



grow. pray. study.

August 2, 2020 “Becoming Resilient in the Face of Adversity”
Scripture: James 1:2-4, 12

Abraham’s resilient faith

MONDAY 8.3.20 Genesis 15:1-6

Abram’s life (later Abraham—cf. [Genesis 17:3-5](#)) 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. Today’s reading showed Abram struggling to wait, telling God, “I still have no children.” (In the end, [Genesis 12:4 and 21:5](#) showed a 25-year wait for the promised child.) Genesis 15:6 provided the key to Abraham’s resilience—he “trusted the Lord.” That trust kept him going.

- Today’s story wasn’t just about one couple who lived long ago. The apostle Paul quoted Genesis 15:6 in a letter to non-Jewish Christian converts in the province of Galatia (cf. [Galatians 3:6-9](#)). He said God blesses all who believe as Abraham did. In what ways have you learned to see your resilient journey of faith, not as an isolated, individual journey, but as part of a great procession of faithful people reaching back at least to Abraham?
- Are there ways in which you need to trust God because you do not see particular promises or life directions “paying off” immediately? What opportunities do you have to invest time, energy or material goods in ways that will help others and build God’s kingdom in the future, even if you are not around to collect the award(s) or hear their gratitude expressed?

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.

From spoiled child to resilient adult

TUESDAY 8.4.20 Genesis 37:17-28, 39:20-23

Joseph was a spoiled son of privilege. His bitterly resentful brothers sold him to be a slave in Egypt. How would that story play out? Maybe surprisingly, instead of being depressed or bitter, Joseph showed capable integrity for Potiphar, his Egyptian master, and then when he was unfairly jailed. In both cases, we find that everything was “put under Joseph’s supervision.” But Genesis didn’t just say, “Joseph was amazing.” The historians believed his secret of resilience was, “The Lord was with him.”

- Partly because it’s told in broad brushstrokes, the story makes Joseph’s resilience sound almost effortless. Do you think that was the case, or did Joseph need to work hard and wisely to make his Egyptian master’s household, and then the prison, run smoothly? Does God’s blessing relieve us of the need for effort and wisdom, or does God tend to work through those qualities in our lives?
- Joseph’s brothers betrayed him. Joseph’s Egyptian master had little choice but to believe his wife’s charges (even if he didn’t believe her—cf. [Genesis 39:11-19](#)) and sent Joseph to prison. Yet Genesis said amid all the letdowns Joseph found a loyal friend: “The Lord was with Joseph and remained loyal to him.” 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 others. Amen.

The preacher who kept getting up

WEDNESDAY 8.5.20 Acts 14:11-22

When the apostle Paul preached about Jesus in a city called Lystra, his enemies took extreme action. “They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing he was dead.” Luke didn’t explain how it happened, but wrote, “When the disciples surrounded him, he got up and entered the city again.” He didn’t pack up and go home but went on to the city of Derbe to preach. Then, going home, he amazingly went back to Lystra as well as other cities, encouraging the Christian converts in each city.

- Paul and his friend Barnabas didn’t tell their converts (even in Lystra, where things had gotten especially violent), “Lay low, keep quiet about your faith and stay out of trouble.” Luke wrote that their message was, “If we are to enter God’s kingdom, we must pass through many troubles.” And they were echoing Jesus’ message to his followers (cf. [John 16:1-4, 31-33](#)). How can it increase your resilience to know that difficulties are not unexpected, but part of the journey of faith?
- At first the people of Lystra were ready to worship Paul and Barnabas as Greek gods come to earth. The apostles’ reaction was, “People, what are you doing? We are humans too, just like you! We are proclaiming the good news to you: turn to the living God.” Sometimes we talk about facing a temptation to “play God.” How can remembering that we are humans telling people about the living God make us more resilient than if we try to fill a role we aren’t capable of filling?

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

“I’ll brag about my weaknesses”

THURSDAY 8.6.20 2 Corinthians 11:23-33

Scholar N. T. Wright showed what made this passage unusual: “In Roman culture one of the standard things every public figure could do was to list his achievements....the teachers who have influenced the church in [Paul’s] absence have been going in exactly that direction....they have wallowed in a culture of fame and success and showy rhetoric. To answer them, Paul lists his own ‘achievements’, all of them things any normal person in the Roman world would be too ashamed even to mention.” *

- Roman culture was not radically different from ours. “Monuments, civic buildings and other sites bore inscriptions praising wealthy donors; civic assemblies featured the voices of the powerful; public culture revolved around power. Boasting in weakness challenged the very values on which most boasts were founded— values antithetical to the good news of a crucified savior.” ** What draws you to follow the good news of a crucified savior rather than the lure of power or wealth?
- Wright posed the profound challenge of Paul’s message. “Somehow the church in Corinth, and the church in the world of today, have to learn to stand normal cultural values on their head, to live the upside-down life, or rather the right-way-up life, of the true servants of the Messiah.” *** How can letting Jesus rework your values give you greater resilience that basing your life on trying to gain power or applause (which can easily slip away)?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, when you lived on earth, no one would have worn a piece of “cross” jewelry. Yet you changed the world more than all the self-important emperors, then or since. Teach me how to follow in your powerful footsteps. Amen.

* Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians* (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 127-128). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

** Zondervan, NIV, *Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 264575-264578). Kindle Edition.

*** Wright, N.T., *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians* (The New Testament for Everyone) (pp. 128-129). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus' resilience as our supreme example

FRIDAY 8.7.20 1 Peter 2:20-25

The apostle Peter said Jesus was our example in endurance and trusting God when suffering comes. He alluded to [Isaiah 53:5](#) as he declared that Jesus “carried in his own body on the cross the sins we committed”—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.

- In what ways does Jesus' example of self-giving love and courageous determination in the face of evil inspire you and shape your way of life? Are there aspects of Jesus' example that feel like “too much,” beyond your reach? How have you learned to claim Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit to give you power to live differently and better?
- What burdens of guilt do you carry? 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 their lives. In what ways have you found the healing Jesus offers? In what ways can you open yourself to let that healing more fully reshape your life?

Prayer: O Jesus, fill my heart with your healing, peace and freedom from guilt. I thank you that your death made that possible. I ask you to energize me for life by helping me follow your example. Amen.

The link between resilient endurance and maturity

SATURDAY 8.8.20 James 1:2-4, 12

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 a life. Being human is not hard because you're doing it wrong, it's hard because you're 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.

- How do you most often respond to the trials of life? With joy? With distress? The next time you face a trial, step back and remember that it's okay to be uncomfortable. This is what it means to be human. God is with you in your sadness or discomfort. What do you believe are the most characteristic marks of a mature, “tried and true” Christian? (If you're not sure, review [Galatians 5:22-23](#) and [2 Peter 1:5-8](#) as thought starters.) Do you exhibit those traits? Are there areas of your life you need to examine to lead you to the place where you are “fully mature, complete and lacking in nothing?”

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.

* From <https://www.popsugar.com/entertainment/quotes-from-glennon-doyle-book-untamed-47425859>.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Judy Klote and family following the death of Jack Weltsch (father), 6/8/2020

Terrie Dalrymple and family following the death of Gail McGhee (stepfather), 7/15/2020

Frank and Yvonne Gentile and family following the death of Santina (Sandy) Maria Gentile (mother/mother-in-law), 7/15/2020

Kim Harrison and family following the death of Gilbert O. Linderman (uncle), 7/18/2020

Julia Bottaro and family following the death of Bill Caldwell (father), 7/19/2020

Missy Accurso and family following the death of Nancy Dee Bryant (mother), 7/20/2020

Michael Rasmussen and family following the death of Laurie Rasmussen (wife), 7/20/2020

Kent Baker and family following the death of Willard "Bill" Baker (father), 7/22/2020

Bobbie Garber and family following the death of Clyde Russell Ludwick Jr. (father), 7/24/2020

Pamela Meeker and family following the death of Robert "Bob" Meeker (husband), 7/25/2020