



**Main Scripture:** Isaiah 54:1-4; Mark 3:1-6

**Sermon Theme:** Stepping into 2026 by stretching beyond our comfort zones to receive what God wants to do in our lives.

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## Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to open hearts and minds to His leading, and for courage to stretch into new places of faith this year.

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## Icebreaker

**Share:** What's one New Year's resolution or goal you've set in the past that you actually kept? What made the difference?

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## Key Takeaways

### 1. Nothing Changes Without Action

*"Nothing in 2026 will be different than 2025 if you don't do anything different in 2026."*

### 2. Faith Requires Stretching

Stretching increases mobility, can be painful, exposes what we're hiding, and increases our capacity for God's blessings.

### 3. Stretching Always Comes Before the Miracle

Jesus told the man with the withered hand to "stretch out your hand" BEFORE healing it—not after.

### 4. God Won't Let You Fail

Isaiah 54:4 - *"Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame."*



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## Discussion Questions

## Understanding the Message

1. Read Isaiah 54:1-4 together. Why do you think God told barren people (those with nothing) to enlarge their tents and stretch their cords? What does this reveal about God's character?
2. The sermon mentioned the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-6). Why is it significant that Jesus asked him to "step forward" and "stretch out" his hand before healing him?
3. What did the pastor mean when he said, "Stretching often exposes what you're hiding"? Can you think of biblical examples where God asked someone to expose their weakness before blessing them?

## Personal Reflection

4. The sermon asked: "What would you do tomorrow if you had no fear of failure?" Take a moment for each person to share their answer. (Create a safe space—no judgment!)
5. Which of these four points about stretching resonates most with you right now?
  - Stretching increases your mobility (flexibility)
  - Stretching can be painful (uncomfortable)
  - Stretching exposes what you're hiding (vulnerability)
  - Stretching increases your capacity (room for more)
6. The pastor shared Mike's testimony about increasing his giving before his income increased. Have you ever experienced God blessing you after you stretched in faith? What happened?

## Going Deeper

7. The sermon mentioned that we often hide our "withered hand"—our insufficiencies, insecurities, and fears. What keeps us from bringing these things to Jesus? How does pride play a role?
8. Read Isaiah 54:4 again. God promises we won't be put to shame when we stretch in faith. Why do we still struggle to believe this? What past experiences might be holding us back?
9. The pastor said, "God will never be done stretching you." How does this truth challenge or encourage you? Is there a place in your life where you thought you had "arrived" but God is calling you to more?



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## Practical Application

### Individual Action Steps

This Week, I Will:

Choose 1-2 of these to commit to:

- ☐ Identify my withered hand. Write down one area where fear has kept me from stretching (career, ministry, relationships, finances, health, etc.)
- ☐ Take one uncomfortable step. Do one thing this week that stretches me beyond my comfort zone in the area God has been speaking to me about.
- ☐ Practice "what if it's good?" When fear tells me "what if it's bad," counter it with "what if God does something amazing?"
- ☐ Increase my capacity. Like Mike's testimony about giving, identify one area where I can increase my faithfulness BEFORE seeing the increase (time, talent, or treasure).
- ☐ Declare God's promise. Memorize and speak Isaiah 54:4 over my life daily: "Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed."

### Group Action

Accountability Partners: Pair up with someone in the group. Share specifically what you're stretching toward in 2026 and commit to checking in with each other weekly.

Group Challenge: As a group, identify one way you can collectively stretch to serve the church or community this quarter (supporting the building expansion, serving at Hope Center, starting a new outreach, etc.).

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### Closing Reflection

Read this together:

"God wants to do something in 2026 that requires us to make room for it. We cannot receive new wine in old wineskins. We cannot hold more water if we're already at maximum capacity. The question isn't about God's ability or willingness—it's about our willingness to stretch, even when it's uncomfortable, even when we're afraid, even when we can't see the outcome. God is looking for vessels willing to be stretched so He can pour into them and through them."



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## Prayer Time

Popcorn Prayer: Go around the circle and have each person pray a one-sentence prayer about their commitment to stretch in 2026.

Closing Prayer: Have someone close by praying over:

- Courage to stretch beyond comfort zones
- Faith to believe God won't let us fail
- Healing for past wounds that make us afraid to try
- The church's expansion and everyone's personal expansion
- Specific needs shared during discussion

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## Before Next Week

- Attend Wednesday's Hope Center Graduation for Derek (6:03 PM) as a group
- Check in with your accountability partner mid-week
- Journal about any steps you took to stretch this week
- Prepare to share one testimony of stretching (big or small) at next week's meeting