

Resilience - The Practice of Bouncing Back

As we come to an end of this series it is important for us to understand that warfare fails when we have no backbone. **The person who is effective at spiritual warfare tends to have tremendous resilience and grit.** Proverbs 24:16 “*For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.*” Rising again is part of being righteous. You rise back to your identity of right standing with God. This verse shows us that one of the core characteristics of a righteous person is resilience. **Resilience is positive adaptation in the face of adversity. Resilience is the ability to bounce back quickly from setbacks.** This is not just resurfacing after 10 months. **There is psychological resilience, emotional resilience, physical resilience and community resilience.** Many families in our church have been resilient through some of their worst times. The community in KZN was very resilient after going through looting followed by floods. The church in China has been resilient learning how to do church differently during times of persecution. Many churches demonstrated resilience during Lockdown and seasons of COVID. In this message I will highlight the power of resilience and outline three things that resilient people do differently.

In May 2022 Manchester City was at the cusp of winning the Premier league title once again, but at the risk of losing their title because they were 0 – 2 down to Aston Villa at 75 minutes. Liverpool were one point behind them and leading in their game. To the amazement of many, Man City went on to win their game 3 – 2 after scoring three goals between minute 76 and 81. That’s 3 goals in five minutes. What makes a team do this? It is resilience. Many other teams drop their heads after they are down by one goal. Somehow these champions didn’t. I am not a Man City fan, but I am a fan of resilience. It was the same for Liverpool in their last game against Wolves. The score was 1 – 1 for most of the game but then they scored again in the 84th and 89th minute to win 3 – 1. What is it about these teams? It is resilience. I find it interesting that in sport we intentionally develop resilience. You see this in open water swimming when there is the washing machine effect at the start. I have seen this in distance running. The essence of distance running is to help you to build endurance. You learn how to run faster for longer periods without getting tired. You learn how to increase your pain threshold and pain tolerance. You learn how to push through despite setbacks such as hard climbs or people overtaking you. We also see resilience amongst concert pianists or violinists who describe specific strategies for maintaining focus after making a mistake. They forget about the mistake and focus on the next thing they are going to play. Mike Edger in Sports Psychology stated, “**Athletes need to remain in the present moment and focus on the task at hand. It is difficult to focus on the present when the mind is occupied with an error that occurred three plays ago.**” Unfortunately, somehow in the school of life we tend to build resilience by default. *Phil 3:13-14 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* This scripture can be applied to many aspects of life, and it is a principle that sets the groundwork for resilience.

Resilience is essentially about outlook. **You are training your mind to respond differently to negative situations.**

Can you turn your mess into a message, your pain into progress, your tragedy into triumph? Learned optimism is crucial. Make a list of negative situations and write out the opportunities next to them.

Resilience predicts positive outcomes in the aftermath of trauma, loss, or adversity. Individuals with high resilience are more likely to experience post-traumatic growth, meaning they not only recover but also emerge stronger, with a greater sense of purpose and personal growth. Some have it more than others, but it is not a fixed condition. **Your resilience is a competency that you can develop and grow.** In sport you gain fitness and endurance. In life we often learn resilience through the school of hard knocks. It is possible to do resilience training for your kids by how you parent them.

It is important to understand the science of resilience so that we can pass it on to the next generation. Sadly, on the African continent we know that our parents and grandparents had resilience in order to do

what they did but we don't always know how to replicate it. **As you parent your children, praise effort rather than outcomes to instil a belief that they can improve through persistence.** Encourage phrases like "I can't do this yet" instead of "I can't do this." Model optimistic thinking, helping them understand setbacks as temporary and surmountable.

Resilience is crucial as it helps us to avoid depression, anxiety, and stress. 1 out of 8 adults have anxiety. 1 out of 6 have depression. 1 out of 3 are experiencing stress. The consequences of these three challenges are devastating to our health and effectiveness.

Resilience is not about the power of positive thinking. We are not in denial about the adversity, we just train ourselves with regards to what we choose to focus on. Lucy Hone said, "**Don't lose what you have because of what you have lost.**" Highly resilient people embrace calamity as part of life. They understand that bad things happen to good people. They don't keep asking why me and binding themselves to a life of self-pity. They embrace the fact that life can be difficult BUT there is life after adversity. **What are you like after losing a match? Do you switch sides, or do you make a game plan for the next game?**

Ultimately we want to come out of setbacks in an even better position. The word for this is **ANTIFRAGILITY**. This refers to **the ability not only to recover from adversity but to grow and improve as a result of it.** Unlike resilience, which is the capacity to bounce back to a previous state, antifragility describes systems, people, or organizations that actually get stronger, better, or more capable after experiencing stress, volatility, or setbacks.

Benefit finding refers to a reported positive life change resulting from the struggle to cope with a challenging life event such as trauma, illness, or other negative experiences. The positive psychology movement has recently driven a shift toward an emphasis on the positive consequences of negative events.

In the retail industry when it comes to restaurants it has been said that it only works out on average on the seventh try. Imagine the number of people who end up closing down their businesses prematurely. Research by Ohio State University (2005) also explored the high failure rate of restaurants, with findings that about 60% of restaurants close within the first year of operation, and 80% within five years. If this is true, we should be asking "**What are some key competencies of these resilient people?**"

1. Resilient people create their own stories

We are not destroyed by our experiences, but by the story we tell ourselves of our experiences. How have you interpreted your life events and is this interpretation accurate? In addition to this, how many times have you rehearsed inaccurate interpretations? This is what destroys you.

2 Cor 4:8-10 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

This mindset helps you to block out the naysayers. Whose report shall you believe? Isn't it great when your favourite footballer is being booed at his former home ground but still goes on to score? That is resilience.

I remember doing some work for an organisation and people had become cynical. The combination of cynicism and exhaustion is often burnout. The way I try to help in these situations is to encourage them to make a list of all their cynical thoughts and next to them write out the counterarguments. **Stinking thinking has to be displaced not suppressed.**

In our relationship with God, we know that He is good. We know that He has good plans for us. Part of being resilient is knowing that things will turn out well at the end of the day. **We don't judge a matter prematurely based on present circumstances. We are people of hope because He is the God of Hope.** This is what we

expect. Things will work out even when the odds are against us. Be careful of ruminating. *It aint over til its over.*

A powerful practice is gratitude. It helps us to keep our focus on what is good. "Hunting for the good stuff." In psychology this is called "benefit finding". **What is the opportunity in the calamity? It's like the boss who said, "Never waste a crisis". God meant it for good.**

2. Resilient people are resourceful

- **Inner resourcefulness**

1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

As believers we know that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. We have the mind of Christ. These are personal assets that no one can take from us. I am friendly, a quick learner, passionate, hopeful...no one can take these from me.

Self-efficacy is a characteristic of resilience. This is your belief in your ability to do something. It's the mindset that can say, "I've got this!" Don't underestimate the power you have within you because of your born-again spirit. Ephesians 3:16 "*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.*"

Say "I am powerful!"

- **Social Resourcefulness**

2 Kings 6:15 – 17 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. 16 "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 17 And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

1 Kings 19:18 "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

As with Elisha and his servant, our eyes need to be opened so we see who is for us. **Do you know who your relational assets are?**

3. Resilient people take ownership

There is a fine line between patience and passivity. A lot of people are waiting for the powers that be to do something, yet God is waiting for them.

Phil 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

- **Take ownership of your life**

The starting point is what I call "facing stuff". Face yourself, face your work and face others.

- **Take ownership of your time**

- Keep appointments with yourself

- **Take ownership of your values**
 - Research has found that when we stay true to our values it helps to build our resilience. Our self is not divided. We are not trying to project an ideal image of ourselves whilst something else is going on underneath.
 - When you truly take ownership of your values you become more authentic and decision-making is easier.
 - Owning your values is a form of self-acceptance
- **Take ownership of your space and limits (If not, you will always be overstretched)**
- **Take ownership of your career**
- **Take ownership of your relationships: relationships to initiate, nurture, rebuild, redefine and terminate.**

When I take ownership, I focus on what I can change (selective attention) and not what I can't change. I focus on my circle of influence not my circle of concern.

"It is one thing to lead during times of stability, it is another to lead during times of rapplexity." Warren Bennis

Rapplexity us the combination rapid and complex

May God help us as we create our own stories, grow in resourcefulness, and take ownership.

Reflection Questions

1. **How have you experienced resilience in your own life?**
2. **Reflect on a time when you faced adversity but managed to bounce back. What did that experience teach you about yourself?**
3. **What are some areas in your life where you've struggled to "rise again"? How can you apply Proverbs 24:16 to those situations?**
4. **How do you interpret your life experiences? Have there been times when you told yourself an inaccurate story about an event? How did that impact your resilience?**
5. **What role does gratitude play in building your resilience?**

6. Can you identify recent situations where practising gratitude helped you stay focused on the positive?

7. How do you respond to setbacks in your work or personal life?
Do you find yourself focusing on past mistakes or are you able to “focus on the next thing,” as concert pianists do?

8. In what ways can you foster resilience in your children or those you mentor?
What are some practical ways you can model and teach resilience to the next generation?

9. How do you currently take ownership of your life, time, and values?
What changes could you make to increase your ownership and thus strengthen your resilience?

10. Are there any areas in your life where you’ve been passive rather than proactive?
How can you shift your mindset to take more ownership, particularly in areas where you’ve been waiting for others to act?

11. Do you practice learned optimism?
How can you shift your outlook to see opportunities in negative situations, turning your “pain into progress”?

12. How do you handle emotional or psychological fatigue after experiencing a significant challenge?
What steps can you take to improve your resilience, particularly in terms of emotional and psychological recovery?