

What's Your Spiritual "Breaking Point"?

We're told we all have a breaking point. But is this true *spiritually*? Is there a limit to the *fidelity* of our faith? Many would perhaps sheepishly say "Yes," but Heb.11:32-40 says otherwise. However, let's leave that for moment.

Think of it this way: What *triggers* your *natural self* to override your *spiritual self*? Hitting your thumb with a hammer? Missing that fairway (again!) or that 'gimme' putt? That "goodun" fish throwing the hook or breaking your line? The kids getting on that "*last nerve*" for the umpteenth time? Hearing "Mom! Mom! Mom!" for the eleven hundredth time before lunch? Or perhaps that friend or family member saying, "I'm sorry" for the 491st time? ("*seventy times seven*" = 490, cf. Matt.18:21-22)?

While such things might only result in a temporary loss of faith or self-control rather than a complete abandonment, it's humbling to realize how little *tempting* it often takes for us to "blow a gasket" *spiritually*, and even if only temporarily forfeit the fidelity of our faith. Consider a couple of biblical examples of just such a thing happening, and what "triggered" it:

Elijah, 1Kings 19:1-4,10,14. Undoubtedly, Elijah had been deep in the trenches of war for the Lord and His cause, and had fought valiantly and well (cf. 1Kings 18). V.3 says "*he was afraid and arose and ran for his life...*" He was no spiritual snowflake- he was in real and immediate danger from Jezebel and Ahab (the Queen and King), v.2. So in v.4, we see God's faithful soldier break down- he was *tired, afraid, hungry* and said, "*It is enough now, O Lord, take my life...*" In vv.10,14 we also need to note how *alone* Elijah felt. *Tired, afraid, physically depleted, and alone*, Elijah had reached His "breaking point"... or so he thought. But God *refreshed* him with *food* and *rest*, and *assured* him that he was not so nearly alone as he presumed, cf. vv.5-18! **Here's the point: When you're afraid, tired, hungry, and (at least feeling) alone, don't forfeit your faith in God, go to Him for assurance, refreshing, and rededication to His purposes!**

Jonah, Jonah 4:3-11. Hopefully, you already know the story of Jonah (if you don't, take 20 minutes and read the whole book- it's much more than just a *whale/great fish* story!). After Jonah reluctantly relents and goes to Nineveh and preaches *repentance* or *destruction*, the exceedingly wicked king and city "*believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them,*" 3:4. Thus 3:10 records, "*When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*" But, as 4:1 tells us, "*it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry*" (since he considered Nineveh and the Assyrians enemies, and wanted them destroyed), cf. v.2. In fact, he was so disappointed and angry they had been spared by God, he said, "*O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life,*" v.3. The story continues with God seeking to teach Jonah a lesson with a *vine/plant* and a *worm*, but here's the point: **Just because you don't get your way, or God doesn't do what you think He should, doesn't give you the right to blow your spiritual gasket- especially if such involves Him being merciful and compassionate when you aren't, but should be.** And, on the positive side of things, there's...

Job, Job 1-2. The book begins, “*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.*” But in the course of one day, this *blameless, upright, and faithful* man lost his *livestock, 1:13-16a; servants and camels* (transportation), *1:16b-17*; and *all his children, 1:18-19*. Even with the loss of his *livelihood/business and staff and offspring*, “*Job did not sin nor did he blame God,*” *1:22*. Instead, even in his grief and agony, “*he fell to the ground and worshiped*” and *blessed “the name of the Lord,” 1:21*. Talk about “triggers” and “breaking points”! Can you imagine? I certainly hope you can’t, but surely others have and do experience much the same types of tragedies. However (as you likely already know), this wasn’t the end of Job’s difficulties. In *2:7* Job was smitten “*with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.*” So great was his agony that even his wife told him to “*Curse God and die!*” *2:9*. If the loss of *fortune and family* wasn’t enough to “trigger” him, surely the loss of his *health* would do the trick! Not Job, as *2:10* records that “*In all this Job did not sin with his lips,*” but rebuked his wife’s rash words and blessed and praised God. Here’s the point: **Even if you should lose your fortunes, family, and fitness, you don’t have to be “triggered” and surrender to such as your “breaking point.” You can, as Job proves, overcome with your faith and fidelity intact.**

Now let’s go back to where we were at the beginning with our “triggers” and “breaking point(s).” I don’t know about you, but I’m thoroughly ashamed of *how little* it takes to *trigger* me to the spiritual *breaking point* of even temporarily forfeiting my faith and fidelity. I suspect that I’m not alone in this- that far too many of us are far too much like Elijah and Jonah, and too far from Job in these regards. We, all too often in my case, allow such things like being *tired, hungry, afraid, and feeling alone*, or even just *not getting our way and God not working like we think He should*, to “trigger” us into blowing our spiritual gasket(s).

Usually, we use these “triggers” to excuse ourselves that our “breaking point” had been reached. But here’s the thing about our “breaking point”- God knows where it is better than we do, and has promised that He is “*faithful*” and “*will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it*” (*1Cor.10:13*)... without “breaking” seems to be the idea. Let’s set the bar higher for ourselves, and stop making excuses involving “triggers” and “breaking points.” Instead, let’s let God, who knows us far better than we know ourselves, *test and grow* us as He sees fit, *cf. Jas.1:2-18*. Read carefully and consider reflectively and inspirationally, *1Pet.1:13-16*, “*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”* (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)