

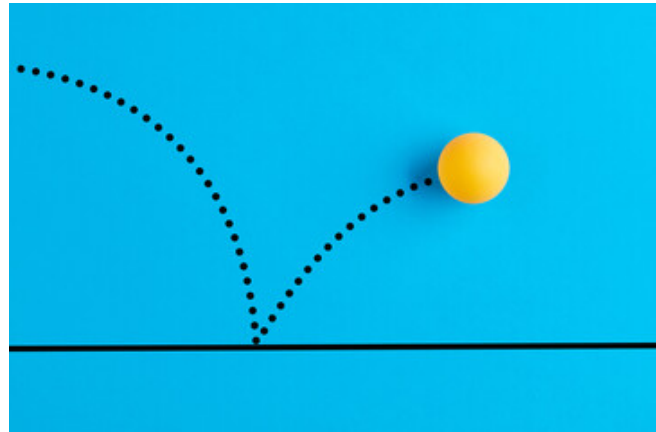
# RESILIENCE

## CHARACTER

John Scroggins

***Without pressure, there is no progress.***

Have you ever been driving down the road and hit a big pothole? What happened? You may have experienced a jolt from the sudden impact and pressure. But if you had decent shock absorbers on your car, it likely didn't break anything but instead bounced back up with minimal or no damage.



Resilience is like that. It's the mental ability to recover quickly. It's the positive attitude that enables one to learn from pressure or setbacks and adapt in the face of adversity without being overwhelmed or acting in dysfunctional or harmful ways. It is the ability to endure trials and maintain hope, courage, and faith despite challenges. It's more like being a rubber ball rather than a wrecking ball or a Christmas tree ornament ball.

For the Christian, resilience is not merely about human strength or perseverance but about trusting in God's sovereignty and provision. Throughout Scripture, we see numerous examples of individuals who displayed resilience through their faith in God. From Joseph's journey from slavery to leadership in Egypt to Paul's steadfastness in the face of persecution, the Bible offers profound lessons on how to build and sustain resilience.

### **Defining Resilience Through Scripture**

Resilience in a biblical sense is deeply tied to the concept of perseverance, which is a recurring theme in the Bible. James 1:2-4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." This passage highlights that resilience is not merely enduring difficulties but growing and maturing through them. Trials serve as a refining process, molding us into the image of Christ. Resilience, therefore, is an outworking of faith that allows us to face challenges with hope, knowing that God is using them for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28).

### **PRACTICAL STEPS TO BUILD RESILIENCE**

**Meditate on God's Promises.** Commit key Scriptures to memory and meditate on them during difficult times. Passages like Isaiah 41:10 ("Do not fear, for I am with you") and Philippians 4:13 ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me") serve as powerful reminders of God's faithfulness.

**Practice Daily Dependence on God.** Begin each day with prayer, seeking God's guidance and strength. Dependence on Him fosters humility and resilience.

**Reframe Challenges as Opportunities for Growth.** Adopt a mindset that views trials as opportunities to grow in faith and character. James 1:12 says, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

**Take Care of Your Physical and Emotional Health.** Stewardship of our bodies and emotions is a biblical principle (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Exercise, proper nutrition, rest, and seeking emotional support when needed are vital to building resilience.

**Serve Others.** Acts 20:35 reminds us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Serving others shifts our focus from ourselves and fosters joy and purpose. It also strengthens our sense of community and reliance on God.

**Learn from Biblical Role Models.** Study the lives of resilient biblical figures like Job, Joseph, David, Esther, and Paul. Reflecting on their stories can inspire and guide us in our own journey of resilience.

**Do hard things.** Pick a challenge that you can realistically do, but will be a true test, a good stretch of your skills, patience, abilities. Gradually increase the difficulty of your challenges.

**Regulate emotions.** The emotional part of our brain (limbic system) is closely tied to a fight, flight, or freeze response. It makes possible a quick response to unanticipated stress or threat in one of these ways. The rational brain (prefrontal cortex) processes higher-level cognitive functions like planning, decision-making, and considering long-term consequences. God made both to be needed. The trick is using them in the most beneficial ways. Resilience is largely tied to mindset and requires pausing and controlling the messages from the emotional brain.

**Eliminate cognitive distortions.** Cognitive distortions are irrational or exaggerated thoughts that can cause people to perceive reality inaccurately. Examples "I never do anything right," "I never do anything wrong," "the worst always happens to me," etc.. Not having a grasp on reality (the truth) can undermine resilience. Learn strategies for identifying and overcoming cognitive distortions (there are 10-15 types.)

**Trust in God's Sovereignty.** Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Resilience begins with surrendering control and trusting in God's plan. Recognizing that God is in control of every situation allows us to face adversity with peace and confidence. Also, focus on what you can control, not on what you can't.

**Draw Strength from God's Word.** Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The Bible provides guidance, encouragement, and hope. Regularly immersing ourselves in Scripture strengthens our faith and equips us to navigate life's challenges with wisdom and discernment.

**Develop a Prayerful Life.** Philippians 4:6-7 encourages us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Prayer connects us to God's power and peace. Through prayer, we find comfort, strength, and clarity in difficult times.

**Cultivate a Spirit of Gratitude.** 1 Thessalonians 5:18 commands, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Gratitude shifts our focus from our problems to God's blessings. Recognizing His goodness even in hardship fosters a resilient spirit that can endure adversity with joy.

**Build a Supportive Community.** Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 states, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone

who falls and has no one to help them up." God designed us for community. Surrounding ourselves with fellow believers who encourage, pray for, and walk alongside us strengthens our resilience.

**Focus on Eternal Hope.** 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." Resilience is fueled by the hope of eternity. When we set our eyes on the promises of God and the eternal glory that awaits, we can endure present trials with patience and strength. Choose a bigger life perspective and eternal perspective.

### **Think about it this way...**

Think of each principle or practice as a rubber band wrapped around an inflated balloon. The balloon has air inside, which causes pressure on the skin of the balloon. As air pressure increases, the balloon stretches. Rubber bands (practices) flex with the expanding balloon, offering it support and allowing it to handle the pressure. However, even with the supportive bands, there still is a breaking point. If air/pressure is not relieved, the balloon will burst.

Fortunately in life, the pressure usually subsides, or we add bands. The balloon is stretched by the pressure, and though it shrinks down when air pressure is released, it doesn't typically shrink down to its original size. It will be able to handle a little more pressure next time.



### **Benefits**

Resilience offers a range of benefits including improved mental and emotional well-being, better stress management, increased adaptability to change, a positive outlook, stronger relationships, enhanced productivity, and the ability to bounce back from setbacks and challenges, ultimately leading to a higher quality of life overall.

### **Key Scriptures**

- "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" - 2 Cor 4:8-9
- "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" - Philippians 4:6-7
- "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." Proverbs 24:10
- "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places." (Habakkuk 3:17-19)
- We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ...2 Corinthians 10:5

### **Quotes**

- "Everything negative - pressure, challenges - is all an opportunity for me to rise" - Kobe Bryant
- "A diamond is merely a lump of coal that did well under pressure" - Henry Kissinger
- "When we long for life without difficulties, remind us that oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure" - Peter Marshall

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### **Reflect and Respond**

Baton Exchange

1. Do you have the tendency to be resilient? Why or why not?
2. How long does it take for you to bounce back from disappointments or mistakes?
3. Evaluate yourself from 1 to 10 in this character quality:
4. Why did you give yourself this rating?
5. What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?

### **Ask Your Mentor**

1. Who is one of the most resilient people you know? Why?
2. Can you share a time when you had to bounce back from an event or life season that was difficult? How did you do it?

### **Creative Connection**

Think of a song, character or person from a book, movie or history, an animal, or an everyday item that personifies the main idea of this lesson and share it.

### **Go Do**

1. Ask your boss or someone who knows you well to rate your overall level of resilience.
2. Ask God, "Which of the above 'steps to follow' should I prioritize? What would it look like to trust you to help me with that?"
3. Practice. What would resilience look like for you in the coming week? What specifically will you do to be resilient? How I will practice this over the next month:

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**Go Deeper:** Further Conversation & Study for those who want to go deeper.

1. What big problem do you think this session may be addressing?
2. What emotions, if any, did you have from what you learned in this session? Was there anything that surprised, excited, or angered you?
3. Look up: Psalm 56:3-4, Proverbs 24:10, Psalm 27:3, 1 Corinthians 9:2-27; 2 Chron. 15:7; James 1:2-4; Romans 5:1-5, Romans 8.37-39, Romans 8.26, Psalm 55:22
4. How is this quality shown in the life of Jesus Christ?

### **Sources & Resources**

Photo credit:



#### **Videos**

Building Resilience: 5 Ways to a Better Life | 5 Minute Video,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPMqMJMiBiA>