

When God Is Stretching You Beyond Your Natural Limits

I spend several days a week lifting heavy weights and doing all sorts of crazy new exercises in the gym. Sometimes, I forget to stretch and end up with muscles so tight I can barely walk two days later. That soreness makes me want to skip the next workout. You might say my muscles are weary in well doing.

Lately, I've found myself in God's gym—lifting heavy **spiritual** weights and doing all manner of uncomfortable new exercises. I don't have to worry about the stretching part. He's doing that too. God's stretching is sometimes as painful on our souls as working over a sore muscle—I'm reminded of Lurch from *The Addam's Family* on that mediaeval-looking stretching machine in the dungeon—but it leaves you with a spiritual capacity great enough to move into the next season He's ordained for you.

Apparently, I'm not the only one going through God's stretching. I asked the question, "Is God stretching anybody else, or is it just me?" on my Facebook page last week and got several thousand responses. Precious saints said everything from, "I feel like a rubber band" to "Stretched and pulled like taffy" to "Call me Gumby." Behind the cutsie quips are folks who are walking by faith as God makes us, shakes us, breaks us and molds us into the image of Christ. So how do we best respond?

Separating Godly From Ungodly Pressure

One thing I've learned in times of pressure is that there's pressure from the inside—what I call **Holy Ghost** pressure—and pressure from the outside the comes from people, places, things (and some of those "things" include devils).

It's easy enough to resist God in the name of resisting the

devil just because you don't like what's happening and assume the assignment came from the pits of hell. I've seen others lay down and let the devil walk all over them in the name of yielding to the **Holy Spirit**. Don't do that! Stay **prayerful**. Ask the **Holy Spirit** to show you what is of Him and what is against His will for your life. Yield to God, resist the devil.

Here's another thing I've learned about pressure. Whether it comes from the hand of God or the enemy, if you'll just keep pressing through the pressure you'll not only gain strength, the pressure will eventually let up. To my chagrin, every single time—yes every single time—I've fainted in the face of adversity the pressure eased up as soon as I backed off. If I had just pressed a little while longer I would have pressed through into victory.

Don't give up. God knows how much you can handle and He won't let the enemy press you past what you can bear, either. Through the pressing, you are building **spiritual strength** and character that will serve you well on the next phase of your journey. Always remember, sometimes manifesting your victory in **spiritual warfare** is merely a matter of outlasting the devil.

Enlarging Your Spiritual Capacity

God has purpose for every thing He does. Take confidence knowing that He's stretching you so that you can hold more of His power, gain more of His wisdom, more of His character—more of Him. He wants to increase your influence and enlarge your territory.

For months and months I quoted Isaiah 54 every single day. I had memorized it and could repeat it back to you. A friend of mine approached me last week and said she had a word for me. It was Isaiah 54. It's too long to print the whole chapter, but here are a few of the verses that really speak to me in

this season of stretching:

“Enlarge the place of your tent, And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes.

For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited” (Isaiah 54:2-3).

“O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, Behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children,’ (Isaiah 54:11-13).

“In righteousness you shall be established; You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. Indeed they shall surely assemble, but not because of Me. Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake” (Isaiah 54:14-15).

“Behold, I have created the blacksmith who blows the coals in the fire,

who brings forth an instrument for his work; And I have created the spoiler to destroy. No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me...” (Isaiah 54:16-17)

Trust Yourself in God's Hands

Let me leave you with this quote from Oswald Chambers, an early 20th century Baptist and Holiness Movement evangelist, who said it better than I can:

“Patience is more than endurance. A saint’s life is in the hands of God like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see, and He stretches and strains, and every now and again the saint says, ‘I cannot stand anymore.’ God does not heed, He goes on stretching till His purpose is in sight, then He lets fly. Trust yourself in God’s hands. Maintain your relationship to Jesus Christ by the patience of faith. ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ Amen.

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