

## Getting Ready in the Desert

By Bob Young  
December, 2008

*Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus" (Galatians 1:17).*

In the early centuries of Christianity, the Monastic movement sought solitude and spiritual vitality in the desert. These "Desert Fathers" are not the first to experience spiritual shaping in the desert. In fact, through the years, many great servants of Christ have been prepared for effective and fruitful ministry in the small, unknown, and less inhabited places of our world. The apostle Paul certainly understood the call Jesus had issued to him at his conversion. The text of Galatians 1 says that he did not consult other men about this calling. But before he began his mission, he spent three years in Arabia. Why did Paul have to go to Arabia for three years before he began his work for Jesus Christ?

The Scripture does not tell us exactly why Paul spent three years in Arabia. Based on other examples of God calling people to kingdom service, we can observe that it often requires a time of separation from the old life and preparation for the new life. In the desert, Paul had time to consider what had happened to him, to develop an intimate knowledge and relationship with the Savior, and to prepare for his ministry to the Gentiles. A time away prepares the heart for what is coming. Joseph was separated from his family, Jacob was sent to live with his uncle Laban, Moses was sent to the desert.

What is happening in your life right now? Are you in the desert? Perhaps God placed you in your desert for a reason. We cannot always see the reasons or the way. We cannot always make sense of our circumstances. The key is always to seek Him wholeheartedly. God may be preparing you for something you cannot imagine. The problem is that we don't want to get ready in the desert. We want to get ready with ease. We want to get ready with pomp and circumstance. But getting ready requires discipline and solitude. Preparation is not an accomplishment of self; preparation is from God.