

# Resilience<sup>1</sup>



## SABBATH—FEBRUARY 12

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** James 5:10, 11; Job 19:25; Ruth 1; Esther 2; 2 Corinthians 11:23–28; Philippians 4:11–13.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “God is our place of safety. He gives us strength. He is always there to help us in times of trouble. The earth may fall apart. The mountains may fall into the middle of the sea. But we will not be afraid. The waters of the sea may roar and foam. The mountains may shake when the waters rise. But we will not be afraid” (Psalm 46:1–3, NIV).

**RESILIENCE HELPS US TO FACE** great stress, threats, and difficult times in life. People who are resilient are able to “bounce back” from negative experiences. All of us face major (big) hardships and stress in life. The question is, How can we have the resilience to deal with what happens and not be destroyed emotionally<sup>2</sup> at the same time?

In the 1960s, Victor and Mildred Goertzel wrote *Cradles of Eminence*,<sup>3</sup> which was updated in 2004. The book told the life stories of more than seven hundred people who went through great hardships during childhood. These hardships included broken homes, financial struggles, physical and/or mental problems, and so on. But all of these people had great success in life.

The Bible also tells us of people who had to face hardships. But with the help of God's grace,<sup>4</sup> they bounced back and overcame their problems. True, they went through some very difficult times and were far from perfect people. But God was able to use them to do His work because they had the resilience to face the hardships and pressures of life.

1. resilience—the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.

2. emotionally—of or relating to a strong feeling such as love, anger, joy, hate, or fear.

3. eminence—a condition of being well-known and successful.

4. grace—a help or kindness that God gives or shows to people.

**SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 13****THE PATIENCE OF JOB  
(James 5:10, 11)**

**According to James 5:10, 11, what is it about Job that makes him a good example for us? Read also Job 1–3.**

A woman took counseling to recover from a serious crisis. She told her friends the one thing she learned that made the biggest difference and helped her to heal. She said, “The counselor used to tell me that my painful situation would come to an end. The counselor used to say, ‘Life may seem dark now, and your problems may seem as though they will never end. But your hardship will not last too much longer.’ This thought helped me gain resilience.” In other words, the counselor kept the woman’s hope alive.

How do we grow in patience? George Goodman of England once received a young man who needed his prayers. The young man explained his need directly: “Mr. Goodman, I wish you would pray for me that I might have patience.”

The elderly man answered, “Yes, I will pray for you that you may have trouble.”

“Oh no, sir,” the young man answered. “It is patience that I want.”

Goodman said, “I understand, and I will pray for you that you may have trouble.” The Bible teacher opened his Bible and read Romans 5:3 (NirV) to the surprised young man: “ ‘And

that’s [that is] not all. We are full of joy even when we suffer. We know that our suffering gives us strength [patience] to go on’ ” (NirV).

The story of Job offers a perfect example of resilience. Earlier in his life Job understood that God was merciful and righteous (good). But Job did not understand the reasons for his suffering. He did not find support from his wife. His property and children were destroyed. Then he got a horrible disease. But Job never lost his faith in God. He held on until his troubles were over.

**According to Job 19:25, what hope did Job hold on to? How can we better learn to hold on to this hope as we face our own problems?**

**Think about times when you were going through something terrible. What hope kept you going? What words spoken to you were helpful? Which ones were not so helpful, or even harmful? What did you learn that would help you to give hope to someone who is going through great difficulty now?**

**MONDAY—FEBRUARY 14****JOSEPH IN SLAVERY AND PRISON (Genesis 37:19–28)**

Read Genesis 37:19–28 and Genesis 39:12–20. Try to put yourself in Joseph’s sandals (shoes). Joseph must have been very discouraged. Think about how he could have

become very angry and bitter. The Bible does not tell us in detail what Joseph's emotions were. But it is not hard to imagine the pain he suffered from such experiences.

But Joseph turned to the Lord at these times. In the end, good things came out of these events. After being sold by his brothers, Joseph actually experienced his conversion and a much closer relationship with God. "Joseph had been told of the Lord's promises to Jacob and how they had been fulfilled. Joseph also had been told how the angels of God had come to instruct, comfort, and protect Jacob in his time of suffering. And Joseph had learned of the love of God in providing a Savior for all people. Now all these precious lessons came very clearly to Joseph's mind. He believed that the God of his fathers would be his God. Joseph then and there gave



**Try to put yourself in Joseph's sandals and imagine how bitter and discouraged he could have become if he had not trusted God.**

himself fully to the Lord."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,<sup>5</sup> pages 213, 214.

Joseph was unfairly thrown into prison. But the experience opened for Joseph the path to the court of Pharaoh. Later, God used this opportunity (chance) to save many souls in Egypt, as well as Joseph's own people.

**What do Romans 5:3–5; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 1:8, 9; and 2 Timothy 1:11, 12 tell us about how bad situations can be turned to good?**

God does not want us to suffer when we do not need to. In fact, the environment Jesus has prepared for us in heaven is without tears and pain (Revelation 21:4). But we wait for that promise to be fulfilled. Until then we must remember that suffering and pain can teach us important lessons. Being kind, humble, and understanding good and evil are some of the lessons we can learn. It is difficult to believe that suffering can help us when we are going through pain. But we can ask God for the necessary strength to pass through hardships.

**Have you ever had a terrible experience that, in the end, brought some good? How can this help you learn to trust the Lord in any time of trouble, even when nothing good seems likely to happen?**

5. *Patriarchs and Prophets*—patriarchs were leaders of God's people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are spokespersons for God.



After his brothers sold him as a slave, Joseph grew much closer in his relationship with God.

## TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 15

### NAOMI (Ruth 1)

**According to Ruth 1, what are some of the bad experiences that Naomi had?**

It must be scary for someone to leave his or her country and settle somewhere else. The famine (shortage of food) in Judah forced Elimelech, Naomi, and their two sons to move to the country of Moab. Moab was a farming area where they could get food. The people of Moab worshiped idols (Judges 10:6). The Moabites' practices did not mix well with Jewish beliefs. This must have caused many serious problems for the newcomers. Sometime after settling in Moab, Naomi's husband died. Now, mother and sons found themselves in a strange land without protection. Then Naomi's sons, Mahlon and Kilion, married local women. This fact may

have caused problems in the family because of great religious differences between the sons of Naomi and their brides. The law did not prevent marriages between Jews and Moabites. But the Bible said that Moabites or their future children could not enter the assembly<sup>6</sup> of the Lord until after ten generations (Deuteronomy 23:3).



**The people of Moab worshiped idols, which must have caused problems for Naomi and her family.**

Later on, Mahlon and Kilion, whose names meant "sickness" and "wasting,"<sup>7</sup> also died. It is hard to imagine a sadder event in the life of Naomi than this. There was no one alive from her close family, and the remaining relatives were far away in Bethlehem.

**What important event changed Naomi's life? How did God repair the damage (harm) caused by her sufferings? Read Ruth 1:16–18 and Ruth 4:13–17.**

During her worst time of trouble, Naomi's daughter-in-law Ruth served

6. assembly—a group of people who have gathered together.

7. wasting—to become weaker and thinner because of illness or lack of food.

as her emotional support. Naomi must have been a wonderful woman because she had inspired (aroused good feelings) the devotion (deep affection) of her two daughters-in-law, especially Ruth. Ruth was the one who accepted the God of Israel. Ruth also made the firm decision (choice) to care for her mother-in-law in a land (Israel) where its people were her enemies.

Chapters 2 through 4 tell us of the beautiful chain of events that ended up in a happy family arrangement. Naomi left behind terrible suffering and lived to witness the marriage of Ruth to Boaz. Ruth gave birth to Naomi's grandson Obed, the father of Jesse and grandfather of David.

**We need to totally trust the Lord and surrender (give up control over) everything to Him. But there are times when we need human help too. When was the last time you really needed someone's help? What did you gain from that experience?**

### **WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 16**

#### **ESTHER'S DAYS OF STRESS (Esther 2:6, 7)**

**What were some of the problems, struggles, and pressures Esther faced according to Esther 2:6, 7; Esther 2:10; Esther 2:21, 22; Esther 4:4–17; Esther 7:3, 4; and Esther 8:3?**

Since early life, Esther had been an orphan. She was adopted by her

older cousin Mordecai. It must have been very difficult for Esther to grow up without parents. But she grew up as a balanced, determined, and capable young woman.

When Esther became queen, she did not tell anyone about where she came from or her family background. This was a very heavy challenge. It was uncertain what would happen to her if she hid her Jewish background. The risk of this being discovered was real. In addition, she had to keep her faith strong even though she was surrounded by food, comforts, and practices of life in the court that could have weakened her faith.

Esther also had to tell the king the bad news that officers were planning to kill him. This was not an easy job. This is because if the plot could not be proven, then Esther and her cousin could be blamed for starting rumors. And who knew what the results would be?

But God had chosen Esther to save her people. Mordecai asked her to use her power as queen to help the Jews. Esther had to risk her life to do so. When Esther tried to put it off, her cousin put more pressure on her: "What if you don't [do not] say anything at this time? Then help for the Jews will come from another place. But you and your family will die. Who knows?" (Esther 4:14, NIV). Talk about stress!

Finally Esther appeared before the king, knowing that her actions carried with them a high chance of death. But however dangerous the situation was for this young woman, things worked out in the end.



All of us, like Esther, are born into situations that we do not choose. What is your background? What things were handed to you, good and bad? How can you learn to better appreciate the good you have been given and to overcome the bad?



After she became queen, Esther kept her Jewish background a secret.

## THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 17

### THE SECRET OF BEING CONTENT (SATISFIED) (2 Corinthians 22:23–28)

Paul was born and grew up in Tarsus.<sup>8</sup> He was born into a Hebrew family from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul received his Roman nationality through his father, a citizen of the Roman Empire. He became a Pharisee, a religious group that tried to follow the law (Torah) plus the Jewish religious laws (Mishnah). With this background, Paul must have enjoyed the honor and rights of a high social and religious position.

But when Paul accepted the call of Jesus, everything changed. Paul

became the target of hate from his own nation and from the Romans. He suffered hardships and troubles for thirty years. Finally, Paul was executed after being imprisoned in Rome.

**Second Corinthians 11:23–28 lists some of the difficulties Paul had to face. Think about that list as you read Philippians 4:11–13. After so much suffering, what is Paul saying about his own life? What lessons can we learn from Paul about the struggles we are going through?**

Contentment (satisfaction) is an important part of happiness and psychological (mental) well-being. Being content comes to those who have a positive outlook on things. Content people look at the past with acceptance and at the future with hope. Having “everything” does not guarantee (promise) contentment or happiness. For some people, no matter what they have, it is never enough. Others have very little but are always satisfied. What do you think makes the difference?

One meaning of “intelligence” is the ability to fit into new situations. This may have to do with living in new places, getting along with new people, and experiencing new ways of living. Paul’s ability is not something he was born with. We know because he says, “I have *learned* the secret of being content” (Philippians 4:12, NIV; emphasis supplied). This is not something that some have and others do not. The ability to adjust to living

8. Tarsus—a city located in southern Turkey.

conditions and be content comes from learning. This learning is gained over time and comes from practice.

Verse 13 gives the key to Paul's resilience. Paul could feel content with little or with much, and he could do anything and everything in Jesus Christ.

**How content are you? How much are you influenced by<sup>9</sup> your situations? What are ways you can better learn to be “content no matter what happens” (Philippians 4:11)?**

### FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 18

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “The powers of darkness gather about the soul and shut Jesus from our sight. At times we can only wait in sorrow and wonder until the cloud passes over. These seasons [times] are sometimes terrible. Hope seems to fail, and discouragement seizes us. In these dreadful hours we must learn to trust and to depend solely on what Jesus has done for us on the cross. In all our helpless unworthiness, we need to throw ourselves upon the crucified [put to death on a cross] and risen Savior. We shall never perish [die] while we do this—never! When light shines on our pathway, it is no great thing to be strong in the strength of grace. But to wait patiently in hope when dark clouds surround us requires faith and surrender.<sup>10</sup> When we surrender to Jesus, our will [desires; plans] becomes swallowed up in the will of God. We are too quickly discouraged, and cry for the trial [hardship] to be

removed from us. Instead, we should plead for patience to go on and grace to overcome our difficulties.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, page 114.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ Some people overcome hardships that others are crushed by. What do you think makes the difference?
- ❷ Think more about the question of hardships and sufferings that do not seem to have a happy ending. How are we to judge them? How do we connect them with our faith and the promises of God?
- ❸ In the quote from our study on Friday (“In these dreadful hours we must . . .”), what is Ellen G. White telling us? Where is she pointing our hope? In the end, why is the gospel<sup>11</sup> our only hope, no matter what may happen to us now?
- ❹ How can you use the advice of Peter in 1 Peter 4:12, 13? It is one thing to remain resilient and faithful through hardships, but how is it possible to do what Peter says?
- ❺ Suppose you were dealing with someone who was in a very difficult situation, where there seemed no way out. Suppose, too, that you only had five minutes with that person. In those few minutes, what would you say to give that person hope?

9. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

10. surrender—the act of giving everything to God.

11. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins.