

An Oft-Overlooked Ingredient to Unyielding Faith

Today I'm posting a devotional from the book Steve Baker wrote. As a dad, grandfather and Christian school administrator, he wrote the devotionals in *O Taste and See* to encourage parents and children to learn from God's Word together. Each is related to one or more of the core needs I teach about often and that are taught in my book, *Finding Authentic Hope and Wholeness*. He has seen their importance and wanted devotionals as another way of helping children meet the needs in healthy ways.

I chose to post a devotional about flexibility because those of us who are willing to be flexible will have a better summer than others. Would you agree that parents and children need to be willing to go with the flow? Sharing Steve's thoughts with your children will provide an excellent avenue to talk about their attitudes this summer. Could it sometimes be the Holy Spirit redirecting us? Also, I love-love! -his "taste test" idea at the end. I think doing that would be a very rich experience.

FLEXIBILITY – the state of being able to easily change or adjust; ability to do different things, adapt to new and different or challenging requirements.

For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:19-21).

Scripture Text: Acts 16:6-12

When situations in life are a source of irritation, it may be because God is trying to move us in a different direction. God uses our circumstances to guide and direct us. It may be through suffering which He allows us to endure or through trials we face from others that God moves us to a place of constant service and worship in our journey with Him. Being flexible means being attentive and available to the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

This was true in Paul's life as he went on his missionary journey through Asia Minor. Paul desired to go one way toward Turkey, yet the Holy Spirit wanted Paul to go west and cross over into southern Europe. God gave Paul a vision of a man standing on the shore of Macedonia praying and calling out, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." This took great flexibility from the mission team to change their plans; and even a greater need for flexibility as they faced opposition.

In light of the vision, Paul made plans to sail to Macedonia. He and his team eventually arrived at Philippi. They had quick success in reaching a well-known and affluent woman named Lydia. She listened intently to their teachings and trusted the Lord Jesus as her Savior.

Their obedience was also met with suffering because they were followed about by a young demon-possessed girl who was used by businessmen to tell the fortunes of people for a profit. Paul cast the demon out of the damsel and this ended the business practice of these local men. Outraged, they caught Paul and Silas, took them before the rulers, had them beaten, and thrown into prison.

Where was the blessing of being flexible to follow the Holy Spirit in all of this, one might ask? God always knows what He is doing. That night as Paul and Silas sang in prison, probably to the amazement of the other prisoners and the

jailor, God shook the prison with an earthquake. The events that followed led to the jailor and his whole family's salvation and the church at Philippi was born. None of this would have happened if Paul and Silas had not been flexible to listen to the leading of God's Spirit, flexible to endure unjust suffering knowing that God was with them, and flexible to praise God in light of the irritations they endured.

Taste Test:

Take an elderly saint in your church out to lunch one day and visit with them about the character of flexibility.

- Ask them to tell you stories of when God moved them or changed the direction of their life.
- Was it hard?
- How did they respond?
- Was it worth it if they obeyed?
- Ask them to tell you the blessing of listening to the Spirit of God.

Scraping the Plate:

Discuss the Scripture text in Acts 16:6-40.

Read the whole story.

What might have been different in history if Paul and Silas had gone the other way into Bithynia? Would we have ever heard the gospel or would we have ever heard of Paul? Would God have had to raise someone else up to spread the gospel to Europe? We can be extremely grateful for Paul's obedient flexibility.

Nanny's Chocolate Pie:

Our identity as God's children requires that we are growing in character and changing by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. This requires our flexibility in allowing God to lead us.

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Reprinted with permission from Dr. Kathy Koch's blog. **Steve Baker** has served in ministry for over 35 years and is currently finishing his master's in divinity. With his heart for discipleship, he has worked as a senior pastor, associate pastor, teacher, coach and hospice chaplain. In 2010, God called him and his wife, Joyce, to help launch a university-model school. He is currently the principal of Summit Christian Academy in Boerne, Texas. Steve has a passion for families and mentoring believers to walk in this world humbly and boldly as warriors sharing the powerful message of the gospel to all people.