

Allowing Ourselves to be Stretched Spiritually

Philippians 3

Introduction:

1. How many of you have ever heard the expression, “This is really stretching me”? What do we mean when we say, “This (new job, college class, project at work, problem, trial) is really stretching me”?
2. We mean that we are being taken out of our comfort zone, growing in ways we could have never imagined, and finding strength we didn’t know we had.
3. But how are you doing spiritually in your walk with Christ? Are you being stretched and are you growing? Or have you gotten locked into a comfort zone and you’re coasting?
4. As we know, the apostle Paul was a man on a mission. He was very focused on exalting Jesus Christ and reaching people with the good news of Christ. He accomplished so much for Christ in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.
5. I believe verse 13 gives us some insight into how he was able to do this.
 - He was “*reaching forth.*” This phrase literally means “to stretch oneself forward.”
6. According to God’s Word, we need to be reaching forth and stretching ourselves spiritually in our Christian walk and as a church family.
7. Be honest – are you possibly stuck in a spiritual rut and locked into a spiritual comfort zone? I believe many Christians and many churches are. Spiritual growth has stopped.
8. But we cannot afford to allow this to happen. Church, there is too much at stake! Satan is fervently attacking homes, families, Christians, and churches. He is not letting up, so we cannot afford to let our guard down and think that we can coast to glory.
9. How can we (individually and as a church) stretch ourselves spiritually and accomplish spiritual goals? This text will show us how.

First, we must refuse to trust in our fleshly power. vs. 3

1. It is so crucial that we understand this vital scriptural principle. Fleshly power and fleshly wisdom cannot bring spiritual growth. When the Bible talks about the flesh, it is speaking of people doing things independent of God through their own strength.
2. If we as a church are to grow and stretch ourselves spiritually, it will not happen through some new program or ministry event that we have invented.
3. If you are to grow and stretch yourself spiritually, it will not happen through keeping a list of rules and “dos” and “don’ts.”
4. Paul was reaching forth, but he understood that fleshly power, fleshly wisdom, fleshly preaching, and fleshly service were absolutely useless. 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

Second, our passion must be for a Person – Jesus Christ. vs. 10

1. Paul said, “*That I may know him...*” Paul wasn’t satisfied to have simply **met** Christ as his Savior on the road to Damascus. He longed to know Christ in a more intimate and personal way.
2. You cannot be satisfied with a surface relationship with Christ. You must desire a close, personal, one-on-one, daily communion with Christ – one that changes the person you are at home and at work.
3. If this is your desire, God will begin to stretch you spiritually in amazing and wonderful ways.
4. Here at CrossRoads, our passion cannot be to simply have sharper and slicker programs, or to have more things to **do** than anybody else in town. Our passion must be to connect people to a life-giving and life-changing Person – Jesus Christ.
5. Our church has experienced some wonderful blessings this past year. But we must remember why we are doing these things and why we are stretching ourselves to accomplish these goals.
6. It is not to have the biggest church in town. It is not to make a name for ourselves. It is not to give people more things to do to fill their time. It is not to have the slickest programs and nicest buildings in town.
7. It is all for the purpose of connecting people to a Person – Jesus Christ.
 - Only one thing will make men godlier examples for their children, better husbands for their wives, lights for Christ at their workplace, not afraid to pray with their kids.
 - Only one thing will make ladies more loving moms, better wives, lights and testimonies for Christ wherever they go, not afraid to tell their kids how much they love Jesus.
 - Only one thing will make children and teens more respectful of their parents, live holy, pure, virtuous lives, and live unto Christ even when nobody is looking.
8. That one thing is to lead people into a deeper, personal, intimate, daily, one-on-one relationship with a Person – Jesus Christ. Do you have that today? You can have it!
 - Passionately desire to have a relationship with Him that will affect the whole of your life.

Next week we will examine Part 2 of how we can stretch ourselves spiritually in this new year!