

“Built Different” Series

Echo Church | Year 1 Month 3 Week 1 | March 1, 2026 | Rich Saunders Jr. |

“Expand” Part 3 “Strengthen Your Stakes” | Isaiah 54:1–5 NKJV

1 Sing, O barren, You who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, You who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman,” says the LORD.

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.

3 For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited.

4 “Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; For you will forget the shame of your youth, And will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.

5 For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

Introduction

Isaiah 54 is spoken into a people who have survived exile. Jerusalem has been devastated. The temple has been destroyed. The nation has lived under Babylonian rule. And now God speaks expansion before they even feel stable.

That is the tension.

God commands enlargement before comfort. He commands increase before evidence. He commands structural reinforcement before visible crowds.

The people hearing this text were not strong. They were fragile. They had lived in survival mode. And survival mode shrinks vision. It trains you to think in preservation, not expansion.

But Isaiah 54 is not a motivational speech. It is a structural command.

The imagery is nomadic. The Hebrew word for “stakes” refers to tent pegs driven deep into the ground to secure a structure against wind and instability. In ancient Near Eastern life, if the stakes were weak, the tent collapsed. Expansion required deeper anchoring.

God is not only telling them to get bigger. He is telling them to get stronger. Because expansion without stability leads to collapse. And many believers want enlargement without reinforcement.

Target Point

If God is going to expand your life, He must first stabilize your structure.

Expansion is not about size. It is about strength. “Strengthen your stakes” is not poetic suggestion. It is architectural instruction. If your capacity is increasing, your foundation must deepen.

Example

If a church grows from 80 people to 200. Systems that worked before start breaking. Communication gaps widen. Volunteer burnout increases. Leadership tension surfaces.

The problem isn't growth. The problem is that the structure wasn't strengthened to sustain the growth.

More reach requires deeper roots.
More capacity requires more formation.
Expansion is not the reward. It is the test.

When capacity increases, the foundation must deepen or what was meant to elevate you will eventually exhaust you.

Stakes Represent Conviction

What Anchors You When Pressure Comes

In the ancient world, tent stakes were hammered deep into the ground. They were not decorative. They were defensive. They resisted wind, pressure, and environmental change.

Spiritually, stakes represent conviction *the deep internal anchors that hold your life steady when circumstances shift.*

Hebrews 6:19 (NKJV) says, “19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,”

Hope is not hype. It is anchoring confidence in God's character.

When Isaiah says strengthen your stakes, the Hebrew implies reinforcing firmness making something immovable. God is telling His people: if you are going to expand, your internal convictions must be stronger than external opposition.

Application: Many believers want new territory, but their theology is fragile. They want influence, but their doctrine is shallow. They want visibility, but their prayer life is inconsistent.

A survey report from LifeWay/Ellison Research states that only about 16 percent of pastors say they are very satisfied with their personal prayer lives, with the majority being somewhat or not satisfied at all.

So, the question then becomes two-fold, Why do we want Visibility and Expansion when we don't pray? Because praying is what gives you the insight on what to do. So, we out here wanting to be seen and we haven't even seen the father?

You cannot sustain expansion with weak anchors.

Ephesians 4:14 (NKJV) warns, "14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,"

Expansion requires maturity.

Conviction is what keeps you stable when culture shifts. Conviction is what keeps you obedient when feelings fluctuate.

"Expansion reveals what was anchored and exposes what was shallow."

If pressure causes you to abandon alignment, your stakes were never strengthened.

Conclusion

Isaiah 54:2 says, "Enlarge the place of your tent... lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes." Notice the order. God commands expansion, but He does not skip reinforcement. Before the tent stretches wider, the stakes must go deeper. And many of us have been praying for enlargement without deepening. We want new territory, new influence, new opportunity but we have not strengthened our convictions.

Conviction is what holds when the wind comes, and the wind will come. It will come when culture shifts, when pressure increases, when obedience costs you something, and when standing firm makes you stand alone. The issue is not whether expansion is coming; the issue is whether you are anchored enough to handle it.

Growth exposes what was shallow. If your belief system changes every time public opinion changes, your stakes are loose. If your obedience bends when convenience speaks louder than conviction, your stakes are weak. If your faith only works when circumstances cooperate, your structure is unstable. Isaiah does not say decorate your tent. He says strengthen your stakes. Drive them deeper. Make them firm. Reinforce what holds you steady. Before God increases your reach, He solidifies your roots. Before He enlarges your

influence, He fortifies your inner life. Before He stretches your capacity, He strengthens your core.

Expansion is not dangerous; instability is. The wind is not the enemy; looseness is. And God loves you too much to enlarge a structure that cannot stand. So, to the believer, this is your moment to deepen your anchors. Strengthen your prayer life. Strengthen your obedience. Strengthen your doctrinal clarity.

Strengthen your alignment with Scripture. Mature your faith. When the cords stretch, the stakes must hold.

And to the one who has not yet surrendered to Christ, you cannot strengthen stakes you do not have. Jesus is the anchor of the soul. He is not an accessory to your life; He is the foundation of it. Apart from Him, every structure eventually collapses under pressure.

But in Him you are rooted, established, and strengthened. God is ready to enlarge. He has already spoken increase. But before the tent stretches wider, let the stakes go deeper. That is how you live built different.