

## BECOMING RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

**Introduction** – What do we do in this season of uncertainty in our society? How might we become stronger in this season? How might we become resilient in the face of adversity? In life, as individuals, in our relationships, as parents?

James, Abraham and of course Jesus are examples to us of a resilient faith. We develop resilience when we:

- Read and remember scripture
- Are present and don't run away
- Pray and then pray some more
- Are thankful

### MONDAY – Abraham's resilient faith



**Genesis 15:1-6** .... the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." But Abram said, "Sovereign Lord, what can You give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to Him as righteousness.

Abraham's life might seem simple if you haven't studied it. God promised to make him a great nation, and then gave him and his wife a son named Isaac. Easy, right? Not really. Abraham was already 75 years old when the conversation in our reading happened and then he waited 25 years for the promised child! The

key to Abraham's resilience was that he "trusted the Lord" and that trust kept him going.

#### **Reflection:**

Are there ways in which you need to trust God because you do not see promises of life directions "paying off" immediately?



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, teach me how to view life through the lens of eternity, as You do. Help me to trust that there are vast spheres that lie way beyond my immediate ability to see or understand. AMEN

## TUESDAY – From spoiled child to resilient adult



**Genesis 50:20** *You intended to harm me (Joseph), but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.*

Joseph was a spoiled son of privilege. He was favoured by his father but rejected by his brothers. Joseph is carried by the Ishmaelites into Egypt and is purchased in the slave market by Potiphar, a captain of the guard. If he was to be a slave, Joseph was determined to be the best of slaves, and do what he was required to do with a glad and willing heart. So well, in fact, does he do his duties that he becomes an overseer in his master's house.

One day, however, Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce him and although he refuses to agree to her suggestion, he is falsely

accused and brought before the master of the house for punishment. Yet despite the pressures that were upon him, no self-pity arises in his heart and his spirit remains unbowed and unbroken.

The Bible story does not say that Joseph was amazing. Genesis tells that amid all the letdowns Joseph found a loyal friend: The Lord was with Joseph and remained loyal to him.

### **Reflection:**

How much do you trust that the Lord always remains loyal to you?



**Prayer:** Lord God, I thank You that You are always loyal to me. In whatever I do, I ask for Your presence to guide me and make my efforts effective in serving and blessing other. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – The preacher who kept getting up



**Acts 14:19-22** Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city (Lystra), thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”

As a pioneer missionary to the Gentiles living in the countries on the northern and eastern coasts of the Mediterranean, He travelled thousands of miles by land and sea, was constantly in danger, experienced shipwrecks on three separate occasions and endured great hardship.

Paul's preaching and the many miracles which accompanied his ministry brought severe persecution from both Jews and Gentiles. Early in his Christian life, he had been smuggled out of Damascus to escape the

murderous hatred of the Jews there. He also records in 2 Corinthians 11: 24 that he was flogged five times by the Jewish authorities. Our reading vividly demonstrates his resilience under life-threatening circumstances. Luke wrote that the message of Paul and Barnabas was that if we are to enter God's kingdom we must pass through many troubles.

### **Reflection:**

How can their example increase your resilience to know that difficulties are not unexpected, but part of the journey of faith?



**Prayer:** Lord God, keep me humble about my own standing, yet full of courage to bear witness to Your grace and glory. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Jesus’ resilience as our supreme example



**1 Peter 2:20-25** *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.” When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. “He Himself bore our sins” in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by His wounds you have been healed.” For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

The apostle Peter said Jesus was our example in endurance and trusting God when suffering comes. He referred to Isaiah 53: 5 as he declared that Jesus “carried in His own body on the cross the sins we committed” to emphasise that Jesus in some deeply mysterious yet life-changing way bore our guilt. When we falter or fail, one key to resilience is to understand that we do not have to bear the weight of that – because Jesus already bore it for us.

What wounds and hurts haunt you and disrupt your peace? The early Christians regularly turned to Isaiah’s promise that “by His wounds we are healed” as a major way to express the impact of Jesus’ death on our lives.

### **Reflection:**

In what ways can you open yourself to let the healing more fully reshape your life?



**Prayer:** O Jesus, fill my heart with Your healing, peace, and freedom of guilt. I thank You that Your death made that possible. Help me to follow Your example. AMEN

## FRIDAY – The link between resilient endurance and maturity



**James 1:2-4, 12** *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

**12** *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.*

James didn't write about "if you face trials." He wrote about the "various tests you encounter," for he knew trials are an inescapable part of life. He even urged us to consider trials an occasion for joy! Really? Some trials hurt so much we may find it next to impossible to even imagine joy in them.

Author Glennon Doyle offers this wisdom when facing life's inevitable trials: "If you are uncomfortable – in deep pain, angry, yearning, confused – you don't have a problem, you have life! Being human is not hard because you're doing it wrong, it's

hard because you are doing it right."

You will never change the fact that being human is hard, so you must change your idea that it was ever supposed to be easy. God did not and does not promise easy. God promised God's abiding presence as we become mature followers of Christ. And it was in that maturing sense of endurance, or resilience, that James found joy, not in the trials themselves. The next time you face a trial, step back and remember that it is okay to be uncomfortable. This is what it means to be human.



**Prayer:** God of wisdom, right now the world around me seems drastically changed, and I don't like that at all. Help me, even in this difficult season, to find ways to grow in the resilient maturity You offer to give me. AMEN