

A Church That STRETCHES

Acts 8:1-40

Read Acts 8:1-3

What events do the early church members face that stretches their faith?

What things stretch your faith?

Read Acts 8:4-8

How does the early church respond in the midst of persecution?

How can times that stretch your faith make you shine in such a way that brings joy to the people around you?

Read Acts 8:26-40

Having your faith stretched does not always mean that a time of persecution or suffering is at hand. There are other things that stretch our faith. What are some of those things?

When we are being stretched...Jesus wants us to see the direction of God.

When we are being stretched...Jesus wants us to see Him as our standard.

When we are being stretched, Jesus wants us to see His imprint on our lives.

A Church That STRETCHES (With Notes)

Acts 8:1-40

Read Acts 8:1-3

What events do the early church members face that stretches their faith?

While still quite young, the church faces a time of persecution. Families are uprooted from homes and forced to flee to different, strange lands. The threat of persecution involved more than loss of property or status. It could mean rejection by friends/family or even loss of life, like the example we have of Stephen.

What things stretch your faith?

Personal reflection...

Read Acts 8:4-8

How does the early church respond in the midst of persecution?

Those leaving Jerusalem still hold tight to their faith. They still talk about Jesus, even in their struggles. Stretching our faith is not the struggle itself but about the decision to trust God in whatever circumstances. Though Philip is being stretched by the persecution of the church, his faith is strong because God is strong. Philip holds fast to what he has heard and seen, and as a result the entire city sees the power of God in action. The devil flees when Jesus is preached. The sick are healed. Joy comes to a town that seems to have been without hope.

How can times that stretch your faith make you shine in such a way that brings joy to the people around you?

Personal reflection...

Read Acts 8:26-40

Having your faith stretched does not always mean that a time of persecution or suffering is at hand. There are other things that stretch our faith. What are some of those things?

Philip is not the only one whose faith is being stretched. The Ethiopian eunuch is experiencing a time when his faith must move from one stage to another. He is moving toward a fork in the road where he must decide which path he will choose. It is a time when God calls him to be something different. His encounter with Philip shows us how to choose to stand with Jesus in times of stretching. Remember that being stretched is about trusting in the power and purpose of Jesus.

When we are being stretched...Jesus wants us to see the direction of God.

“Go south to the road...” Philip received an audible call from an angel of the Lord. Sometimes we see a passage like this and wish for a time when God would just come down and talk to us. Even though it may be difficult at times to see, God still gives clear direction for our lives. God is not moving our faith in random. God calls us in one particular direction-towards the nature and character of Jesus.

When we are being stretched...Jesus wants us to see Him as our standard.

The Ethiopian was riding along reading from the book of Isaiah. His questions tells us that he is looking for something. Philip explains that that something is Jesus. “Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.”

Jesus stands in the center of our lives and calls us to be like Him. The nature and character of Jesus will always be the goal of God’s transformation in our lives. Stretching is purposeful. We are stretching to be like the standard that God lays out before us.

When we are being stretched, Jesus wants us to see His imprint on our lives.

“Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” As the Ethiopian is stretched, he sees God has a direction for him. Seeing the water, the Ethiopian is ready to receive the imprint of Jesus on his life. The Ethiopian is ready to surrender-to give himself into the power and control of Jesus.