

Rubber Band

A Lord's Flock General Assembly Topic

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A rubber band can stretch to a certain limit at which point it will break. If not used, it eventually dries up and loses its elasticity. Similarly, God stretches us like rubber bands to grow in faith and to grow more in the image and likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29), but never beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13).

Purposes of stretching:

1. God stretches us to grow and glow.

- 1.1 Our maturity happens in the stretch. We'll never know our capacity until we are stretched.
- 1.2 We undergo stretching to accelerate us to another level of spirituality. God stretches us to what He has designed for us; God never stretches us to our breaking point. (Is. 42:3a)
- 1.3 The growth in the faith of Daniel and his three friends was evident when they overcame the test of food in Daniel 1; the test of the fiery furnace in Daniel 3; and in the test of the lion's den in Daniel 6.

2. God stretches us to love.

- 2.1 We must love others as God loves us.
- 2.2 We must do good to those who have wronged us. (1 Pt. 2:20)
- 2.3 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on [your] right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well" (Mt. 5:38-40).
- 2.4 "Bless those who persecute you. Vengeance is the Lord's (Rom. 12:14-19)."

3. God stretches our character.

- 3.1 "The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ [Jesus] will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little" (1 Pt. 5:10).
- 3.2 God answers our prayer in His time. (Ecc. 3:11).

3.3 Job, a God-fearing man, was allowed by God to be tested one after the other (Job 1:8-9; 12-14). Job showed how it was to be very human and yet very heavenly.

3.4 No matter what we face, God is in it for us. He has a plan for our difficulties.

3.5 "We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

4. God stretches our faith.

- 4.1 Peter's faith was stretched when he walked on water (Mt. 14:28-32.)
 - Why would we be reluctant to get out of the boat?
 - The boat represents comfort zone.
 - Because of fear.
 - Because of doubt.
- 4.2 Why should we get out of the boat?
 - Risk leads to reward.
 - Our faith will grow.
 - Because Jesus is there [outside of the boat].

We must remember that no matter how painful the stretching of our faith may get, the Lord is in it with us for the long haul. He challenges us to "enlarge the space for your tent, spread out your tent cloths unsparingly; lengthen your ropes and make firm your pegs" (Is. 54:2). We can look forward to the reward that awaits us at the end of the season of stretching. "Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead" (Phil. 3:13).

Reflection: Have you experienced a stretch in your faith? How did it go?

The season of stretching may not be a pleasant experience, but it is part of God's design to transform us into Jesus' image and likeness. Pray, "Bend me, o Lord, like clay in the hands of the potter."

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