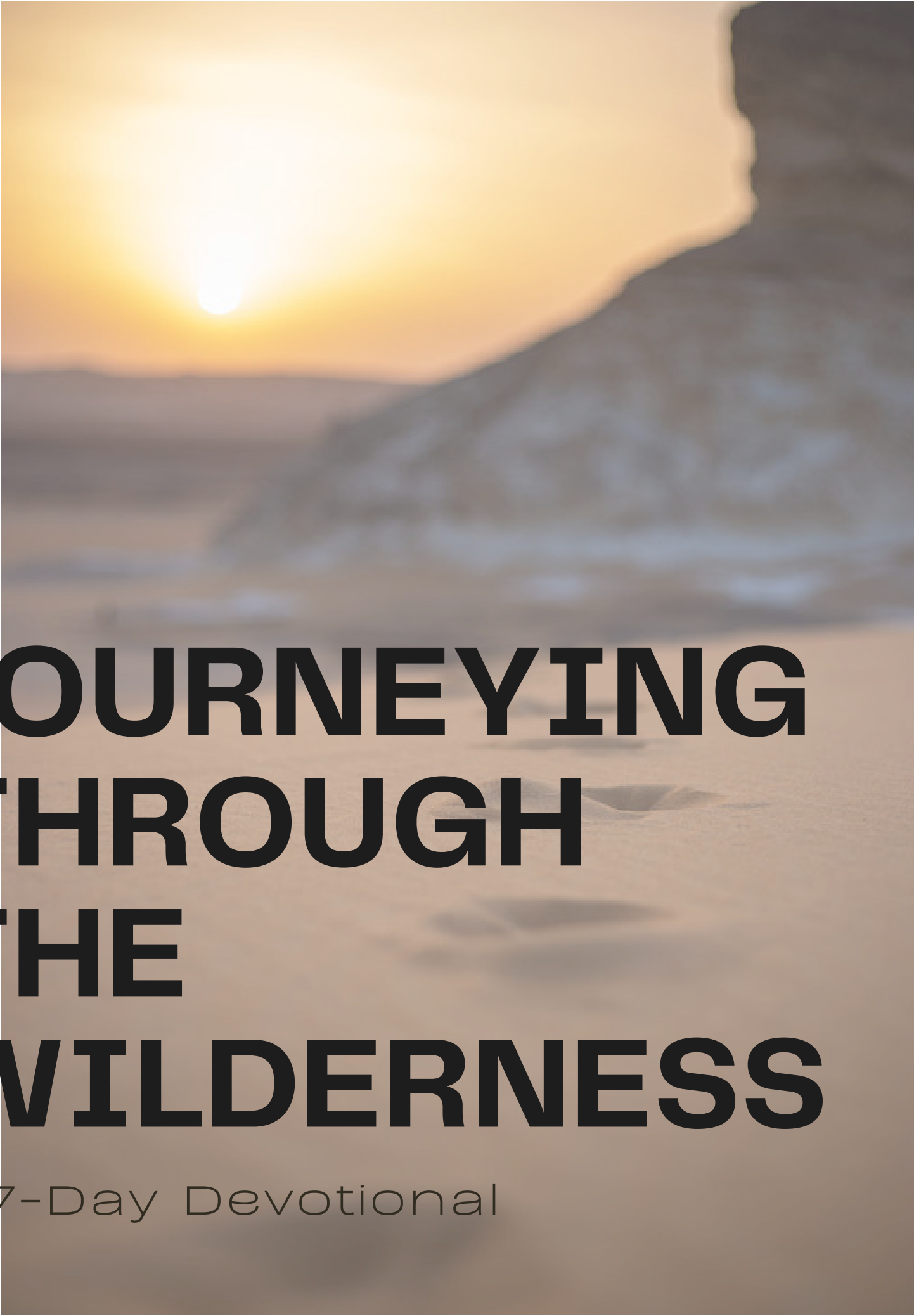


By Chino Eze



JOURNEYING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

A 7-Day Devotional

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Day 1

THE WILDERNESS SEASON

“We want to remind you, friends, of the trouble we had in the province of Asia. The burdens laid upon us were so great and so heavy that we gave up all hope of staying alive.

We felt that the death sentence had been passed on us. But this happened so that we should rely, not on ourselves, but only on God, who raises the dead.”

2 Corinthians 1:8, 9—GNT

A wilderness season can be described as a period when we go through circumstances that are painful, unbearable, and almost impossible to endure.

When we go through these seasons, it is natural for us to feel like we have been robbed of every source of joy, faith, and satisfaction—and sentenced to a period of depression, misery, and hopelessness.

Often we struggle to see anything good about wilderness situations.

How could harsh and unfriendly circumstances ever produce anything good?

In the Bible, the children of Israel, freed from their bondage in Egypt, completely missed the point of their wilderness experience. We too generally have the wrong perspective about adverse situations that come our way.

Although their 40-year journey through the wilderness came as a punishment for their unbelief, God’s purpose for taking them through

that ordeal was that they would come to appreciate the tender-hearted care He bestowed upon them.

Each challenge they encountered was God allowing them to experience His divine intervention. He had a thought-out solution for each problem the children of Israel faced—the Red Sea was there to drown Pharaoh’s chariots, not to hinder the Israelites from escaping Egypt.

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FROM ESCAPING EGYPT**



Focal Points

- The wilderness period is harsh and unpleasant and we'd rather not go through it but it meant for us to appreciate God's care for us.
- Each wilderness challenge is an opportunity for us to experience God's intervention.
- God has a thought-out solution for each problem we encounter, therefore, we must trust Him at all times.

Day 2

PURPOSE OF THE WILDERNESS

“Though we experience every kind of pressure, we're not crushed. At times we don't know what to do, but quitting is not an option.

We consider living to mean that we are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus will be revealed through our humanity.”

2 Corinthians 4:8, 11—TPT

As you've probably deduced from the title, we will journey through the wilderness in this devotional. Not in the literal, of course, but I will share some lessons I'm learning while passing through my desert experience.

Call them landmarks, if you will. However, I believe these lessons could help you as you pass through the challenging seasons of your life.

Purpose 1

Some challenges are not setbacks, but a means to eradicate persistent and oppressive issues in our lives.

Such limitations can be so inextricably bound to our lives and remain unchecked until a surpassing pressure snuffs it out.

The heat of the fire is not meant to destroy silver but to eliminate impurities.

Therefore, the real purpose of wilderness challenges is that they are God's tool to deal with persistent problems in our lives that require intense pressure to be dissolved.

It is important to note that the persistent problem could be a character flaw that God wants to correct.

Purpose 2

God also uses these challenges as opportunities to prove to us His ever-abiding presence and power.

If you consider each crisis the Israelites faced while on their journey to Canaan, you'd note that God already had a pre-existing method by which He resolved each challenge.

The unassuming Rock was already present with the Israelites to provide water to quench their thirst. Nothing took God by surprise. He knew the way, and He faithfully led them through the

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wilderness. Therefore, if the Israelites had learnt this truth earlier in their journey, their season in the wilderness would have been less tragic and harsh than it was.



Focal Points

- Your season in the wilderness is not meant to destroy you but to build you up.
- Your wilderness experience is not purposeless. Through it, God is perfecting His divine purpose in you.

Day 3

HE LEADS ME...

“...he leadeth me beside the still waters...he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

Psalm 23:2, 3—KJV

“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”

Luke 4:1—KJV

Just as God leads us beside still waters, He sometimes leads us into the wilderness. It is important to remember that as long as God is leading you, wherever that path may take you, He is leading you through the paths of righteousness.

We are familiar with the truth that God, our Good Shepherd leads us through the wilderness. But when we find ourselves in the wilderness, we rarely accept the fact that it is the Spirit of God that led us there.

To you, it seems like you’ve been struck by a series of mishaps and have just wandered into the wastelands of your life.

Therefore, as betrayed as we might feel when we are there, we must realize and accept that we’re in the will of God even when the Spirit of the Lord leads us into the wilderness.

The same Spirit that leads us beside still waters also leads us **into and through** the wilderness.

Whether He leads us through green pastures, still waters or barren

**AS LONG AS GOD IS
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wastelands, God is able to provide all that we need for every season of our life.

So, from the experiences of the saints in the Scripture, the most valuable lesson we can learn about being in the wilderness is that God is always with us. The Spirit of God provides sustenance for us when He leads us into the wilderness and while we are going through the desert, He is with us providing all that we need (Isaiah 43:2).

“When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt.”

Isaiah 43:2—GNT

God’s miraculous provision for us as we journey through the wilderness, and what we must do to partake of it, will be the subject for our discussion tomorrow.



Focal Points

- The same God that leads us through times of plenty also leads us through seasons of scarcity.
- During all seasons, God's capacity to provide for us is unlimited.

Day 4

PROVISION IN THE WILDERNESS

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD’s hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”

Numbers 11:23—KJV

As you journey through the wilderness, it is vital for your faith that you remember that:

God doesn’t lead you into a place where His power cannot sustain you.

God doesn’t lead you into a place where His arm cannot reach you.

God doesn’t lead you into a place where His word cannot touch you.

God doesn’t lead you into a place where His covering, protection or provision cannot support you.

Providing food for the entire camp of Israel in the wilderness was an impossible feat. Sourcing water from a rock was unimaginable. It had never been done and even Moses, whom God had used to perform spectacular signs, doubted that it could be done.

This teaches us that it is in the wilderness that we experience marvellous wonders that God has never done before.

But don’t allow the harsh climate to cloud your vision from recognizing and praising God when He does the impossible. Don’t let the glare of the sun blind you as you look up to God.

God may perform signs and wonders in delivering you from

bondage but when you are in the wilderness, God does the impossible. This is because the climate supports such incredible feats.

It is in the wilderness that God gets creative. He has nothing to work with, so He has to be creative in achieving His purpose in your life and providing your needs.

God works best when He has little to nothing to work with. *See the wonderful world He created out of nothing.*

...WHEN YOU ARE IN THE WILDERNESS, GOD DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE. THIS IS BECAUSE THE CLIMATE SUPPORTS SUCH INCREDIBLE FEATS.

Therefore, if you are in the wilderness, expect creative miracles from God—expect the unexpected.

All the people God led into the wilderness, He blessed them with His divine provision. As long as they were in the wilderness, the children of God relied on Him for their daily sustenance and He provided for them supernaturally.

God performs creative miracles in the wilderness.



Focal Points

- When you are at the center of God's will, you can never be far from His reach.
- The wilderness is a perfect setting for God's wondrous deeds.
- Don't allow the harsh conditions of the wilderness to blind you to God's goodness.

Day 5

DO'S & DON'TS IN THE WILDERNESS

“...Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?”

And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.”

Matthew 15:33, 35—KJV

If you are like me and going through the wilderness season, you probably have many questions and most (if not all) have gone unanswered since they surfaced.

God does not promise to give us all the answers, however, there are instructions He expects us to abide by in order to receive His blessing.

Do's

When you are in the wilderness and are wondering how God will provide for you, follow the instruction that Jesus gives:

- **Surrender what you have to Him**, no matter how little and insignificant it is (John 6:9). You already know that it is insufficient to satisfy your needs so why not turn it over to the One who can do something with it?
- **Give thanks for what you have** no matter how small it is. *“And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks...”* (Matthew 15:36).

- **Be at rest.** *“And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.”* The wilderness does not seem like a place you can be comfortable in but if you are going to receive divine provision, sit down and rest in the presence of Jesus.

Even though the terrain doesn't seem to support it, it is only when you find rest in the wilderness that you can recognize and appreciate God's presence.

Don'ts

On the other hand, there are certain things that you must fight against your will to avoid doing when you are in the wilderness.

- Don't grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30)
- Don't entertain unbelief (Romans 11:20)
- Don't murmur or grumble (1 Corinthians 10:10)
- Don't lose touch or connection with the Holy Spirit.
- Don't be anxious (Philippians 4:6, 7)
- Don't go ahead of God – Moses knew this and pleaded with God not to let them proceed without His presence (Exodus 33:15).

If you want to leave the wilderness with spectacular testimonies, make sure you don't run out before time.

Instead, leave with His divine presence. It was the evident presence of God with the Israelites that made them a peculiar people in the sight of the heathen nations (Exodus 33:16).

Like with the children of Israel, if the presence of God is tabernacled in the wilderness of your life, that is the best place for you to be. You cannot prosper anywhere else.



Focal Points

- We will not always understand the reason for each season of adversity we pass through.
- For each wilderness journey, there are accompanying instructions: **Be obedient to them.**
- Finding rest and contentment in God's presence is the easiest way to make it through the wilderness.

Day 6

WILDERNESS PERIOD: 40 DAYS/YEARS

“Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.”

Isaiah 32:15—KJV

Jesus had a perfect understanding of the lesson that the children of Israel struggled to learn in the wilderness.

God wanted them to learn to depend on every word He spoke, every promise He gave them, but the Israelites wouldn't. For this reason, their unbelief, He let them wander in the wilderness for 40 years—one year for each day the spies spent in spying the Promised Land (Numbers 14:34).

It is this same lesson that Jesus excelled at. The temptation came from the devil for Him to satisfy His hunger with bread, but Jesus knew better. He was grounded in Scripture and understood the implication of the decision.

He would not fail in the same faith test the unbelieving Israelites failed in.

He would not be conquered on the same spiritual and physical ground that His predecessors were conquered.

He would not succumb to His fleshly appetite.

**GOD WANTED THEM TO
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The journey of the Israelites in the wilderness was prolonged because of their unbelief. What would have taken 40 days took them forty years. Jesus took the path of faith and spent only 40 days and nights in the wilderness.

He overcame where the children of Israel failed and His sentence in the wilderness reflected this inner and spiritual victory.

Unbelief is a thief. It robs you of God's presence, blessing, and favour. It also steals your time.

Doubting God is the worst thing that you can do at any instance, but especially when you are in the wilderness. When you doubt God you are literally questioning the integrity of your Guide and the only One that can sustain you through your journey.

It is an insult to God's nature and ability, and more so, if you still expect Him to bring you out of your desert situation.



Focal Points

- The time you'll spend in the wilderness is largely dependent on how well you submit to the process.
- Identify the wilderness lesson God wants to teach you and learn it.

Day 7

WILDERNESS LESSONS

“Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.”

Isaiah 32:15—KJV

When the Spirit is poured out, the wasteland becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field becomes a forest. There is no level you are in that you wouldn't receive an increase.

The outpouring of the Spirit brings increase to every man no matter what level they are at.

There are parallels that can be drawn from the experiences of those that were led into the wilderness by the Spirit:

1 – It's in the wilderness that God reveals wonderful manifestations of His presence

- The Israelites had the Divine presence manifested in pillar of cloud and fire that journeyed with them.
- God passed by Elijah and the mountain shook, the wind tore the rocks, and fire scorched the earth. And then Elijah heard the voice of the Lord (1 Kings 19:11, 12).
- Jesus received angelic visitation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11).

2 – It's in the wilderness that God supernaturally provides

- God provided water from the rock, manna from heaven, and multitudes of quails for the Israelites.
- An angel brought food for Elijah in the wilderness.
- Isn't it peculiar that the two times that Jesus multiplied food for the multitude it was in the wilderness (Matthew 14:15-21; 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-9)?

3 – It's in the wilderness that we learn to rely on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God

- Moses explained to the children of Israel that God's purpose of bringing them through the wilderness was for them to learn to depend on His Word: "...*He did this to teach you that you must not depend on bread alone to sustain you, but on everything that the Lord says.*" (Deuteronomy 8:3)
- When tempted in the wilderness, Jesus relied on the Word to defeat the devil. Isn't it remarkable that He makes reference to the lesson God wanted to teach the Israelites in the wilderness? "...*It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*" (Luke 4:4)
- Elijah saw the manifestation of God's presence in mighty ways but it was the Word from God that set him in motion.

The wilderness is not a convenient place to be. God knows this and though there may be moments of silence, He does go out of His way to break the bound of the norm.

He assures us of His presence as we journey through the wilderness.

You can say that in the wilderness, He is even more committed to keeping you because He is the only one who can. You have no resource

to sustain yourself, nor do you have access to any other source but the one that God miraculously supplies.

What wilderness are you in? Is it the wilderness of grief, or the wasteland of your shattered dreams? As a child of God, be assured that His presence is with you. In His Word, He says, “...*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*” (Hebrews 13:5)



Focal Points

The wilderness season is a great time to:

- Get intimate with the Word of God
- Get used to the voice of God.
- Jettison doubt and build faith in God.
- Build capacity to receive the outpouring of the Spirit.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In all honesty, I didn't set out to write a devotional. But the idea struck me when I kept thinking of what I could do with the insight I received from the Holy Spirit.

Recent events in my life led me to understand that I'm in the wilderness season of my life.

How else would I explain the disappointment, depression, pain, and grief that has characterized my life for the past year?

But in the midst of it, I have come to feel (and not just know) the love of God. I also learnt some things about the wilderness season which I feel could be of help to anyone going through such challenges.

Find more at:

 theezez.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Chimnomnso (Chino) E. Eze is the creative behind *theeze.com* a blog that features content on godliness, Christian life, leadership, and personal development. He is also a contributing writer on Calla Press and scottroberts.org.

Chino holds a master's degree in biomedical engineering which he obtained at a leading University in Kharkiv, Ukraine.

Despite his keen interest in music, design, academic writing, and Christian ministry, his passion is Christian writing. He hopes to touch lives and bring people closer to God through Spirit-inspired words.

He lives in Botswana where he works and serves as a leader and a keyboardist for the main branch of the Deeper Life Bible Church.

Find him at:

 facebook.com/ezugoce

 instagram.com/ezugoce