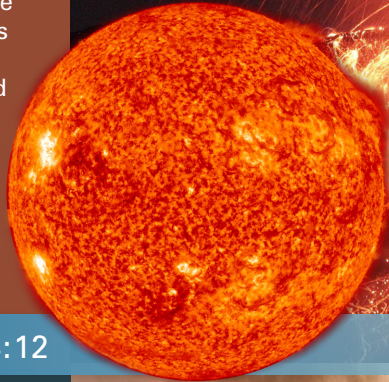


- **WARM UP** When the particles in metal are heated their average energy increases and expansion occurs. This expansion is usually proportional to the heat applied. What happens in effect is that when heated, the particles need more room so they expand. When the metal cools, the average energy between the particles decreases and contraction takes place. The same effect happens when liquids and gases are heated and cooled. However when water freezes it has the opposite effect – it does not contract, it expands! Don't ask me why!

The principle of thermal expansion and contraction is very real and we can glean something important from it.



- **READ** Acts 16:22-34, Philippians 4:12

● BACKGROUND

In a believer's life, like that of Jesus, the cross will always precede the crown. Contraction will invariably precede expansion. Read the account in Acts to see what happened to Paul and Silas in a Philippian jail: beaten, bleeding, feet in stocks – contraction! Then an earthquake, doors flung open, jailer saved, household baptised, great rejoicing – expansion!

It's so easy to rejoice when we are on the mountaintops and our horizons have expanded. But Paul wrote to the Philippians from a Roman prison (Philippians 4:11-12) stating that he had learned to be content in **any and every** situation.

● QUESTIONS

- 1 What did Paul say he would do during the times of contraction in his life? (See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.)
- 2 What about the life of Joseph? Thrown into a pit by his brothers. Sold as a slave into Egypt. Falsely accused by Potiphar's wife. Thrown into prison. Forgotten by the chief butler – a time of great contraction (Genesis 37, 39-40). Now what about expansion? Look at Genesis 41:41-46 and discuss.

● CONSIDER THIS

Every mother who has gone through the pain of natural childbirth would have experienced contractions in a very real way. So when we are going through a painful time of contraction, count it all joy (read James 1:2-4), because you can be sure that God is getting ready to birth something in your life.

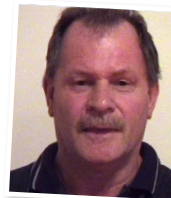
If we will yield to the Spirit, contraction will birth expansion. If God is on the throne of your life, it is inevitable! We experience joy on the mountaintops, but the topsoil and the nutrients flow down into the valley, and that's where we experience growth.

- 3 What does Hebrews 12:7-11 and James 1:12 teach us about expansion and contraction? Look at the life of Job as well!

What is God saying to me?

● LET'S PRAY

● REAL LIFE STORIES OF GOD'S POWER



I had a very sore wrist. In fact I got to the stage where I couldn't move my hand. Bill told me to stretch my hand out and he said Jesus was moving down my arm, through my leg and into my wrist. [He] told me to give my wrist a good shake, which I did, and it was perfect! This was about eight months ago. There is a little bit of something, just off and on, but I haven't lost a day's work and I was really happy! John

True stories from the Dove Ministries files