

Stretched

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Relationships have a way of challenging me like no other. Since I cannot really enjoy life without relationships, AND it is my life's work (smiling), writing another article about relationships and how they work is, well, "stretching" me. Relationships will often call us out of our comfort zone spiritually first, then relationally. There are basic principles that exist which help us understand the benefits of relationship struggles.

Spiritually

Spiritually our relationship with the Lord is a process in which we continually are stretched in our understanding of who He is, who we are, and what He has for us as joint heirs with Him. (Romans 8:17) The Lord is often calling us out of our comfort zone in order to be all He has designed us to be. Jesus was certainly stretched out of His comfort zone for our sake.

Relationally

Relationally, it is the same process of expanding our comfort zone in which we are continually stretched to understand, extend grace and forgive one another.

We stretch and grow more effectively when we stay connected with the Lord. Whether it is responding to the challenges of relating with Him or others, it makes sense to involve the author of relationship. Asking the Lord to participate with us in relationship means we take any suffering and ill-treatment to Him. This means even when we do not understand or are upset with present circumstances. Jesus experienced disappointment in His relationships on earth. "Couldn't you keep watch for one hour?" (Mark 14:37b) This is a similar disappointment we experience with one another.

There are rewards and blessings to be enjoyed by walking through the process of being stretched. They are increased honesty, vulnerability, comfort, understanding, and the ability to attach appropriately. Candidly, I know the more honest and vulnerable I am with the Lord about myself, the more I feel stretched, comforted, understood, and connected to Him. In turn, I can comfort, understand, and connect with those God has given me. Is it easy? No way! Is it worth it? Absolutely!

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