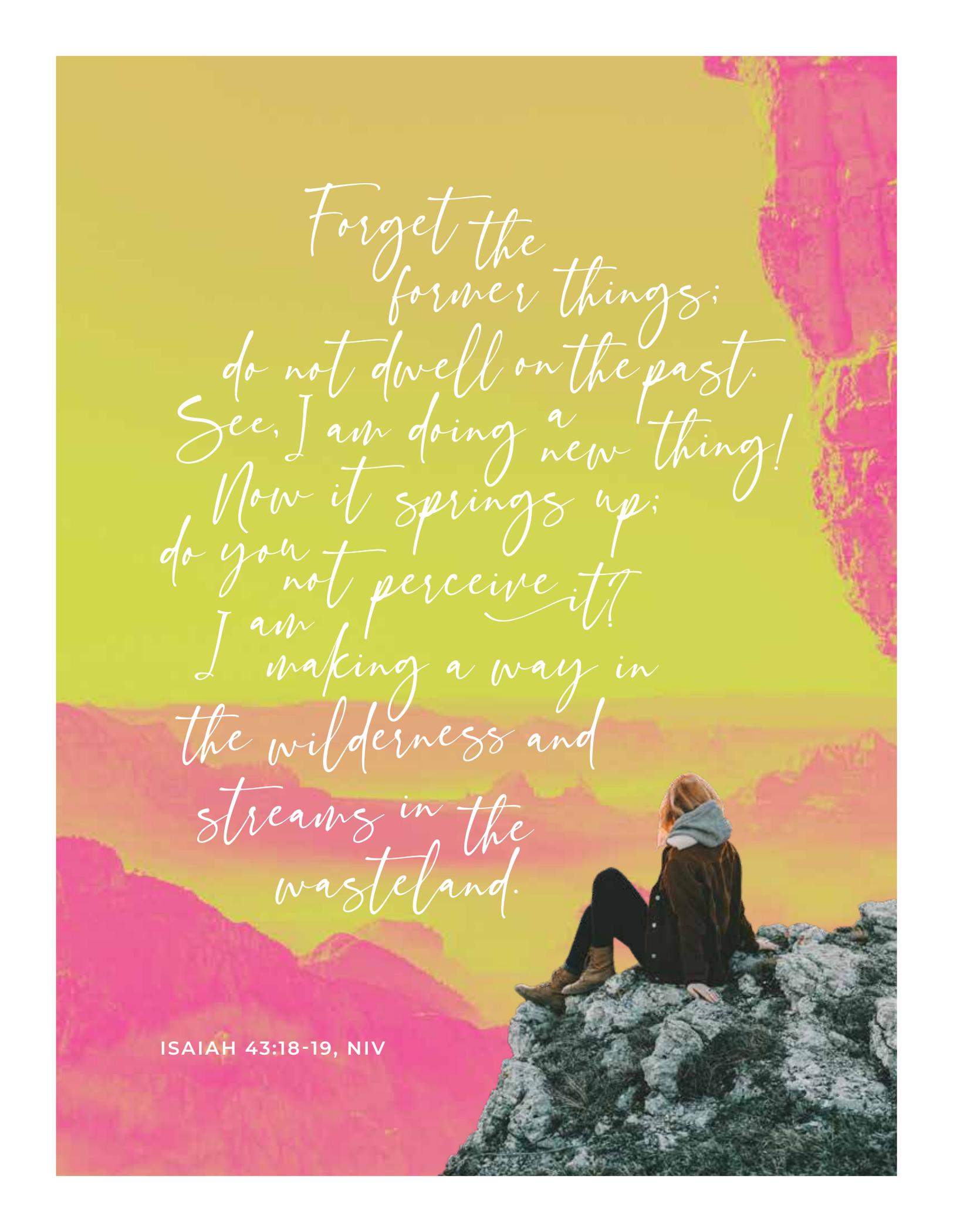




THE MOMCO

WILD HOPE

A person with long hair, wearing a brown jacket and black pants, is sitting on a rocky cliff edge. They are looking out over a vast, colorful landscape of mountains and valleys. The sky is a mix of yellow and orange, and the mountains are in shades of pink and purple. The overall scene is bright and vibrant.

Forget the
former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up;
do you not perceive it?
I am
making a way in
the wilderness and
streams in the
wasteland.

ISAIAH 43:18-19, NIV

Do you ever feel like your pilot light has gone out? Like the spark that once fueled your passion, clarity, and energy has been dimmed under the mental load of motherhood? Perhaps it's the need to make 1 million decisions a day (so many decisions!) that causes you to never really feel confident you're doing it right. Maybe you are in a season where you feel you are not showing up well for yourself or others; just going through the motions, trying to get to the end of the week.

That is about to change because we're declaring this the year of new things. A new season needs a new strategy, and we choose wild, contagious hope. Hope is not a passive exercise in wishing; it's an active approach to living life engaged. Hope is generative. In Proverbs 13:12 we read, "*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.*" Hope provides clarity, vision and vitality.

Looking at the adversity and division that seems to be seeping into the fabric of our culture, hope offers another option – the opportunity to see new paths and ways of living that we might not have considered before. It reminds us that we can make a positive difference in our families and communities and that tough times will not paralyze us. Hope requires courage and trust because to see the new thing God is doing likely means going into the wilds – paths that take us through uncomfortable places and challenges that nourish our deepest longing.

God is doing something new, and we can get our hopes up. It's time for *Wild Hope*.

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

MARK 10:51, NIV



Moms are notoriously brilliant at caring for others, but when we get tapped out, we often try to dig our own wells instead of drinking from the stream God has provided. *But this is going to be a year where we practice receiving.* It means drinking from the stream in the desert, eating the manna provided, accepting help when needed, saying yes to Jesus' sacrifice for us, and trusting in God's power. This is the year of letting go of the belief that we must manage every detail and over-analyze every decision. Instead, we will be open to trusting that God will provide at the moment we most need it.

Jesus frequently asked people, *"What do you want me to do for you?"*. It's a complicated question, right? When was the last time you thought about what you REALLY want deep in your soul? When you don't have clarity, it's easy to live untethered – to have a life ordered and prioritized by others telling you what you should want. Is it possible that with all the choices available to us, we have lost focus and are chasing a thousand different ways of doing life because we have no idea what we really want and need? Does your life align with your values? This year, we will get clear about what we want for our families and make room to receive the new rhythms, habits, and opportunities God offers. This is the year of trusting God to guide our decisions, calm our anxious searching and free us from believing it's all up to us.

Endurance helps us discover the secret of contentment,

which is the ability to find hope in any situation. It is tempting to outsource the growth process, to take the easiest route, but the advancement never lasts. Stop waiting for enough confidence or motivation to take action, motivation comes from action. We must do the uncomfortable work by showing up and putting in the reps, building the habits and developing discipline. This is how we are reminded that just because something is difficult doesn't mean we are doing it wrong. Instead, it's an opportunity to endure, build character and rediscover hope.



**BUILD
ENDURANCE**

In order to build endurance, we are going to:

Get outside _____.

our house.

our routine.

our fears.

our head.

our circumstances.

our control.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

ROMANS 5:3-5

Choosing passion means living fully committed. We are all asked to do more than we can do. Every hero and heroine of the Bible does more than they thought was possible – Peter walked on water, Sarah had a baby even though it was biologically impossible, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego survived a fiery furnace and Moses stood in the middle of a sea trusting God to part the water. The story of God is filled with passionate and flawed people who God used to do impossible things. What if this is the year you pursue risky obedience and passionately go all-in with God?

Living passionately also means accepting the new thing God asks you to step into while simultaneously enjoying what you've already been given. It's about living your normal everyday life beautifully and audaciously. What do you want your kids to remember about their childhood? Do more of that. What would you love to do that you haven't done yet? Today is the day to start. Why not let loose your inner hugging person, even if you've tamped her down in social settings before? Why not wear the pants you didn't think you could pull off? Seduce your husband and make his day. Enjoy your work and view it as a blessing – do it with all your might. Don't just make it through the day; add a little romance. Why not go for it? Your life has been given to you as a gift from God; it doesn't always have to be serious and high-stakes – go and enjoy it.



You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

JEREMIAH 29:13

Are you ready for the wild and passionate life God has for you? Are you excited to discover new things about yourself? To loosen your grip on control so you can be open to receive? It's time to face your limits in the wilds and come out on the other side with stories to tell.

LET'S GO! It's time for Wild Hope.



The wilds are unexpected places where the best things begin. Hope is often born in the wilds. Frequently in the Bible, the wilderness is where God transforms us, raises us as leaders, and prepares us to live passionately and with purpose.

It's where God wrestles with Jacob and gives him a new name.

It's where Moses is called to rise as a leader even though he feels inadequate.

It's where Hagar is reminded that God sees her.

It's where the nation of Israel was brought to prepare for the Promised Land.

It's where David penned the Psalms.

It's where God protects, provides for and prepares Elijah.

It's where John the Baptist took on the moniker of "a voice calling the wilderness."

It's a testing-ground where Jesus faces off with temptation before his ministry began.

Audacious, unbridled purpose and possibility are found when we are willing to go through some discomfort to follow God to a new place. This is the message that came to God's people who were exiled in Babylon. They were living in constant disappointment, corruption, division, and exhaustion, yet Isaiah's words invite them to get passionate about their future. Babylon is not an end but a beginning. God was doing something new, but it was going to look different than they thought it would.

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

God's people had a reputation for settling for just getting by. When God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt and led them through the wilderness, providing manna from heaven, the people complained and wanted to return to what they considered the "good old days." They wanted to go back to Egypt, where they were enslaved in horrific conditions, but at least they had stability and shelter and knew what to expect. They were stuck longing for a former situation that while it was miserable, it was known.

A new season needs a new strategy. New seasons call for a new level of trust in God. This is why God reminds us not to dwell on the past. We can own and learn from it but don't need to get stuck there. We can't expect past victories to sustain us (Judges 6:13). We also shouldn't let past failures paralyze us. All of our experiences so far are breadcrumbs leading us to what's ahead.

Do you not perceive it?

No matter how hopeless a situation seems, God specializes in the impossible. This is a tremendous source of hope. Starting in Genesis 18:14, God asks Abraham, who is having a hard time believing that he and his wife would have a baby after waiting for so many decades, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" Throughout the Bible we are reminded of this same fact – nothing is too difficult for God.

— *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?*

JEREMIAH 32:27

— *Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.*

JEREMIAH 32:17

— *But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

MATTHEW 19:26

do you not perceive it?

Do you not perceive it? Have you forgotten what God is capable of? God is continually doing surprisingly good things for His people, but sometimes we need to get curious about what is holding us back from perceiving the new things God wants to do in our lives.

Ian Simkins, Lead Pastor of Teaching and Vision at The Bridge in Nashville, TN, says:

It's hard to hear God's voice if we've already decided what He should say.

It's hard to expect God to lead us if we've already decided where we should go.

It's hard to expect God to be our identity if other people's opinions are our mirror.

It's hard to expect God to nourish us if the news is what's feeding us.

It's hard to believe God can do something new if we've bought into hopelessness.

Here are Some Ways God Makes Things New:

GOD RENAMES: Names carry a lot of significance in Scripture, but what is even more significant is the renaming of people. When God gives someone a new name, it is always a sign of renewed purpose.

God changed Abram's name to Abraham in conjunction with a monumental promise (Genesis 17:5). Jacob became Israel. Simon became Peter, and Saul became Paul when they became Jesus' disciples (Matthew 4:18; Acts 13:9). God gave new names to mark new beginnings, hopes, and blessings. While we may not literally receive new names when we become Christ-followers, we do receive new identities. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). This year, MomCo takes on a new name, and we don't take lightly that this renaming from God comes with fresh purpose, promises, and responsibility. May it be a year where we honor the new creation God has made us individually and collectively.



GOD MAKES A WAY IN THE WILDERNESS:

Often, we find ourselves in places where we can't see a way forward. We want to do it all, but also feel guilty that we aren't doing everything perfectly. We're bombarded by so much information and so many opinions that we feel overwhelmed and uncertain which path to choose. What school should we send our kids to? Should we take on more work to help with finances? Do we let our baby cry it out, or will that mean they never form healthy attachment for the rest of their lives (so dramatic)? It ALL feels high stakes! Often, it's lonely and scary in the wilds and so we start to think everything is up to us – like we must save ourselves and figure out the path forward because if we don't, no one else will.

Here's the good news – God is a way-maker. He parts seas and overcomes enemies. He provides pillars of cloud by day and fire by night. He quiets the storms inside and outside of us. He reveals paths that we didn't realize were there. He has good plans for us that are better than anything we might figure out on our own.

There is another truth about the wilderness that we sometimes don't want to talk about, is often is the place where we battle darkness. Jesus models this when in the wilderness he is faces three common human temptations:

- The desire to be relevant, “*...command these stones to become loaves of bread*” (Matthew 4:3).
- The desire to be impressive, “*... throw yourself down ...*” (Matthew 4:6).
- The desire to be powerful, “*all these I will give you ...*” (Matthew 4:9).

Jesus confronts the same struggles that we face and affirms that our identity is found not in our own power to make things happen, but God's.

Lastly, in the wilderness God promises to remove all obstacles in coming to Him (Romans 8:31-39). Whatever may hold us back – mistakes, shame, regret – Jesus has already made a way. “*Jesus, said to him ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life ...’*” (John 14:6).

God Provides Streams in the Desert

Have you ever been in an isolated place, unprepared for the experiences you were navigating? Maybe like David, you can't escape your problems. Or, like Abraham, you're hoping for something that feels impossible. Maybe, like Moses, you feel overwhelmed by the needs of the people around you. Or, like Elijah, you are burnt out. Like your body or soul is parched.

The Hebrew word for the desert is MIDBAR. Because there are no vowels in Hebrew, the letters that spell it out are M-D-B-R. Coincidentally, this is also how you spell another Hebrew word, MEDABER – to speak.* When we are in the desert thirsting for hope, this is where God speaks to us.

This is where the words of the Psalmist become our words, *"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God"* (Psalm 42:1). And, *"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"* (Psalm 63:1).

God provides water from a rock, nourishment under the shade of a tree, God sends angels to provide a snack – no joke. When we experience the wilds of the desert, this is where God provides for our most desperate longings, both practically and spiritually. The desert is where we learn that just because something is difficult, doesn't mean we are doing it wrong. It's where we learn to dance upon disappointments, and where we see that God literally provides for our needs.

God is about to do something new, do you sense it? A new season of hope is rising and it's starting right here, with the kid-raisers, the dust-shakers, and the rule-breakers who are willing to do to the impossible in the name of Jesus. May our homes and the world be changed because we choose to live with Wild Hope.

GOD IS MAKING ALL THINGS NEW, *"And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'"* **REVELATION 21:5, ESV**

*Source: <https://firmisrael.org/learn/wilderness-meaning-bible-importance-desert-seasons/>
All translations are English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.