

WHEN IT'S TIME TO  
**STRETCH**



'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

Oftentimes when we're seeking growth or a breakthrough in an area, we don't place sufficient emphasis on the process that God will take us through that will give us the capacity to attain and retain what God wants to give us. With growth and expansion always comes a stretching, therefore it is a continuous process we will always experience as we go from strength to strength.

If we do not understand what a stretch looks like and its purpose, we may end up frustrating the process of manifesting the very thing we are looking for. This series we're looking at how to identify and maximize the season of a stretch and align with God's agenda for our lives.

We pray the Holy Spirit will bring illumination and alignment as we learn how to cooperate with Him in the season of a stretch.



## Day 1 Why Stretch?

“You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God’s word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.” Hebrews 5:12

Any time God stretches us it is because He is preparing us individually and collectively for the next season. One of the things we must recognise is that ageing is automatic but maturity is conscious and intentional in both physical and spiritual things. Meaning a person can be getting older in biological years, but still be a spiritual baby. This certainly isn’t God’s desire as all believers need maturity and continuous growth to walk in the fullness of what God has planned for us. So God initiates a stretch to develop us, but we have to respond by allowing ourselves to be stretched, as He won’t force us.

“...They compare themselves to one another and make up their own standards to measure themselves by, and then they judge themselves by their own standards. What self-delusion!” 2 Corinthians 10:12 (TPT)

Stretching looks different for each person, because it depends on the areas in us being worked on by the Holy Spirit at that time. Which means only the Holy Spirit can be the marker of our growth, not comparison with other people. For example, the Lord could want someone to invest say 2 hours a day in prayer. However, that person looks around and sees that she’s already praying 1hr daily and this is much more than anyone in her circle, so she may think she’s already doing well and won’t cooperate with the stretch of getting up an hour earlier. Meanwhile, based on where God wants to take her 2hrs in His presence daily is a requirement to face the challenges of the next season.

“Known to God from eternity are all His works.” Acts 15:18

Even if we don’t always know the specific details of where we’re deficient, God wants us to have a heart that’s always open to His processing so we’re constantly on a journey of growth in Him.

**Prayer:** Lord thank You for showing me that I must be intentional about my spiritual development. Help me on this journey Lord so I don’t miss out on maturing and receiving Your best in every season.



## Day 2 Refinement

'He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.'  
Malachi 3:3

The purpose of a stretch is to enlarge us for more. More presence, more capacity, more strength, more of who we are designed to be. Because God understands our limitations, He doesn't take us from raw material to finished product overnight – rather we go through a continuous process of refinement. Refinement is critical because if we skip that process, we will end up with an enlarged version of our flawed selves. And God is always more interested in who we are becoming and our eternal destination than what we are doing.

'For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.' Psalms 66:10

Gold and silver melt at over 1000 degrees Fahrenheit, so when the Lord says he will purify us, it means He allows the heat to be turned up in different parts of our lives. So it's fair to say that the process isn't pleasant. The point of refinement isn't to harm us, but for the impurities in us – prayerlessness, indiscipline, pride, untrustworthiness, etc – to come out. The amount in each of us varies and the Lord knows just how much heat needs to be applied to get us to the stage where we are no longer slaves to that particular trait. Then He begins work on another area. Life with God is a journey of continuous refinement.

'..We went through fire and flood, but you brought us to a place of great abundance.'  
Psalms 66:12

God's intention for refinement isn't to punish us, but to bring out the version of us that can accommodate His great abundance without sacrificing our character and walk with Him. There's some level of abundance that if God gives us based on our current version, over time the things of God will become less of a priority and we will react wrongly to the pressures that come with that abundance.

**Prayer:** Lord, I understand that all You do is from a place of love and to bring out the best version of me. Help me remain open to Your continuous refinement and not cut the process short.



### Day 3 Planning

'While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest...shall not cease.' Genesis 8:22

Enlargement never happens automatically. It starts with a desire, followed by a plan and then intentional execution. Farmers know that a harvest (enlargement) only comes from planting seeds, not from wishing for a harvest. They are intentional about going out to plant, knowing what to plant and the effort required to nurture the seeds to get the returns expected. It isn't a haphazard action but planned and deliberate. Likewise, we need to be deliberate about enlargement. One of the first things we need to be clear on is what enlargement looks like for us. Because if we don't know we may get frustrated in the process and shortchange ourselves.

'Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain.' Exodus 25:40

When it was time to build a temple Moses took time to hear from God so he knew the exact pattern for the temple to be built. We are His living temples and we can download from God His pattern for each season of our lives. He alone can give us the keys to the next level in Him and how to go about achieving this. This means once we hear enlargement our immediate next step shouldn't be to rush into activity, but to take some time to retreat to ensure we receive instructions on what our pattern is, otherwise we run the risk of building wrongly.

'But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?' Luke 14:28

There's a cost to enlargement. There's the cost of waiting on the Master Architect to receive direction and then the actual cost of building. Time spent in prayer, meditation, personal/career/ business development, capacity building, whatever it takes to grow. In practical terms, we will often see that all these are happening at the same time so there will be a stretch on our time and other resources. It's a time of being intentional about our priorities so we don't waste valuable energy on things that don't feed our enlargement. It may sound like a lot, but when we align with God, He gives grace for the journey.

**Prayer:** Lord, thank You for opening my eyes to see that enlargement requires intentionality and planning on my part on receiving the keys for my next level and the grace to pay the price necessary.



## Day 4

### New Wineskin

'And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.' Mark 2:22

One of the things that the Holy Spirit works on during the period of a stretch is our mindset. The way we think must expand in order to accommodate the new realities God will make available to us. The reason new wine bursts old wineskins is because new wine expands as it ferments over time. Meanwhile old wineskins would already have been stretched from the initial fermentation process of the wine in it before. So putting new wine in an old wineskin would cause it to over stretch and burst.

'And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Romans 12:2

This doesn't necessarily mean every old wineskin is useless. In biblical days there was a process of reconditioning old wineskins into new ones by washing, airing and drying the container and then soaking in oil until it's supple enough to allow for expansion, then new wine can be put in it. In the context of our mindsets this speaks to letting the Holy Spirit clean our hearts and minds, making us able to receive higher thoughts and habits by being soaked in His presence until we are able to break out of old thought patterns and behaviour. Then it becomes easier for us to accommodate the new wine of a new way of living without contaminating it with old detrimental practices.

'...But we have the mind of Christ.' I Corinthians 2:16

Our minds are meant to constantly be renewed (reconditioned) in line with what pleases God. As we're refined, we're cleansed of the old and the then soaked in oil – intentionally dwelling in God's presence for extended periods of time so we start reasoning like Jesus and acting like Him. It's a journey, but the Holy Spirit is always there to guide us through.

**Prayer:** Lord, I submit myself for your reconditioning. Remove the hard parts in my heart and make me supple enough to be transformed by You so I begin to function more and more like Jesus.

## Day 5

### Waiting

“Then the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; ...“Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.” Exodus 24:12,16

Waiting speaks to a heart posture where we’re ready to do whatever it is God would have us do, when and how He would have us do it. The waiter at a restaurant doesn’t determine when you’re ready to order or what you should order. The waiter’s job is simple: wait for your order and ensure execution. This is the same way we’re to wait on God to find out what’s on His mind.

Interestingly God Himself called Moses to come to the mountain, yet He didn’t speak to Moses for 6 days. Sometimes we think when we’re waiting on God, He’s supposed to speak to us immediately. Sometime He may, other times He may not. The critical thing is that we obey the instruction in verse 12: “be there”. It’s in being in His presence and not necessarily in the multitude of instructions that we are transformed.

“But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31

Waiting in the Bible speaks of looking eagerly for something and also being made to sit down, which sounds like a bit of a contradiction. How can a person be looking eagerly for something and sitting down at the same time? This tells us that it speaks to a heart disposition not necessarily physical activity. It’s in our constantly seeking God for who He is that we exchange our plans and ambitions for His and begin to value the things He values. It’s as we wait that we receive refreshing, strength, strategy, power and everything we need to be effective ambassadors of Jesus wherever we are. Waiting can be uncomfortable, especially as it involves laying aside our personal desires and actively seeking God’s agenda. As uncomfortable as it may be, it’s an integral part of a stretch and we always come out better for it.

**Prayer:** Lord I ask for the grace to wait upon You, not for your signs/wonders, but to get to know You for who You are.

## Day 6 Boldness

“...But the righteous are as bold as a lion” Proverbs 28:1

Stretching requires boldness as many times we will be required to move into new territories: spiritually, mentally and physically. Being built up spiritually is like climbing a mountain- the higher we go, the further we can see. As we see further we gain more perspective and clarity on what God is doing both at world and personal levels. Because God is limitless, as we yield to His agenda we will need to take bold steps to activate what He's doing.

““Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:18-19

“...Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before.” Joshua 3:4

We like the sound of God doing something new, but in practical terms new can sometimes be confusing, unfamiliar and it may feel safer to stay in our comfort zone of the past. It takes boldness to forget former expertise, successes and even failures in order to embrace a new that's still forming before our eyes. Yet this is what God calls us to in a stretch because He's always moving and doing new things so we shouldn't get stuck in the rut of the old. He doesn't expect us to be confused through the process which is why we have to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit so we can follow His leading as He navigates us through uncharted terrain. But that's only if we choose to follow, He won't force us.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

When we understand God's heart and that He always wants what is best for us then it's easier for us to trust Him and move in boldness when He points us in an unfamiliar direction because we know He's not setting us up to fail. What has God asked you to do that you're afraid of doing?

**Prayer:** Lord I ask for boldness to step out on Your instructions because I know your plans for me are good and You always supervise the execution of Your agenda.



## Day 7 Divine Strategy

'So David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?" And the Lord said to David, "Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand"...Then the Philistines went up once again and deployed themselves in the Valley of Rephaim. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, and He said, "You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees.' 2 Samuel 5:19,22-23

One of the things we should expect during a stretch is divine strategy. God's character is constant, but His methods are dynamic so we shouldn't box Him into the same way of doing things. When David was attacked by the Philistines, the Lord gave him a strategy for victory. When he was attacked again by the same Philistines, the Lord gave him a different strategy for victory. This tells us that it's important we don't make assumptions with God on how he wants us to handle a matter. There's nothing wrong with asking Him what to do and how to go about it.

'...and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding' Colossians 1:9

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.' Proverbs 3:5-6

When we walk in alignment with God's plan, He shows us the strategy to fulfil it – it is HIS plan after all. Where we run into trouble is when we formulate our own plans outside of God – even when we think it's something that will please Him – and expect Him to take responsibility for its success. It doesn't work that way. This doesn't mean we don't plan or have strategies. It means we take everything back to God and are honestly ready to amend as He instructs. As we seek His will and His strategy, the wisdom for execution comes and we know exactly what to do as we submit our intellect to His direction and move as He leads us.

**Prayer:** Lord as You open me up to new innovations and ideas for every area of my life, I submit to Your will and receive Your divine strategy because I know that way, I am guaranteed to please You.

## Day 8 Pressing Forward

'Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 3:13-14

One of the critical elements of a stretch is the ability to sustain the impact of the experience and push for more. God is too vast for us to fully comprehend in one lifetime so we must keep pushing for more. As we create room in our hearts, we experience even more stretching as He takes us deeper. We should never allow ourselves to get to the point where our best experience with God is in the past. He's always moving, and we should move with Him.

'The Lord our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain.' Deuteronomy 1:6

It's not easy to stretch, especially if we have fully settled into a comfortable pattern with God. Because we're not necessarily doing anything bad, we may not see the need for the discomfort that comes with stretching. But someone once said the biggest enemy of great is good. Being comfortable with a particular level of relationship with God is a precursor to lukewarmness because it robs us of the desire to pay the price to dig deeper into knowing Him.

'How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!' Psalms 147:5

Our stretching doesn't change God in any way, but it creates room for us as finite beings to begin to journey with an infinite being whose ways and thoughts are higher than ours. Stretching pulls on the strength of the Holy Spirit in us to take us through what would be at best exhausting in human strength alone. As we stretch, we make room for the Holy Spirit to take over more and more as we die to ourselves (personal desires and ambitions). Death to self isn't a one-off but a daily experience so as we press forward, we must be open to consistent and continuous stretching.

**Prayer:** Lord I see the great men and women in the Bible and see that they are normal people who allowed themselves to be stretched by You. Lord, I ask for the grace to constantly press forward into more of You in every area of my life so I can be all You created me to be and do all You created me to do.

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