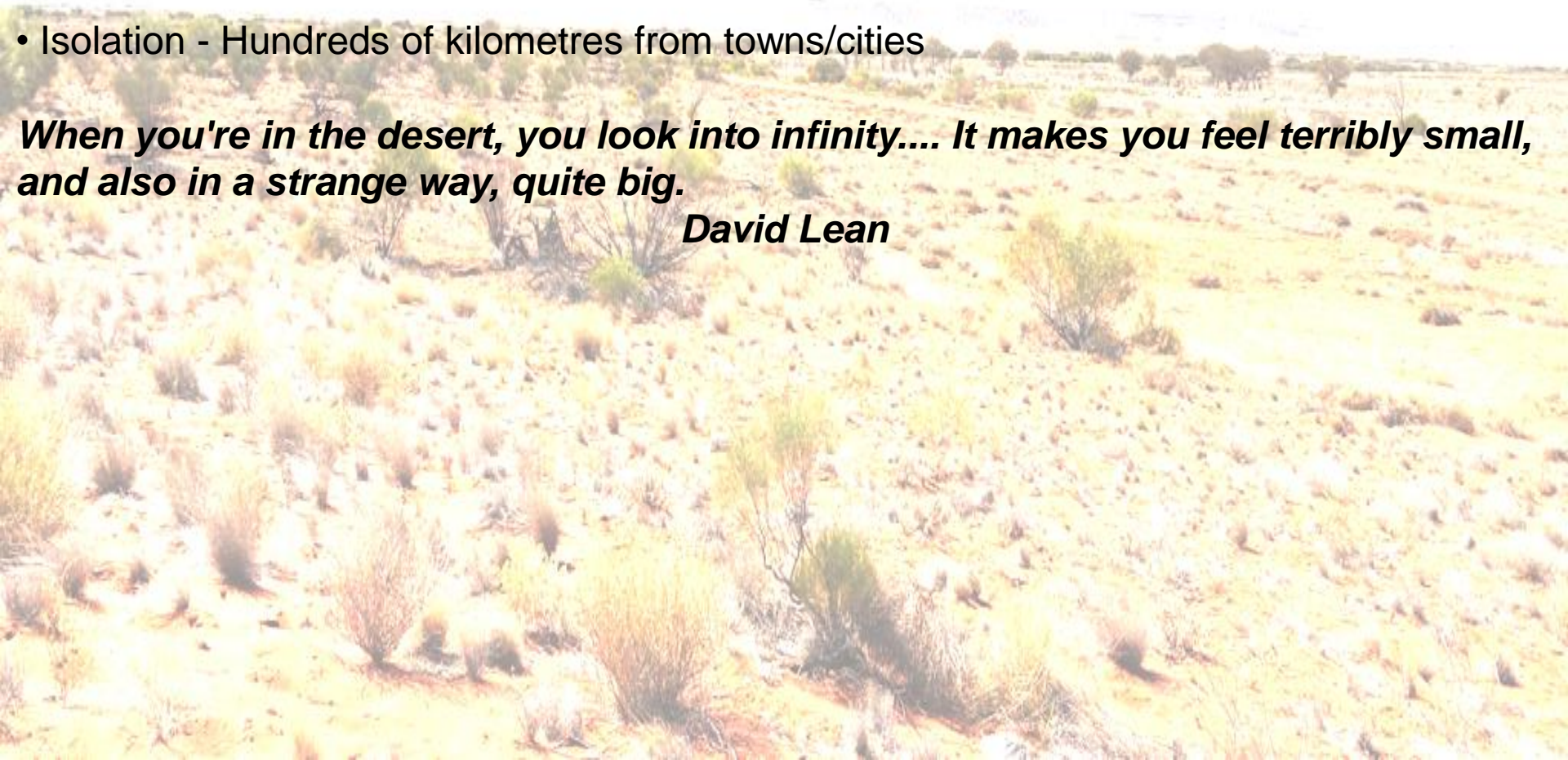
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***When you're in the desert, you look into infinity.... It makes you feel terribly small, and also in a strange way, quite big.***

***David Lean***



# What happens when we're there?

## 1. Faced with a new **Perspective**

- **Physically**

- **Materially**

- Away from the comforts of modern life that we have become so reliant on and see as a necessity to survive





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***Deserts can invite deep reflection on spiritual realities. As the lushness of the material world is stripped from our senses by the barrenness of a desert, we might turn our hearts toward God and seek to discover what is truly important in our lives.***

*Clifford M. Yeary* (American author/commentator)



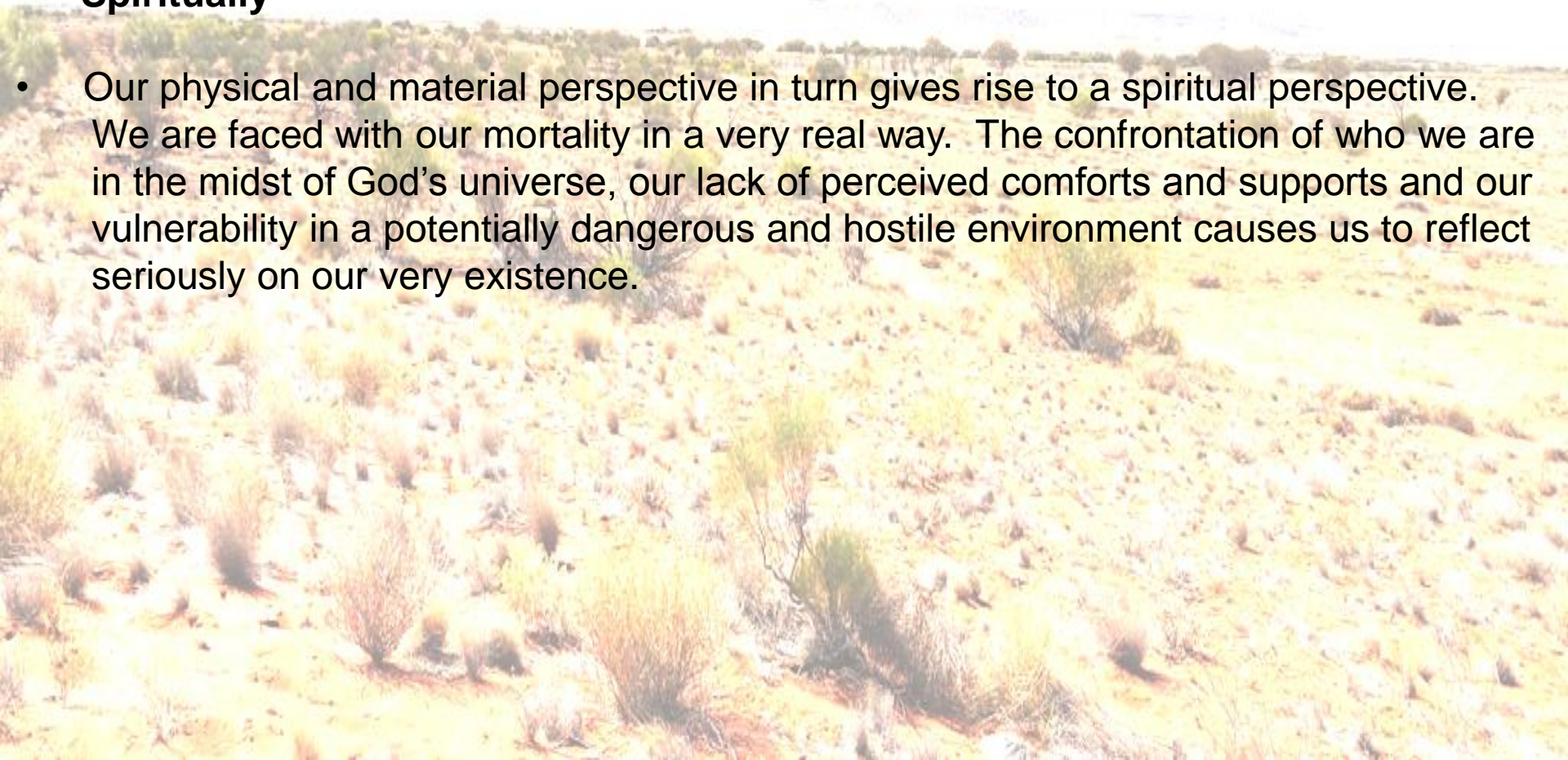
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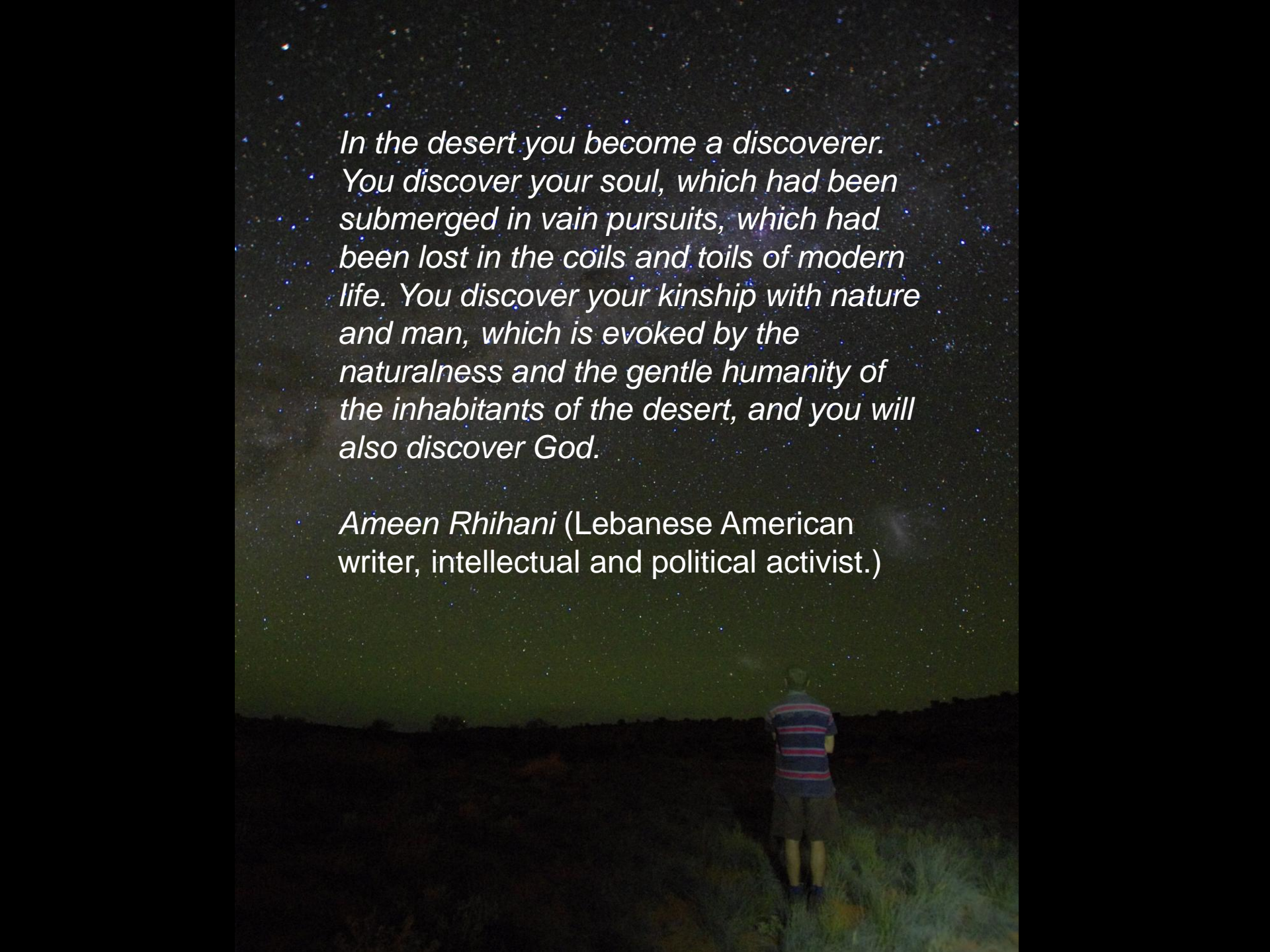
- **Physically**
- **Materially**

### **Spiritually**

- Our physical and material perspective in turn gives rise to a spiritual perspective. We are faced with our mortality in a very real way. The confrontation of who we are in the midst of God's universe, our lack of perceived comforts and supports and our vulnerability in a potentially dangerous and hostile environment causes us to reflect seriously on our very existence.





A person is standing in a dark, grassy field at night, looking up at a vast, starry sky. The person is wearing a striped shirt and shorts. The sky is filled with numerous stars, and the overall scene is dark and serene.

*In the desert you become a discoverer. You discover your soul, which had been submerged in vain pursuits, which had been lost in the coils and toils of modern life. You discover your kinship with nature and man, which is evoked by the naturalness and the gentle humanity of the inhabitants of the desert, and you will also discover God.*

*Ameen Rihani* (Lebanese American writer, intellectual and political activist.)

# What happens when we're there?

1. Faced with a new **Perspective**
2. Faced with **Problems** (Challenges)

In the desert there are many challenges that present to the traveller, lack of water, vast distance, dunes, animals, to name a few. These challenges can be:





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- **Unforeseen** (Not expected) If equipped with right tools, knowledge and skills these can be overcome.

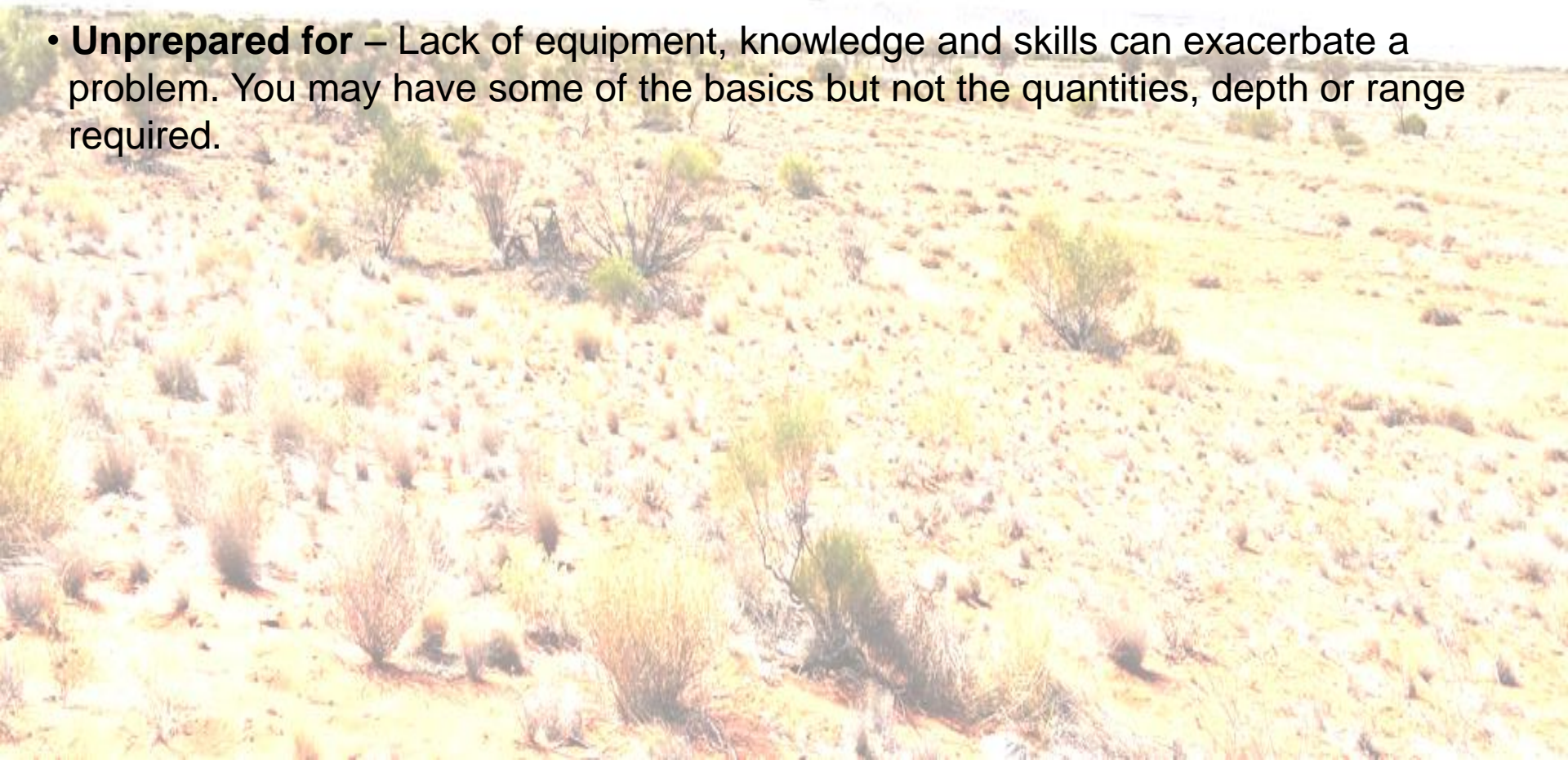




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**Unprepared for** – Lack of equipment, knowledge and skills can exacerbate a problem. You may have some of the basics but not the quantities, depth or range required.

**Underestimated** – The danger here is not lack of essential equipment, knowledge and skills, but **attitude**. Complacency, naivety and ignorance will put you or others with you, in jeopardy.

Israelites had a poor attitude. They took their leaders, their God and their circumstances for granted. That's why 40 days turned into 40 years!

# What happens when we're there?

1. Faced with a new **Perspective**
2. Faced with **Problems** (Challenges)
3. Experience **Renewal**

This can be in the form of a;

- **A quick reminder;**
  - We are withdrawn from a situation for a short while
  - a gentle “tap” from God, reminding us that He is in control.
  - Our **identity is confirmed and affirmed** .
- **A rebuke/correction;**
  - We need to be confronted with attitudes and actions contrary to God's call
  - How long we spend in the desert depends on what sort of student we are.  
The quicker we learn, the sooner we can get out!
  - God's plan (as with the Israelites) is always to **guide, never to abandon**.
  - **The desert is not your final destination!**



**What happens when we're there?**

### **3. Experience Renewal**

**This can be in the form of a;**

- **A quick reminder**
- **A rebuke/correction**

***They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. Isaiah 49:10 (NIV)***

# What happens when we're there?

## 3. Experience Renewal

This can be in the form of a;

- A quick reminder
- A rebuke/correction
- **A complete rebuild- Strip/Rip/Equip (just like Elijah, Paul)**
  - Assessment, diagnosis and treatment of our hearts, mind and soul.
  - Painful, but look at the results!
- **Israelites – a brand new nation set part by God who would create the lineage for our Saviour**
- **Paul - the pioneer of the Christian church who laid a foundation for the lives and qualities we need to show as the Church, the body of Christ**
- **Jesus - who came lived , died and rose again to mend the rift between God and His people, to restore order to the universe; to bring a hope and to all humanity**

## **Reflections:**

- **Where are you at the moment? Are you in a desert situation?**
- **If so, how did you get there? Are you running? Lost? Being directed to the desert?**
- **What do you need from the experience; a gentle reminder, a rebuke, a rebuild? Perhaps you don't know?!!! That's ok. God does!!!**
- **Are you equipped for a trip to the desert?**
- **Look for God because He's there. Embrace it!**



A person is swimming in a river, surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery. The scene is peaceful and serene.

**There is reward, nourishment, life at the end of the desert.**

***The deserts of our lives are undoubtedly troubling places of both temptation and doubt, but they can also be the occasion for deep spiritual renewal***

*Clifford M. Yeary*

*He turned the desert pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs.*

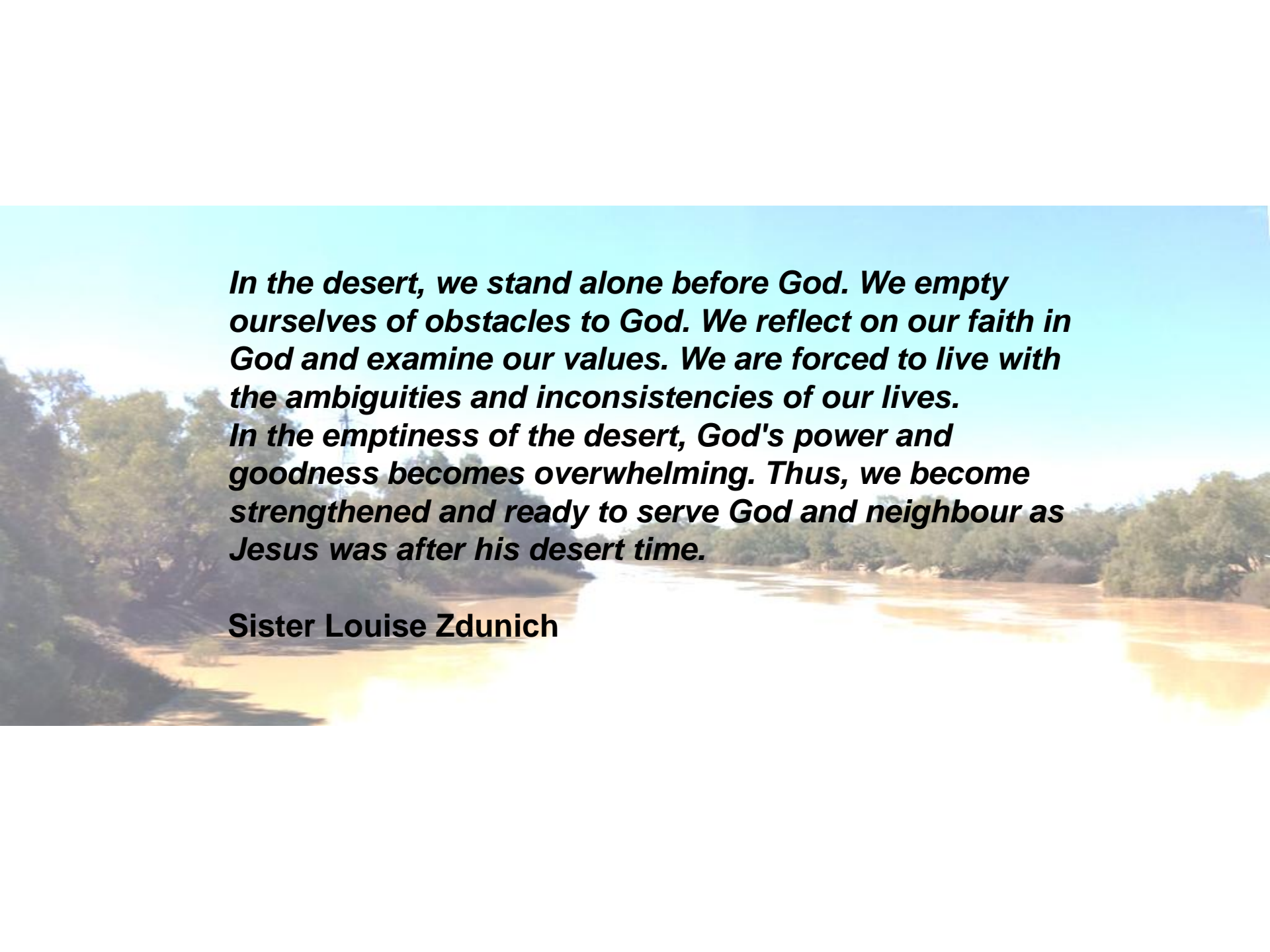
**Psalm 107:35 (NIV)**



*The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These (forty) years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything. Deuteronomy 2:7 (NIV)*







***In the desert, we stand alone before God. We empty ourselves of obstacles to God. We reflect on our faith in God and examine our values. We are forced to live with the ambiguities and inconsistencies of our lives. In the emptiness of the desert, God's power and goodness becomes overwhelming. Thus, we become strengthened and ready to serve God and neighbour as Jesus was after his desert time.***

**Sister Louise Zdunich**