

SECTION II: THEORY

CHAPTER 6 RESULTS

Aim Small, Miss Small

In *The Patriot*, Benjamin Martin taught his sons to “aim small, miss small.” The idea is that if you aim at the bullseye on a target, you are more likely to hit it. If you aim at the whole target you might hit somewhere on the object but you won’t hit the bullseye. In leadership, we need to guard against trying to do too much and stay focused on the task at hand. If we keep a small, sharp aim at a particular outcome then we are more likely to hit the mark and see the results we are hoping for. If we deal only in generalities then we will probably either miss or barely hit the target. Outdoor leadership has a target...the target is our audience. We need to know them, study them, love them, and seek spiritual guidance from Jesus in how to lead them. As we keep a keen eye on our audience and choose outcomes and objectives that create an environment of spiritual formation for our group then we will be more satisfied with the results. Outdoor leadership is much more than just going outside to hang out with people.

As an outdoor leader, you will be more organized and effective if you know what you are aiming to see happen. This chapter is about desired outcomes. They will vary from group to group, but there are common spiritual fruits that seem to ripen through outdoor adventures. Grasping some of these common outcomes will help you establish good goals and plans for your trip. I have been asked many

1. **AWARENESS** of God's existence through observing his creation
2. **BELIEF** in Jesus Christ
3. **COMMUNITY**: Experiencing biblical fellowship
4. **DISCIPLINE**: Finding freedom and joy through spiritual disciplines
5. **EXAMEN**: A habit of Christ-centered contemplation

Wilderness experiences heighten our **AWARENESS** of the existence of God. Colossians 1:15-20 says that Jesus is the One who made all of creation, so it should be of no surprise that his handiwork has a limitless number of illustrations to elicit awe for God. The wilderness changes our perspective. It expands our comfort zones and shows us our need for God's grace.

Adventures also invite us to take risks. **BELIEF** requires taking a risk. Trusting other people may come with some perceived risk, but the actual risk of putting your trust in Jesus Christ is nil. It's just that our pride gets in the way of humbling ourselves before him. God used the wilderness to expose Israel's disbelief and Jesus used storms and struggles to reveal the disciples' lack of trust.

Experiencing biblical **COMMUNITY** changes our wrong views of God, others, and ourselves. If we embrace individualism and neglect community then our ideas of success and failure are going to be warped. Biblical community turns the world upside down in all the right ways. For example, we find out that washing other's feet brings joy because Jesus came to serve not to be served—and that includes us; he came to serve us! The wilderness teaches us that the foundation of community is grace upon grace.

The opposite of **DISCIPLINE** is chaos and confusion. Ordering your life to enjoy the presence and peace of Christ is counter-cultural. It means saying no to many things that everyone else is saying yes to. Yet it also means experiencing freedom that most others will never enjoy. Spiritual disciplines teach us that limitations are good because of our sin and pride. Be comforted if God disciplines you. It's a sign of his love.

St. Ignatius coined the term **EXAMEN** to refer to a lifestyle of Christ-centered contemplation. *Examen* is a habit of taking time

each day to reflect and pray in order to hear God's voice of guidance. Time in the wilderness helps us remember God's faithfulness. The silence and solitude of the outdoors exposes the emptiness we feel when we hide from God and it ushers in the healing balm of brokenness, honesty, and confession.

As an outdoor leader, you will be more effective if you know what you are hoping to see happen in your group. *ABCDE* is an acronym for five of the most common spiritual outcomes that result from outdoor adventures (Note: you can download this model at the book's website, www.outdoorleaders.com/resources). If you choose one or two of the *ABCDE* outcomes as an umbrella theme for your trip, you'll notice more intentionality in everything you do. Then, if you choose one of the ten primary learning objectives suggested in the next section, your teaching content will have a sharper aim at your audience and result in a lasting impact. "Aim small, miss small!"

The grid on the next page is an abbreviated attempt to illustrate the way these *Five Smooth Stones of Wilderness Theology* intersect with the five common *ABCDE* outcomes I have proposed. Each box in the grid lists a theological principle discussed in the book and how it is connected with these desired outcomes. And for reference, in the grid on the next page, some of the pertinent chapters are listed for each theological principle for further study. Again, the main application for you as a leader is to think through how you can lead others toward these *ABCDE* desired outcomes, recognizing that there is a theological basis for what you are doing in that God has used the *tempo/rhythm* of retreats, the *terrain and timing* of wilderness experiences; and he has orchestrated *testing, trials, and trust-building* experiences to *train and transform* his followers throughout the ages.

times, “Why is adventure camping in the outdoors so effective?” Many of us who have been taking people out into the wilderness and leading people on adventures know it is effective from our experiences, but could we explain why it works in a thirty-second elevator conversation? We need a practical way to weave the Five Smooth Stones of Wilderness Theology into our adventures, but we also need a way to cast the vision of wilderness ministry to our church or organization. This chapter pulls back a curtain on the mystery of why adventure evangelism is so effective. It is set up as a tool for memorizing the basic framework of a theology of wilderness. I want to get better at leading others in the outdoors *and* in the city. Don’t we all? Having a thirty-second spiel on the tip of your tongue for what outdoor ministry is all about will help you cast compelling vision to people who may need a little coaxing toward adventure.

This chapter is about outcomes and objectives for outdoor adventures. We will offer a simple acrostic for memorizing five of the most common spiritual outcomes we see happening in the biblical wilderness journeys. A useful acronym I use to easily remember the basics of wilderness theology is “ABCDE”. We will look at each letter of this acronym and then later in the chapter, we will list ten common *objectives* or goals of a typical outdoor adventure.

Before we look at some of our objectives, we need to look at the umbrella themes or outcomes that come right out of the pages of Scripture. The reason I am presenting the following model is for ease of memory. My hope is that as a Christian outdoor leader, you will know by memory the Five Smooth Stones of Wilderness Theology: TEMPO, TERRAIN and TIMING, TRIALS, TRUST, and TRAINING, which we’ve been talking about in preceding chapters. I also hope that you can learn to recognize the ABCDE’s of common outdoor adventure outcomes. The most effective outdoor leaders are able to facilitate experiences toward measurable outcomes such as these.

Having a theological framework helps us to focus on the essentials. I realize that any generalization (like this model I’m about to present) is an approximation of reality. I can already hear many of my outdoor leader friends saying, “Don’t put me in a box!” I assure

you, the opposite is actually what I intend. I’m merely aiming to help us think this through. If this type of ministry is to grow we need many more people who can articulate why wilderness experiences are so effective for evangelism, discipleship, leadership development, and spiritual formation. I hope this will help shed light on your own experiences and enhance your future endeavors as a Christian outdoor leader.

ABCDE’s of Outdoor Leadership Outcomes

The field of wilderness medicine has paved the path for more simple thinking about effective wilderness leadership. For example, if you take a Wilderness First Aid course, you will learn that very little equipment is needed to treat a patient in the wilderness. All you need is a little confidence, some basic skills, and a *bunch* of creativity to use the bits and pieces available to you in your surroundings. In first aid training, the ABCDE’s stand for “Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Disability, and Environment.” These are the essentials for making an initial assessment of a patient to diagnose if there is a threat to his or her life. In the same way that Wilderness Medicine training organizations try to make their training as simple and memorable as possible, the following model is meant to introduce “Christian outdoor leadership” in an easy-to-remember paradigm.

When planning a trip, it is a good idea for you to have the desired results in mind so you can prayerfully guide others toward those outcomes. The ABCDE outcomes I’ve identified are five mega-themes under which you can categorize the types of transformation that happened for people as a result of their wilderness experience in the Bible. And we have every reason to pray and hope for similar outcomes on our trips as well.

The five most common outcomes we see emerging from people’s wilderness experiences in Scripture are as follows: