

The Heat Is On—Can You Handle It?

I want to go to a deeper issue that is necessary to examine. The next part of fantasy we need to look at is the *emotional* component. What are the *emotional* forces that drive men to fantasy?

Emotional maturity and emotional intimacy are the forces in play that drive us into fantasy. If pressure reveals gaps in our emotional maturity, then the key to our maturity is our perspective on pressure.

Do you see the connection? If you want to grow, you have to have a way of thinking about pressure because it's not a matter of *if* pressure is coming on your life. It's a matter of *when* it comes. You can't escape pressure.

Jesus said that pressure is coming. John 16:33 states, "In this world you are going to have tribulation, but take comfort I have overcome the world."

Adam sinned. Pressure entered the world—moral pressure, emotional pressure, relational pressure, vocational pressure and more. Now Satan is in the mix, trying to use pressure to accomplish his goals.

But guess what? God is in the mix too, using the pressure in your life to accomplish His goals, if you let Him. Now it's not just about when the pressure is going to come; it's about your response and attitude is toward that pressure when it arrives. That is critical.

If you are involved in athletics in any way, you get this whole idea of pressure. When top-performing athletes enter the playing field, they need to be used to the pressure. They run techniques, drills and plays under pressure at practice, so

that when they get into the game, they can negotiate and navigate to be successful—under pressure.

The same thing is true in the spiritual life. There are two coaches: God and Satan. They have different perspectives on pressure. That's what I want to talk with you about.

There are two stakeholders in how you handle pressure. You have two people vested in your ability to handle pressure, trial, delay, difficulty, relational conflict and emotional chaos.

You need to know that God uses pressure to test us. If God uses pressure to test us, then Satan uses pressure to tempt us.

One, like a good coach, is putting you under pressure for positive reasons. But Satan wants to use pressure to tempt you to escape your reality and the feelings associated with being under pressure.

We see in David the perspective on pressure from the heart of the "man after God's own heart." In 2 Chronicles 29:17, it says, "I know my God that you *test* the heart and are pleased with integrity" (emphasis added).

I want you to notice the word "test." Just like a good coach, God our Father puts us into situations where we have to choose right or wrong. We have to choose between our feelings or our faith, between the material world or God's world.

Today, He's going to put you in situations where you have to choose. What's right? What's wrong? Choosing between feelings or faith? He's going to do that because He wants to grow you and mature you—like any good father would.

Remember when the government tested the Emergency Broadcast System? They wanted to be sure that it worked.

I want you to know that this is a test of the spiritual

maturity broadcast system. This is only a test. God is seeing what's there. He wants to grow you up. He wants to bring a mirror up to your life. He wants to move you from boy to man. So you need to know that this is for your growth. When we know that the pressure is there for positive reasons in our life—it encourages us to persevere, to realize the gain and to get better.

Satan, however, is using that same pressure to tempt, not to test. That's what we see in Luke 4:1-11.

You see how Satan has not changed his game book? He runs the temptation plays over and over again. I bring us back to the garden because the garden is the symbol of pressure. Adam was in the garden, and under moral pressure he chose feelings. Jesus was in a garden. He was put under moral and spiritual pressure. He chose faith. Adam chose self. Jesus chose significance, spiritually.

Men will be put under pressure. The same dynamics exist in your life. We're all experiencing those gardens of pressure.

This article is the second in a series titled Fantasy Island, Part 2, where Saddleback Church's Kenny Luck takes a closer look at the emotional aspects of fantasy. In this series, Luck also will discuss God's will for men like you who want to grow in maturity, truth and reality rather than in Satan's plan to replace your reality with his fantasy, escapism and unreality. Click here to read Part 1.

Kenny Luck is the founder of Every Man Ministries and the men's pastor at Saddleback Church. His 20th book, *Sleeping Giant: No Movement of God Without Men of God*, is the proven blueprint for men's ministries and was recently released through B&H Publishing. Watch and read more of Kenny's teaching at . Follow Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter (@everymm) and YouTube.