



# YWAC

## Young Women Active for Christ

*Stretch...*

**Prep for Leaders** *If possible, use a clip from the movie **Fireproof** during the Strength Training portion of the study. If you have Internet access, you can find this clip on YouTube by searching "Fireproof The Cross." If you have the DVD, play the scene titled "What You Don't Have" (Scene 12).*

### Playlist\* *Check out these songs this month.*

"We Are" —Kari Jobe

"My Own Little World" —Matthew West

"Give Me Your Eyes" —Brandon Heath

"Give Them Jesus" —Jaci Velasquez

\* All songs can be purchased on iTunes, or you can usually find videos of these songs on YouTube for free.

### Warm Up

Stretching is an important part of every workout. Before you work up a sweat, stretching helps warm up your muscles and prepare them for the workout you are getting ready to do, which prevents injury. After you've spent your time sweating, stretching helps your muscles become more flexible and reduces soreness from your workout.

Even though stretching is important, many people want to skip that part of their workout. Stretching can sometimes hurt, and a lot of people just don't like doing it. We tend to be the same way with our Christian lives. We know that stretching out of our comfort zone is good for us. We know that God has good plans for us and that He will not do anything to cause us harm (Jeremiah 29:11). But we tend to get to a place in our relationship with God where we like the way things are. We get comfortable. We settle in to ordinary lives where we go to church, we say our prayers, and we read our Bibles.

But God didn't call us to be ordinary. He did not set us apart so we could blend in with the crowd. He did not save us and take us in so we could run back to the ways of the world. God called us, saved us, and set us apart. Jesus gave us His name, and He placed us high on a hill so we can shine as lights for Him (Matthew 5:14). God wants us to stretch out of that comfort zone that we cling to. If we do stretch, He promises in His Word that He will provide us with the comfort and peace we need. God wants us stand up for Him. He wants us to stand out from the sinful world in which we live. We are His children, and He wants people to see our attitudes and actions and to know that we belong to Him.

You are a child of the King. Don't settle for ordinary. Stretch a little bit and you'll find God has something extraordinary waiting for you.

### Work Out *Read Genesis 22:1-14.*

God frequently called Abraham to stretch out of his comfort zone. Abraham's faith is an example of living completely surrendered to God. Sure, Abraham and Sarah made some mistakes. They fell short of perfection and they sinned. Knowing that Abraham and Sarah struggled with doubt and that they sometimes didn't understand what God was trying to do in their lives should encourage us. We know that "all things work together for good to them that love God, [and] are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28), but we don't always understand God's plans for us. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that God's thoughts are not like our thoughts and that His ways are not like ours. We have to trust that He knows what He is doing and we have to surrender our fears and our doubts to Him.

Abraham and Sarah wanted a son. They knew God had promised to give them a son and to make a great nation out of their children (Genesis 12:2), but they were old. Because of their age, Sarah had some major doubts about God's plan for them. But God is not bound by the limitations of earth. He is the author of time, and He is in control. Despite Sarah's doubt and despite the sins that Sarah

and Abraham had committed while they were trying to force God's plan into action. (See *Genesis 16:1-16*, *Genesis 17:15-19* and *Genesis 18:11-15*), God blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son.

Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (*Genesis 21:5*). Abraham and Sarah were so happy to finally have the son they had waited for. Imagine how they must have felt, to finally have been given the one thing they wanted more than anything else. God had made His covenant with Abraham, and He had kept His part of the covenant. He had blessed Abraham and Sarah with the desire of their hearts.

Everything was going great for Abraham. Then, in *Genesis 22*, God asked Abraham to stretch out of his comfort zone in a horrible way. Check out what God told Abraham:

"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (*Genesis 22:2*)

Abraham had waited 100 years for God to bless him with a son, and now, God was asking Abraham to give up his son. By this time in his life, Abraham realized that God's plan was best. He still didn't understand God's purpose and he didn't understand why God required this from him, but Abraham obeyed. He surrendered his will in order to follow God's will.

Abraham took Isaac into the mountains, just as God had told him. He built an altar, tied Isaac up, and placed him on the altar. Abraham prepared to follow through with God's command. He raised his knife, ready to kill his only son—the son that he loved more than anything—in order to be obedient.

God saw that Abraham was willing to surrender anything for Him. He stopped Abraham before Isaac was harmed. And when Abraham looked up, there was a ram caught in the bushes that he and Isaac could use as a sacrifice to God.

## Strength Training

**GROUP LEADER:** Show the **Fireproof** scene now. In this scene, Caleb talks to his dad about his efforts to repair his marriage with Catherine. He is frustrated, and his father makes him see that he needs God in his life. This scene should take about 8 minutes. Stop the DVD when Caleb and his father begin to pray together.

God sacrificed for us in ways that we cannot understand. He gave up His only son, Jesus, for us.

My preacher, (Brother Rick Taylor, Sulphur Springs FWB Church) once said, "Salvation is free, but discipleship can cost you your life." God offers us salvation. It is a free gift, and all we have to do is accept it. But to truly follow after God, to be one of His disciples, we have to make some sacrifices. If we want to be disciples, we have to stretch a little. *Matthew 16:25* says, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Sometimes, God will ask us to make sacrifices for Him. He may ask you to move away from your family and your home to serve as a missionary. He may ask you to sacrifice a good paying job as a doctor or nurse to work in a medical mission for free. He may ask you to give up a friend or a boyfriend that you love, but that is no good for you.

When we read the story of Abraham, we think that it is awful that God would ask Abraham to give up his own son. We sympathize with Abraham, and we don't know if we could have that much faith.

God asked Abraham to be willing to give up his son, and Abraham proved that he was. In Abraham's time of need, God provided for him by giving him the ram in the bush.

God was willing to give up His son for you. He did give up His son for you, so that you could have an abundant life (*John 10:10*).

Whatever God asks from you, know that He has a purpose for it and that He is doing it for your good. He doesn't want to hurt you. He wants to get things that aren't good for you out of the way so that He can bless you!

I know that God can sometimes ask for things that we think are impossible, but *Matthew 19:26* says that "with God, all things are possible." He will give you the strength that you need. He will bless you more than you deserve. He will make your sacrifice worth it.

God is tired of lukewarm Christians that want salvation, but don't want to be disciples. He is calling us to stand up. He wants us to stretch the norms and to stand out for Him. He wants you to surrender your life to Him so that He can give you blessings He has planned for you.

Are you willing to stretch out of your comfort zone to be closer to God?



## About the Author

*Christina Hopper is 25 years old. She attends Sulphur Springs Free Will Baptist Church in Northport, AL where she coaches their Bible Millionaire teams and serves as Junior Youth Group Leader. She is currently a student at Mississippi University for Women where she is pursuing a degree in Education. She is pictured here with one of her students from the Junior Youth Group.*