

Devotional 5: Thriving in the Tension – A Way of Growing

Leaning into the Stretch of Faith

Yesterday we explored the surprising strength of **contentment**—a peace not rooted in comfort, but in trust. But what happens when you're in an environment where everything is unfamiliar? When the food, the schedule, the sounds, the pace, the emotions—even your sense of belonging—feels stretched?

That is where transformation happens.



Thriving in the Tension: A Way of Growing

Scripture Reading – James 1:2–4 (NIV)

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.
Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

Devotional Thought:

When you step into a new culture—new sights, smells, rhythms, and relationships—it can feel disorienting. And that's not a bad thing.
It's actually sacred ground.

Tension isn't always a problem to be solved. Sometimes it's the space where God does His best work.

Just like muscles stretch before they strengthen, your heart and mind may feel stretched on this trip:

- You might feel uncomfortable when things move slower (or faster) than you're used to.
- You may feel helpless when language is a barrier.
- You could feel unsure about what your "role" is when you're not the one leading or producing.

- You'll likely feel both admiration and confusion as you learn how others worship, serve, and live.

All of this is part of the tension zone — a sacred space of growth. And it's not meant to be escaped.

It's meant to be **entered** with eyes wide open and hearts ready to learn.

The early church understood this. Following Jesus meant holding grace and truth, wrestling with new ideas, learning from people radically different from them, and trusting God even when they didn't fully understand the "why."

Jesus modeled it perfectly.

He was never in a rush, yet always on purpose.

He challenged systems but embraced individuals.

He held power but walked in humility.

He entered hard places with compassion and didn't flinch in the face of difference or discomfort.

A Different Kind of "Zone"

This trip is not about escaping the noise of your normal life so you can feel peaceful again.

It's about *zoning in*—paying attention to what God is doing right where you feel stretched.

Because the truth is:

- **Tension builds empathy.**
- **Tension grows humility.**
- **Tension reveals assumptions.**
- **Tension prepares you to listen more deeply and love more fully.**

This is where real growth begins—not in the comfort zone, but in the transformation zone.

Reflection & Prayer Focus:

As you prepare to enter a space where you will not have all the answers or control the pace, ask yourself:

1. What tensions am I already anticipating as I step into this experience?
 2. What if I welcomed those tensions as God's tools for forming me?
 3. How can I invite Jesus into those moments, trusting Him to stretch and strengthen me?
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Prayer:

Jesus,

You didn't avoid tension — You entered it with love and truth.

As I prepare to cross borders, meet new people, and experience a new way of life, remind me that You are already there.

Stretch me. Teach me. Grow me.

Help me not to run from the stretch, but to find You in it.

Let the tension I feel become the place where I grow roots deep in You.

Amen.

Tagline for the Day:

You won't grow if you run from the tension. But if you stay with Jesus in it — you'll thrive.