



7TH INNING STRETCH DEVOTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

John 12:27-28 ESV

²⁷“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.”

Opening Thoughts:

- As we set our focus on Taking Ground in 2021, let us get a prophetic perspective on where we have been, where we are, and most importantly how to endure through this season of stretching.
- Isaiah 54:2: “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.”
- No other time in mine and your history has everyone in the world gone through a collective, corporate common experience all at the same time.
- We have all felt it differently, but we have all felt it. In what ways have you experienced the challenges of 2020? Which has been the most difficult? What has God said to you or taught you through it all?
- Would you consider all that you have experienced a disruption or an interruption? Why would it be key that you see it as a disruption rather than an interruption?
- It has been a season of stretching and it is not over. Hear God speak to you today: You may not like the methods I have chosen to stretch you with, but you are going to love the results of the stretching.

Key Takeaway: **There is a purpose in the stretching that God has for us!**

- The pain in the stretching is designed to pull on your potential to bring you to his purpose.
- God has a purpose, you have potential.

1) **Stretching is necessary.**

- Read John 12:27. Jesus would not ask His Father to save Him from this hour. Why not? What kind of struggle do you think He experienced within Himself to make this resolve? Could you honestly pray this prayer as Jesus did?
- Jesus saw the need. If we don’t see the need, we will never stretch. Why is it we do not want to stretch?
- Read Genesis 3:16-17. How were Adam and Eve going to be stretched? What would be the benefit of their stretching? Is there something painful in your life that you can now identify as the process of stretching that will bring about a great purpose?
- Stretching is painful, but there is a purpose! It is a process that no one enjoys, but the fruit it produces is worth it.

2) Stretching is hard.

- Read Mark 15:34 and Psalm 22:14. Jesus felt great pain in the stretching. Can you describe what Jesus was feeling at the moment He cried out this prayer? How does this glimpse into His suffering make you feel about your pain and suffering? What questions do you cry out to God when the pain becomes almost unbearable in the stretching?
- Read Hebrews 12:1-2. How can you resolve that Jesus felt joy in His suffering with His heartfelt prayer you just read in the Gospel of Mark? Can you, like Jesus, look beyond your cry and see the hope set before? Can you find joy in the process as you keep your eyes on the eternal purpose of your pain?

3) Stretching is good.

- Read Philippians 3:12-14. How does Paul describe the “7th Inning Stretch?” The end result of stretching is having a longer reach. What do you need to let go of in order to reach for all that is in your future?
- Divine potential is enabled in the reach. You will never reach your destiny if you are not stretched. It is the 7th inning and the game is on the line. How will you finish the game?

1. Keep your eye on the Ball—Perspective.

- Read Ephesians 3:20-21. What might be required in order to be able to expect the “exceedingly abundantly” in your life? Could it be that God is using this season to bring forth the answer to your hearts cry?
- Don’t lose focus, keep your eye on the end result.

2. Keep your head in the game—Attitude.

- Your Attitude determines your altitude. Your attitude determines the length and success of the stretching. Could it be that the length of your season of pain and suffering has been prolonged because your attitude has been all wrong? Or maybe you are focusing on the wrong ball?

3. Stay on the team—Fellowship.

- Isolation kills. When you experience pain, do you tend to isolate yourself? Do you find yourself encouraging others when you need encouragement yourself? Have you experienced a time of suffering where you had others walk through the season with you? How was different from times of isolation? Can you purpose to give out what you need?

Application:

- **Key Takeaway: There is a purpose in the stretching that God has for us!**
- Things are much better understood within context. Can you now see the context of Jesus’ heartfelt cry when He tells His Father that His soul was troubled?
- For this purpose...There is purpose in the pain. Stretching releases the purpose.
- Don’t succumb to human nature, which is to contend for comfort.
- Prophecy over your life: the pain in the stretching is designed to pull on my potential to bring me into God’s purpose.