

This Simple Decision Means Healing for That Crippled Area in Your Life

He tries to control the tremor that runs through His body. Sweat beads on his forehead and drips down his nose hitting the stone pavement with a pop. He adjusts his robe wishing he paid more attention when dressing earlier. All eyes are on him and Jesus. Watching. Wondering. Whispering.

Standing beside him, Jesus scans the room resting His fiery gaze on a cluster of Pharisees in the prominent seats. "What kind of action suits the Sabbath best?" He asks them. "Doing good or doing evil? Helping people or leaving them helpless?" No one responds. The room is silent. Jesus looks each of them in the eye. It is evident that He is angry now. He can't abide the smug looks of those with such stony hearts.

Looking at the trembling man beside him, He gently speaks, "Stretch your hand out." There is a gasp in the room as everyone strains to see what happens next. The Pharisees glare at him with the anger born of hatred. Others look with the kindness of hope. Losing sight of them all, He turns to look into eyes that appear to be fiery pools of liquid love.

The decision seems simple in the gaze of this love: He slowly stretches the stuff of his embarrassment and frustrations. He stretches his weakness. The part of him that he thinks is ugly. He extends his handicap. The thing that sadly now identifies him more than the name given to him by his mom and dad. He stretches it toward Jesus.

He hasn't been able to move it for years now. He has no power in that right arm of his. But a decision to be vulnerable and stretch the stuff of his weakness and it is whole! He smiles and begins to laugh as he enthusiastically raises his right

hand above his head—waving it back and forth. Wow! It is as good as new!

Shrieks fill the room. Joyful shouts of “Hosanna” mixed with “Hallelujahs” ring out. The Pharisees jump up and move to leave as fast as they can, sputtering about how they will join forces with Herod’s followers to make sure they stop Jesus! But the day is won by the joy that engulfs the people like a raging flood. Heaven is on earth! The cripple is whole again! (See Mark 3:1-6).

What Will Your Story Be?

What about you? Will this be your story, or are you holding onto what is wrong instead of letting it go? It doesn’t matter who you are or what you’ve experienced. Everyone has issues. Regardless of the issue that is crippling some area of your life, this man’s story can be yours. I choose for it to be mine. I hope you will also. The choice is simple but not always easy. It is the decision between “strutting your stuff” or stretching it. It is the decision between being pitiful or powerful.

Hiding Your Stuff

Far too many do all they can to live their life minimizing their issues. They hide them. They dress them up to not draw any attention. They learn how to posture themselves so people only see their good side. They become expert at showcasing their strengths and downplaying any weakness they possess. Some become so proficient at covering up that they blind themselves to their issues. They build a wall of facades around their heart. Fearing the consequences of appearing weak or being wrong, they imprison themselves and their families in a cage of pretense. No one can approach them with a word of correction or even caution without a blow-up.

Sadly, even in the presence of the one who can change everything for them, they stretch out their good arm:

posturing themselves so that their good, their strong side is amplified. When invited by God to stretch their stuff to Him during times of worship and prayer, they instead attempt to prove to God that they are “good.” Thus, they remain crippled.

To be free, we must learn how to rejoice in our weakness. We come to realize that once we stretch it out to Jesus, His strength is perfected in us. The very area of our weakness becomes a greater place of strength for us because it is His strength in us and not our own. We can now say, “When I am weak, then I am strong.” (See 1 Cor. 12:8-10).

Hiding in Your Stuff

Others remain crippled because their identity is so wrapped up in their pain that they now find comfort in their trouble. They want everyone to see. They want to tell their pain to any who will listen. The act of reliving the hurt and the suffering is a temporary catharsis, and the looks of pity from others causes them to feel justified in their weakness. While they dream with joy of what wholeness would be like, they are yet unwilling to be healed. Who will they be without the pain? Who will they be without this challenge to identify them? Healing would remove their excuse for sorry living.

To be free, we must exchange our ashes for His beauty. We must exchange our mourning for His oil of joy. We must give up the spirit of heaviness and take up His garment of praise. You can't be both pitiful and powerful. You will be pitiful, or you will be powerful. Never both!

You and I cannot grasp the fullness of destiny with our strengths. There is destiny that can only be grasped with our weakness that gives way to His strength. It is time to stop looking at your weakness and look at Jesus. It is time to stop worrying about what the crowd thinks and look to Jesus. It is time to stop positioning yourself in the best light possible—get real, get vulnerable and look to Jesus. It is

time to stop finding comfort and identity in what is destroying you and give it to Jesus. It is time to stretch! Lay out your stuff to Jesus and live! {eoa}

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