enditnow® Emphasis Day
August 24, 2019

GOD'S PATH TO RESILIENCE:
Religion as a protector

Sermon resource packet

Written by Julian M. Melgosa, PhD
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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Includes seminar
GOOD THINKING
Written by Dr. Julian Melgosa

Includes workshop outline
FROM TRAUMA TO RESILIENCE
Written by Dr. Julian Melgosa

enditnow®

Adventists Say No to Violence

Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Health Ministries,
Ministerial Association, Women's Ministries, Youth Ministries

Prepared by Department of Women's Ministries
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
On behalf of the **enditnow®** team of General Conference departments
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Seventh-day
Adventist® Church

GENERAL CONFERENCE
WORLD HEADQUARTERS

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

March 26, 2019

Dear Directors,

Joyful greetings to each of you. Thank you for your support of **enditnow**® Emphasis Day. This day has been part of our worldwide church calendar since 2002 when it was known as Abuse Prevention Day. Since 2010 we have called it **enditnow** Emphasis Day.

We thank all the General Conference departments that support **enditnow**. Your support and hard work help bring this issue of abuse at the front of consciousness of the worldwide Adventist Church and to keep it alive. We thank you for organizing this special day in our churches each year, for the marches in the streets, and so much more.

This year's packet is based on a topic we have not had before – "Resilience." How do we rebound from life's major challenges? Abuse, whether experienced as a child, or through a violent act, or within the home leaves scars that can last a lifetime. God is our Healer and our Helper in all trials. He has given us doctors, counselors, friends, and family members who will walk with us through the healing process.

We thank Dr. Julian Melgosa of the GC Education department for writing our sermon this year. Dr. Melgosa is a familiar name to Women's Ministries leaders as he has assisted us with the writing of a number of resources in the area of mental health.

We pray for God to bless and guide you in sending out this important packet of resources for **enditnow** Emphasis Day 2019.

With love and joy,

Heather-Dawn Small

Heather-Dawn Small
Women's Ministries Director

"I thank God for you…" Philippians 1:3-6

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About the author

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Dr. Julian Melgosa was born in Spain and graduated with a bachelor's degree with majors in education and psychology from the University of Madrid (Spain). He earned an MA in psychology from the same institution and a PhD in Educational Psychology from Andrews University (USA).

Dr. Melgosa is a Chartered Psychologist and an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society. He is a prolific author in the area of emotional and mental health for professional and semi-popular press publications, including widely spread books such as *Less Stress and Positive Mind* and Adult Bible Study Guide—Jesus Wept: The Bible and Human Emotions, that was used in every Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world for Sabbath School class.

Dr. Melgosa has served the Seventh-day Adventist educational system in five divisions at universities in Spain, UK, USA, Philippines, and Mexico. He has been an accreditor with the Philippine Accrediting Associations of Schools, Colleges and Universities and for the Adventist Accrediting Association.

Dr. Melgosa is a citizen of Spain and the United States of America. His wife Annette is a librarian and they have two adult children, Claudia, a veterinarian in New Mexico and Eric, a graphic designer in California. Dr. Melgosa enjoys road biking, backpacking and international cooking.

Bibliography

White, Ellen G. *Patriarchs and Prophets.* Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890.

Except where noted, all Biblical texts are from New International Version.

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV ®
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Program Notes

Please read through the components of the **enditnow** resource packet. Be alert to ways you can adjust the materials to fit the needs of your divisions and fields. Feel free to translate, rework, and edit the resource packet *according to your division's needs,* including the best Bible version for your use. Also, you are free to adapt the packet *according to your cultural audience*. We will share the packets for French, Portuguese, and Spanish with the division women's ministries directors, when the assigned divisions have sent us a translated digital file.

The order of service suggests hymns and readings taken from the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, © 1985 that relate to the theme of the sermon as we see it. Please pick and choose elements from the outline or create your own order of service.

Our deep appreciation to you for forwarding the **enditnow®** Emphasis Day resource packet to your division counterparts in order to speed the process of reaching the local churches. The packet is also available on our website, women.adventist.org, under Special Days, 2019.

Kindly remember that our logo **enditnow® Adventists Say No to Violence** is registered and trademarked. Always print **enditnow®** with lower case letters, in black bold with dark red "it," no spaces, and the registered symbol.

Seven departments of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists have joined together as a team to address the problem of interpersonal violence. Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Health Ministries, Ministerial Association, and Youth Ministries joined Women's Ministries in sponsoring the **enditnow®** Adventists Say No to Violence initiative. Interpersonal violence impacts everyone, and we are delighted that these ministries for young and old, men and women, children and adults, church members and church pastors are part of the coalition to bring awareness to this social and spiritual abuse—a tragedy in all its forms.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Women's Ministries Department

Outline of Service

Call to worship: # 847 Psalm 43:3, 4, NIV

"Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.
Then will I go to the altar of God to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God."

Hymn of praise: # 1, "Praise to the Lord"

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9, NIV

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair,
persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed.

Pastoral Prayer

Call for the offering

Offertory music

Responsive reading: # 727, Psalm 27, NKJV, "The Lord is My Light"

Special Music

Sermon: GOD'S PATH TO RESILIENCE: Religion as a Protector

Hymn of response: # 529, Under His Wings"

Benediction: # 908 Numbers 6:24-26, NIV

"The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Closing prayer

Sermon

GOD'S PATH TO RESILIENCE:
Religion as a protector
By Julian M. Melgosa, PhD

Scripture Reading

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 Corinthians 4:8, 9

INTRODUCTION

Abuse, whether experienced as a child, or through a violent act, or within the home, leaves scars that can last a lifetime. God is our Healer and our Helper in all our pain and trials. He has given us doctors, counselors, friends, and family members who will walk with us through the healing process. What is it in the human psyche that gives us the ability to rebound from life's major challenges? Resilience.

The good news is that God's path to resilience can be learned by each of us. People need to feel hopeful and useful, and these God-given tendencies help us rebound and navigate the new normal with flexibility and adaptability. Today, we will look at both scientific and scriptural ways to develop resilience

But first, we must answer the question, what is resilience?

The first entry in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary's defines resilience as the *"capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress."* This kind of resilience is seen after pregnancy as a woman's body returns to what it was before.

The second definition is an *"ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."* This kind of "resilience is the process of adapting well when faced with a traumatic event such as adversity, trauma, tragedy, and threats or significant sources of stress."[1]

One pastor has noticed that people may not return to the original form, but to a finer form or perhaps to a lesser form. "But at least there is this amazing ability to come back again after being bent . . . compressed . . . or stretched." [2]

Some life experiences that can cause significant stress and trauma are domestic abuse, being victim of crime (rape, assault), natural disaster, fire, terrorism, war, persecution, sudden death of a dear one, the betrayal of a spouse, the diagnosis of a terminal disease. Soldiers who survive the frontline of war are famous for being traumatized not only because their life is at risk, but because often they witness the serious injury and death of other combatants.

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[1] APA. *See* American Psychological Association. The Road to Resilience: what is resilience? Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.
[2] Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke. A Good Word for Resilience. Retrieved March 13, 2019. http://www.philipclarke.org/sermons/A%20GOOD%20WORD%20FOR%20RESILIENCE.pdf.

When trauma occurs, the wounds leave psychological scars behind. Traumatic events can produce emotional and physical pain for a long time. Certain triggers cause victims to re-live the episodes of abuse. Carmen only needs a whiff of a brand of cologne to remember her abuser's fingers around her neck. Sometimes when these intrusive memories rise, she feels the pain of the bruising on her neck, a bruise that no longer exists. Mark often wakes up from nightmares of his boss screaming directly into his ear when he was tyrannized by this cruel supervisor who demanded excessive work in an underpaid job.

The process of healing may not be quick, but when we are healed, we are able to remember those events without experiencing pain and fear.

How did Carmen and Mark get past the pain and fear? **God provided a path to resilience for Carmen and Mark using spiritual strategies.** They found peace through reciting and memorizing reassuring scripture promises. They found support in a caring community of believers at church. They found solace in prayer as they developed a friendship with God, confiding in Him their deepest feelings and simply talking to Him throughout the day as their best friend.

Joseph M. Scriven also understood this kind of prayer when he penned the words to the beloved hymn, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." His poem concludes with "Precious Savior, still our refuge, Take it to the Lord in prayer…In His arms He'll take and shield thee, thou wilt find a solace there."

How do Christians understand resilience? When we go through a traumatic event, we ask God, "What are teaching me? What lessons do I need to learn?" "How do I need to grow from this experience?" **And God provides a path to resilience for us.**

From the beginning of the Bible to the end, we read stories of people who face difficulty, who experience abuse and tragedy, and yet they become courageous through trauma. Ever since Adam and Eve lost their home in the Garden, humanity has discovered behaviors and thoughts that lead to resilience.

Resilience is not a personality trait. Resilience is a lifestyle that must be learned and practiced. Resilience is bouncing back, continuing on, rebuilding, forgiving, and resuming the generous, loving life God wants us to live.

Sometimes tragic events occur because of wrong choices we make. Jacob faces his brother Esau while carrying the guilt of stealing the birthright. Because of King David's sin with Bathsheba, he experiences the death of their newborn son. Other times, however, the person does not make the wrong choice yet becomes a victim of trauma, as in the case of Tamar who is raped.

Paul does not make the wrong choice in being an evangelist and missionary for God, yet throughout his ministry Paul experiences trauma in abuse and persecution. He is terrorized by mobs. He is stoned and taken for dead. He is hauled into court and unjustly accused. He is beaten and put in prison chains. He is shipwrecked and even bitten by a poisonous snake. And most of these events occur multiple times. Paul's resilience is evident when he writes the memorable words:

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 Corinthians 4:8, 9).

This attitude may seem unnatural; this ability may seem supernatural. But "resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary.[3] It is available for every one of us.

The physical effects of the constant upheaval of living conditions such as domestic abuse and the violence of war produce significant sources of stress. The emotional factors of constant turmoil in relationships, financial anxiety, and health issues, produce significant sources of stress. The unrelenting disruption of uncertainty, fear, hurt, anxiety, and pain can feel depressing and devastating. But resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary, for humans enduring such hardships.

Our mastery of resilience is related to how we handle significant sources of stress and what our support system looks like. Research tells us that being surrounded by supportive relationships within and outside the family is the primary factor for developing resilience. "Relationships that create love and trust, [that] provide role models, and [that] offer encouragement and reassurance help bolster a person's resilience."[4]

Is Jesus the most important person in your support network? **God provides a path of resilience for us with spiritual strategies**. If we remain open to God's counsel, we experience more positive results in developing resilience. With the wisdom of God, we are able to find resolution to problems, make a plan, and move on. We emerge from suffering with renewed strength and purpose.

Often as survivors of a traumatic event, we find that our experience helps us relate to other victims with greater sensitivity, understanding, and grace. As we support and reassure other victims, we become the arms of Jesus lifting up the wounded and making His presence felt.

You cannot develop resilience in the religious realm without understanding how God feels about you. The most important person in the world to God is you. He loves you with an everlasting love. He redeems you by His blood. He names you as His heir—His sons and daughters. He crowns you with glory and honor—His royal princes and princesses. He covers you with a robe of righteousness so that you are able to love and forgive like Jesus. His divine love provides stability, confidence, purpose, and desire to live like Jesus.

One preacher identifies spiritual lifestyle factors from the ministry of Jesus that help us build resilience by:

- Having a clear purpose
- Forgiving those who hurt you
- Practicing self-control
- Moving on[5]

We will review four Biblical characters, Adam and Eve, Jacob, David, and Naomi, who experience some form of event that today is considered traumatic. The Bible presents these

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[3] APA. The Road to Resilience: what is resilience? Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.

[4] APA. The Road to Resilience: resilience factors and strategies. Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.

[5] These four lifestyle habits are described by Ray Ellis. SermonCentral.com. Resilience is a Daily Habit, August 28, 2016. Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/print?sermonId=94260.

stories in order for us to become acquainted with people who experience trauma. As these broken people make choices for allowing God to work in their lives, we learn from their mistakes and also from their victories.

Abusive experiences—or for that matter any difficult and traumatic event—do not need to keep us chained in darkness. When God is with us, darkness flees away from His glorious light. Yes, the experience may be difficult, and the path may be dark, but God does not promise us a smooth road or an easy journey. Even in dark times, we find notes of hope in His hands. We hold on tightly to God's promise that He will walk with us as we press on through the valleys and shadows. With God walking besides us, we discover we can sing the song with David,

"Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me" (Psalm 23:4).

ADAM AND EVE

"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field."
While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him" (Genesis 4:8).

Adam and Eve are stunned by the unthinkable, horrific attack of one son killing the other. On that one day, Adam and Eve lost two sons: one to death, the other to extreme estrangement. They naturally suffer the classic symptoms of emotional trauma. For every parent, losing a child is one of the most traumatic events in life. For some time after the loss of a child, parents often experience recurrent, intrusive, distressing memories. Contemporary data show that parents who lose a child are prone to depression, anxiety, and the physical effects of stress (hypertension, migraines, digestive complications, alteration of the immune system), reduction of life span and, in some cases, their faith is shaken and lost.

Surely on that dark day Adam and Eve remember and relive their own disobedience in the Garden of Eden and cannot help experiencing guilt and anguish when they recall the words of the LORD God, *"but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will <u>certainly die</u>"* (Genesis 2:17, *emphasis added*). The death of—Abel and the sin of Cain are delayed consequences of their own disobedience and will constantly remind the grieving parents of the prophecy they will surely die.

How did they manage to get through that pain and sorrow and move on? **<u>God provides a path to resilience for Adam and Eve.</u>** Losing their first home was practice for losing their first two sons. Adam and Eve must have been able to accomplish things that are identified today as components of resiliency:

- Lean in faith on God.
- Face fears.
- Accept things they cannot change.
- Look for meaning in the experiences of both past and present mistakes.

- Grasp the important life lesson that bad things can—and do—happen to anyone.[6]

As for Seth, he succeeds Adam as patriarch who depends on God's promises and leads his family in prayer and in worshiping the LORD. *"Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD"* (Genesis 4:26).

God also provides a path to resilience for Adam and Eve using spiritual strategies. Even while they grieve over the sudden loss and rejection of their sons, Adam and Eve are blessed with joy and hope through the birth of another son whom God appoints as the progenitor of the promised Savior. Eve calls her son Seth [*compensation, substitution*], for *"God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him"* (Genesis 4:25).

The guidance and coaching of the Lord helps Adam and Eve learn to find strength in the "meaning and purpose of their lives" and in the life of their newborn son. They learn to "put things into perspective" [7] with the understanding that a Savior is promised and that there is a time for sadness and a time for joy.

God's path to resilience for Adam and Eve includes growing in their understanding of the enormity of their sin and in the magnitude of the promise of the Savior (Genesis 3:15). According to Ellen White, Adam "witnesse[s] the wide-spread corruption that was to finally cause the destruction of the world by a flood" and he understands the Flood will be an act of mercy bringing an end to suffering and sorrow (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 82).

JACOB

"In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, 'If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape'"
(Genesis 32:7, 8).

This is an intense moment. Jacob is notably altered emotionally. Not only does he feel the weight of his guilt for deceiving his brother, but four hundred men led by Esau are marching toward him. The last known communication from Esau were the words, *"I will kill my brother Jacob"* (Genesis 27:41). Jacob is greatly afraid and distressed. Other Bible versions read, "frightened" (GNT), "terrified" (NLT), and with "mounting terror" (ISV). His family and servants are unarmed and unprepared for battle. He divides his people and animals into two companies, so that if half perish, the remaining half might escape. It is a matter of survival for himself, his family, his animals, and all his possessions.

How does Jacob overcome his terror and make things right with his brother? **God provides a path to resilience for Jacob.** The Lord allows Jacob to wrestle and struggle with Him. At first Jacob's struggle is in fear of losing his life because he assumes the stranger has been sent by Esau to kill him. He probably tries to overpower the man at first, then to escape. The more Jacob wrestles, the more desperate he becomes. Perhaps he wrestles in his mind with

[6] These five factors are identified for developing resilience at Brainline.org. Resilience: What Is It? Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.brainline.org/article/resilience-what-it.
[7] These two factors are identified for developing resilience at Brainline.org. Resilience: What Is It? Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.brainline.org/article/resilience-what-it

God, questioning God why he was called to return to Canaan only to be caught between two life-threatening conditions. Laban chases after Jacob to capture or punish him and Esau races toward Jacob to kill him.

Eventually, Jacob realizes he is gripping the arms of a heavenly being. He continues the struggle because he needs forgiveness and legitimate blessing from God. Wrestling with God allows Jacob to receive forgiveness from his brother, because it is only as we have been forgiven that we can forgive or ask for forgiveness from others.

As the morning dawns, Jacob demonstrates strategies that are now understood as building blocks for resilience:

- He accepts that change is a part of living.
- He moves toward his goals.
- He takes decisive action.
- He keeps things in perspective.
- He maintains a hopeful outlook. [8]

Jacob copes sensibly with fear and avoids seeing the situation as a crisis which is escalating into an unsurmountable problem. As he prepares gifts for Esau, he demonstrates gratefulness, another aspect of resilience. The once boastful Jacob displays humility and graciousness through his verbal and non-verbal behaviors toward his brother Esau as depicted in Genesis 33.

What Jacob doesn't know is that God is working ahead of him. Ellen White tells us, "While Jacob was wrestling with the Angel, another heavenly messenger was sent to Esau. In a dream, Esau beheld his brother for twenty years an exile from his father's house; he witnessed his grief at finding his mother dead; he saw him encompassed by the hosts of God. This dream was related by Esau to his soldiers, with the charge not to harm Jacob, for the God of his father was with him" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 198).

This is a lesson for us today as well. We need to trust much more in the Lord's protection and guidance. He goes ahead of us and prepares the way so that we do not have the trouble we anticipate. Claim the promise of Isaiah 52:12, *"But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the LORD will go before you."*

<u>God also provides a path to resilience for Jacob using spiritual strategies.</u> Jacob is shown that he has a Savior. Ellen White writes, "God did not forsake Jacob. His mercy was still extended to his erring, distrustful servant. The Lord compassionately revealed just what Jacob needed—a Savior. He had sinned; but his heart was filled with gratitude as he saw revealed a way by which he could be restored to the favor of God" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 183).

The restoration of Jacob begins when:

- God gives Jacob evidence of **forgiveness** through the change of his name. "Your name will no longer be Jacob *[the supplanter]*, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome" (Genesis 32:28).
- God **saves** Jacob and his household from certain death. "This dream was related by Esau to his soldiers, with the charge not to harm Jacob, for the God of his father was with him" (*Patriarchs and Prophets,* 198).

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[8] APA. These five strategies are identified by the APA. The Road to Resilience: ten ways to build resilience. Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.

Part of the conflict between Jacob and Esau has its roots in material inheritance. At times, stress comes to us because of financial constraints and it generates conflict. But when we trust in God and are open to His leading, the path to resilience helps us grow in faithfulness and strength to overcome.

Mariette Jacobs knew in the moment she learned both her parents lost their jobs that she was going to help them as much as she could, but she didn't know the financial stress it would entail. Soon Mariette also lost her job. The entire family was left with the income of her younger sister. For months, they faced severe shortages. One day, Mariette said, "Oh, how much I would like to enjoy an ice cream." Her younger sister replied, "Do you know how much it will cost to buy an ice cream?" Together they compared the price of essentials to the price of the desired treat and figured out the cost of an ice cream was much as a roll of toilet paper. With much laughter, they decided they needed toilet paper more than ice cream.

Out of this anecdote, years later, Mariette Jacobs wrote a devotional book entitled *The Day I Ate a Toilet Roll: Lessons in enduring through financial hardship*. This book became a best seller of its kind. The author testifies that her experience with monetary struggle brought great lessons with it, such as humility, diligence, obedience, generosity, integrity, discipline, satisfaction, patience, and faithfulness to God.

Living by the promise, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19), will nurture our faithfulness and enable us to walk the path to resilience.

DAVID

"The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept.
As he went, he said: 'O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom!
If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!'" (2 Samuel 18:33).

The Bible describes David's state of emotions vividly at the end of 2 Samuel 18 and the beginning of chapter 19—shaking, weeping, mourning, and exclaiming out loud the name of his dead son Absalom. Even though God preserves the life of David after his sin with Bathsheba, David must endure the loss of four sons who die or who are killed, and also the loss of his daughter who withdraws from society after being raped and becomes desolate.

It has been observed that the loss of a child places parents at risk for depression, marital disruption, and addictions.

Truly, the life of David is full of trauma. Here are some highlights:

- As a young shepherd, his life is at risk from lions and bears harassing his flock (1 Samuel 17:37).
- He himself risks his life as an adolescent when he offers to fight Goliath (1 Samuel 17).
- He fights numerous battles against Philistines and Amalekites, risking his life many times. Late in life his generals instruct him to stay back and not risk riding to war with them, because "You are worth ten thousand of us now" (2 Samuel 18).
- His relationship with King Saul is loaded with trouble; and he is the victim of multiple attacks from the king whose intention is to kill David.

- David is also humiliated and hurt deeply. King Saul orders his daughter, David's wife, to marry another man while David is living in exile (1 Samuel 25:44).
- When the Amalekites conquer several cities and burn them down to the ground, they take captive the Israelites' wives, their sons and daughters, including David's wives. As a result, his own men want to stone him (1 Samuel 30:1-6).
- Amnon, David's son, rapes Tamar, David's daughter, which causes Absalom, another of David's sons, to kill Amnon in revenge (2 Samuel 13:28, 29).
- Absalom leads a rebellion against his own father David, and he dies at the hand of David's soldiers (2 Samuel 15-18).

With so many tragic and life-or-death events in his life, how does David keep calm and carry on? **God provides a path to resilience for David.** One pastor tells us that resilience is a daily habit. Some of the habits he describes are often evident in the life David. "Resilience is a lifestyle. . . Resilience is a choice. You persevere because your life purpose is to keep your eyes focused on Jesus. . . Resilient people take charge of their lives and stop making excuses. . . Resilient people forgive those who offend them and press on."[9] Resilient people see reality and know being positive keeps them going.

Resilient people live healthier lives emotionally and physically. When Goliath hurls abuse and insults at Israel's God, David calmly leaves the army camp to kill the blaspheming giant fully trusting in the LORD. When Saul throws his sword at David to silence him, David calmly leaves Saul's household fully trusting in the LORD. When Absalom marches on Jerusalem, David calmly leaves Jerusalem fully trusting in the LORD. Each time he demonstrates resilience during trauma and returns in victory and peace.

Research identifies positive health outcomes from resiliency. As you listen to this list, think of times in David's early life (or another Biblical character) when you can see some of the health benefits, "including:

- The experience of more positive emotions and better regulation of negative emotions
- Less depressive symptoms
- Greater resistance to stress
- Better coping with stress, through enhanced problem-solving, a positive orientation, and re-evaluation of stressors
- Successful aging and improved sense of well-being despite age-related challenges
- Better management of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms (Khosla, 2017)"

The study continues reporting that "resilience experts point to research that resilience boosts immune system functioning. Resilient people are better able to manage negative emotions and experience more positive emotions, which leads to objectively good health outcomes like more immune system cells and better immune functioning in cancer patients, and more favorable mortality rates in marrow transplant patients." [10] Being resilient is good for your health!

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[9] Ray Ellis. SermonCentral.com. Resilience Is a Daily Habit, August 8, 2006. Retrieved March 13, 2019. https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/print?sermonId=94260.

[10] Positive Psychology Program. What is Resilience and Why is it Important to Bounce Back? Retrieved March 13, 2019. Last updated January 3, 2019. https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/what-is-resilience/. Resilience experts referred to are Harry Mills and Mark Dombeck.

How does David learn dependence on God for his resilience? **<u>God provides a path to resilience for David using spiritual strategies</u>.** David understood from the time he was a teenager that the outward darkness in his life creates inner darkness. But David knows how to turn his inner darkness to light by turning to God who is the Light of the world. David's greatest strategy is taking his troubles to the LORD in prayer. *"David found strength in the LORD his God"* (1 Samuel 30:6).

When David prays or sing his psalms, he brings his great distress to the LORD and lays the heavy burden at the LORD'S feet. David knows that God understands us when we speak desperate words. David said, *"I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great"* (2 Samuel 24:14).

The Book of Psalms offers multiple examples when David faces his troubles and finds comfort and strength in God by:

- Taking his troubles to God in prayer
- Maintaining a positive view when praying and asking for help even in impossible situations
- Trusting in God
- Praising God for His blessings
- Worshipping God
- Working with God

It has been said that difficulty will make you or break you. After all the misfortune David endures, he survives. He is not broken. He makes it! To our present day, David is honored as the most notable king of Israel and considered the model of a "man after [God's] own heart" (Acts 13:22).

NAOMI

"Don't call me Naomi [pleasant, delightful, or happy],*" she told them. "Call me Mara* [bitter]*, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me*" (Ruth 1:20, 21).

A great portion of Naomi's life is full of painful events leading her to bitterness. She develops a Mara attitude not only because of what is happening in the outward darkness surrounding her family but also because of the inner darkness growing in her heart.

Famine forces Elimelech to take his family—his wife Naomi and sons Mahlon and Chilion—and move to Moab to avoid starvation. In a relatively short time, Elimelech dies leaving Naomi to fend for the two boys in a foreign nation. Later Mahlon and Chilion marry Moabite women—Orpah and Ruth. For ten years these young couples do not have children. The men die and, as a result, we find these three widows in danger and deprived of earning a living. Naomi's statement (v. 20) about her Mara bitterness expresses trauma and desperation. Far away from her community of fellow God-worshippers, she attributes the reason of her misfortune and affliction to God.

Jewish and Christian commentaries explain the traumatic events are divine retribution for Elimelech taking his family to a pagan land and for Mahlon and Chilion marrying pagan

women. If this is the case, the suffering of this family is due to human choice and wrong decision making.

How does Naomi get back on the right road going to the place God prepares for her new normal? **God provides a path to resilience for Naomi using spiritual strategies.** Like David who takes his complaints to God, Naomi complains to God. People do not like to endure pain and they get upset with God. But God wants us to talk to Him and not to others. Ask Him, "Why me, Lord?" Naomi also blames God for her pain. Blaming God is not the purest way to cope, but when bitter Mara returns home, God blesses her. The inner darkness recedes, and as she becomes Naomi again, she praises God.

Naomi uses another coping style for developing resilience. She leans on the support from her hometown community. This is a great way to deal with pain. She does not isolate herself in the middle of her pain but allows her community to encourage her during the hard times and then the same friends rejoice with her during the joyful times. We are also called to be healing communities. Like family, a supportive church soothes the pain and helps in practical matters to provide emotional support.

The story of Helen Keller (1880-1968) is known by many. She provides a wonderful example of resilience. As a toddler of 19 months, Helen became deaf and blind. Deprived from the main avenues of learning, she was prevented from normal mental development. But Ann Sullivan, a teacher with unprecedented patience and perseverance, taught the little girl to speak, to read, and to "listen" with her hands. This was possible because Teacher Ann was nearly blind herself and understood the frustration and limitations of Helen's blindness.

Being released from her inner darkness, Hellen Keller graduated from college and wrote twelve books. A popular speaker, she lectured to improve the life of others who, like herself, are victims of public prejudice. She became an officer at the American Foundation of Overseas Blind and travelled extensively to thirty-five countries and five continents thus inspiring millions of people during the 1940's and 1950's.

The story of Helen Keller provides a magnificent example of how unsurmountable barriers can make an individual stronger through distress. The Bible attests that there is meaning in suffering, for it leads to character development: *"We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope"* (Romans 5:3, 4).

CONCLUSION

We have talked about four Bible characters today, but there are many other stories recorded of men and women who suffer and emerge as instruments for God's glory. Their stories serve for the benefit of many other people—their contemporaries and the generations since then. We are inspired by the resilience of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Job, Moses, Rachel, Ruth, Hannah, Esther, Mary, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul. They suffer and, by God's grace, become victorious because they choose divine counsel and direction. **God always provides a path to resilience.** People need to feel hopeful and useful and these God-given tendencies help them bounce back and navigate the new normal with flexibility and adaptability.

We live in a world full of pain and injustice. Not only do we witness suffering and death, we experience it. Yet, Jesus promises that such pain will become joy: *"I tell you the truth, you*

will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy" (John 16:20).

Maybe this message is for a dear one who is suffering. Perhaps your dear one needs your presence. Perhaps your loved one's pain will guide you in learning how to effectively support others as the hands and feet of God. Perhaps the church community will gain many blessings by caring for your loved one. Good things can develop from painful experiences.

You may be going through difficult times in an area of your life health, family, work, faith, relationships, church. Or perhaps you already went through a traumatic event with its various sequels of trauma and you are suffering mentally or emotionally for what happened in the past. Maybe the situation is serious enough that you should consider professional psychological/psychiatric help. Whatever, the case, you are not alone.

You can be blessed by the Lord, both directly and indirectly, through the support of other people. Allow God to work in your life. Keep the avenues of prayer and Scripture reading open. Tell Him how you feel. Then place your trust in God and praise Him. Share any blessings you receive with others. And participate in your church group of believers.

Even when you do not understand why the Lord is allowing painful things to happen, get help, lean on someone you trust, talk about what hurts you. You are not alone. Finally, be patient, for He will not allow pain to be greater than you can take. In the meantime, hold onto promises like these:

They confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.
He brought me out into a spacious place;
he rescued me because he delighted in me.
Psalm 18:18, 19

He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
Psalm 91:4

May God bless each of us as we allow the Lord to help us work through our troubles and solve our painful situations. May God give us wisdom as a church and as individuals to provide meaningful support to those who suffer. May we all choose **God's path to resilience.**

Amen.

Seminar

GOOD THINKING: A Path to Resilience
By Dr. Julian Melgosa

Read for this study: Mark 7:21–23; Luke 6:45; Acts 14:2, 15:24; Galatians 3:1; Psalm 19:14; Colossians 3:1–17.

(Note to Presenter: You need to have time for discussion in this seminar. You may decide how much time to take based on the audience and allotted time frame for the presentation.)

Opening Text: *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things"* (Philippians 4:8, NIV).

As one of the most utilized forms of mental health intervention today, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is based on the assumption that most psychological problems are improved by identifying and changing inaccurate and dysfunctional perceptions, thoughts, and behaviors. People with depression tend to interpret facts negatively; people with anxiety tend to look at the future with apprehension; and those with low self-esteem maximize others' success and minimize their own. CBT, therefore, trains people to identify and change their unhealthy thinking habits into better alternatives that promote desirable behavior and eliminate unwanted ones.

The Bible teaches us about the connection between thoughts and actions (Luke 6:45). Good thought patterns not only are healthy but also provide a way toward integrity: "Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness" (Proverbs 14:22, NIV).

Today we'll look at some biblical truths that can help us gain control over our mental activity by allowing Christ to take charge of our mind.

<u>Thoughts: The Root of Behavior</u>

Read Mark 7:21–23 and Luke 6:45. What do these texts tell us about the importance of controlling, not just our actions, not just our deeds, not just our words, but our thoughts, as well?

People who suffer from impulse-control disorders fail to resist the impulse to steal, to attack someone, or to gamble. Mental health clinicians know that these impulses often are preceded by a certain thought (or chain of thoughts), which leads to the undesirable behavior. Consequently, patients are trained to identify those thought triggers, dispel them immediately, and occupy their minds with something else. In this way, they gain control of their thoughts and avoid the actions that these wrong thoughts so often lead to.

Indeed, sinful acts are often preceded by definite thoughts. (Isn't this what temptation is all about?) It is the duty of every Christian to learn to identify, with God's help, the first steps in this process, because dwelling on wrong thoughts leads almost inevitably to sin.

Read Romans 8:5-8. What alternative is proposed by Paul to deal with immoral behavior?

Mind and behavior are shown by Paul as intimately linked. The Spirit-filled mind will seek good deeds, and the sin-dominated mind will bring about sinful deeds. It is not enough to change the behavior for the sake of convenience or to present a righteous face to the world. The heart (mind) needs to be transformed, or else the eventual fruits will show the true nature of that heart.

"We need a constant sense of the ennobling power of pure thoughts and the damaging influence of evil thoughts. Let us place our thoughts upon holy things. Let them be pure and true; for the only security for any soul is right- thinking."—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times,* August 23, 1905.

Suppose you had to express, verbally, to others the thoughts you have had during the past 24 hours. What would you say? How embarrassed would you be? What does your answer say to you about the changes you need to make?

Thoughts as a Source of Distress

What are the things that really frighten you? What are ways that you can learn to trust the Lord, despite that fear? After all, isn't the Lord's power greater than whatever threats you face?

Much suffering can occur through thinking. Psychologist Philip Zimbardo, in his book *Psychology and Life,* reports the case of a young woman taken to a hospital because she was terrified of dying. Apparently, there was nothing wrong with her, but she was admitted overnight for observation. Hours later she died. Further investigation showed that years before, a psychic had predicted her death on her twenty-third birthday. This woman died, victim of her own panic, the day before she would have become 23. No question, people can suffer seriously from their negative thoughts; hence the need of wholesome thinking.

Also, just as important to remember: we can also adversely affect others' thinking by expressing our negativity to others. Words are very powerful tools, either for good or for evil. Our words either build up or tear down. There is life and death in the words we speak. How careful we need to be with the thoughts and sentiments that come out of our mouths.

Read Acts 14:2, 15:24, and Galatians 3:1. How do we have the power to impact people negatively?

"If you do not feel lighthearted and joyous, do not talk of your feelings. Cast no shadow upon the lives of others. A cold, sunless religion never draws souls to Christ. It drives them away from Him into the nets that Satan has spread for the feet of the straying."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing,* p. 488.

Think about times when someone's "mere" words tore you down in a big way. How can you be sure you never do that to anyone else?

<u>Wholesome Thinking</u>

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:8, NIV).

What is the essence of Paul's words to us here? What is the key to doing what he says?

Remembering, repeating, thinking about, and meditating on the words in the Bible is one of the greatest spiritual blessings available to us, and it is a sure way to cultivate what Peter called "wholesome thinking" (2 Peter 3:1, NIV). Many people have obtained invaluable blessings by committing to memory treasured Bible texts. When confronted with moments of worry, doubt, fear, frustration, or temptation, they have repeated such thoughts in their minds and have obtained relief and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

With so many alluring competitors (TV, computer, iPhone, etc.), this generation of believers is being tempted to put the Bible aside. It is necessary therefore to make a committed decision to read and reflect upon the Word every day. The Word of God is the only true fortification we have against the mental onslaught of unspiritual distractions that come from the world.

Reread Philippians 4:8. Make a list of what things you encounter that are true, pure, lovely, and so forth. What does that list consist of? What do these things have in common?

Prayer is another way to keep the mind out of trouble. While we talk to God, there is little chance for lustful or other forms of selfish thoughts. Acquiring prayerful habits is a sure protection from sinful thoughts and, consequently, from sinful actions.

The Bible is clear: God cares about our thoughts, because our thoughts impact our words, our actions, and our overall well-being. God wants us to have good thoughts because good thoughts, "wholesome thinking," is good for us, both physically and mentally.

The good news is that through meditating on the Bible, through prayer, and through Spirit-inspired choices on our part, we can keep our minds and hearts on things that will uplift ourselves and others as well.

<u>The Thoughts of Our Hearts</u>

Read 1 Kings 8:39; Psalm 19:1; 1 Chronicles 28:9; and 1 Samuel 16:7. What crucial point are these texts making? More important, how should this truth impact us and how we think? Does this truth idea make you nervous and fearful, or does it give you hope? Or both? Analyze the reason for your answer.

"For you alone know the hearts of all men*"* (1 Kings 8:39, NIV). The word *heart* often is used in the Bible as the seat of thoughts and emotions (see Matthew 9:4). Only God has access

to the intimacy of our mental activity, to our true intentions, and to our secret yearnings. Nothing, even in the form of a fleeting thought, can be hidden from the Creator.

God's knowledge of our soul is to our advantage. When people are too discouraged to utter a sensible word of prayer, God knows their need. Humans can look only at the outer appearance and behaviors, and then try to imagine what someone else is thinking; God knows the thoughts in ways others never can.

Likewise, Satan and his angels only can observe, listen, and estimate what goes on inside. "Satan cannot read our thoughts, but he can see our actions, hear our words; and from his long knowledge of the human family, he can shape his temptations to take advantage of our weak points of character."—Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald,* May 19, 1891.

As you make everyday decisions (personal or work-related) or think of other people, pause for a moment and send a quiet prayer to God. Enjoy the understanding of an intimate dialogue that is for you and God alone. Nobody else in the universe is privy to this communication. Allowing Christ into your thinking process will safeguard you from temptation and bring spiritual blessings. This process will, beyond doubt, help you build a closer walk with the Lord.

How does the discussion above help you to better understand the biblical admonition not to judge others? How many times have your motives been misjudged by those who don't know your heart? Why, then, is it important not to judge others in return?

<u>The Peace of Christ in Our Hearts</u>

Read Colossians 3:1–17. What are the specific actions that we are called upon to do in order to live the kind of life in Christ we are promised?

This passage takes us to the root of moral and immoral behaviors, the heart and mind. It also points at the only One who can work goodness in us by governing our thoughts, Jesus Christ: "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15, NIV). Note expressions such as "set your hearts," "set your minds," "put on love," "let the peace of Christ," "let the word of Christ."

They indicate that avoiding sin and acquiring virtue is a matter of choice and preparation, not improvisation. Sin can be overcome only by setting hearts and minds on things from above. Christ is the source of virtue and goodness. Christ, when allowed by us, is the only one capable of bringing true peace to our minds.

Our minds, then, being the core of our existence, need to be put under the care of Jesus. It is central to the development of character, and it cannot be left to the mercy of circumstances. Sinful tendencies and corrupt environments both work against purity in thought. Yet, the Lord does not leave us abandoned; He extends His help and protection to all who want it.

"Our thoughts, if stayed upon God, will be guided by divine love and power." Thus, we must "live on the words that proceed from the lips of Christ."—Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 669.

In the middle of spiritual warfare, a person may be tempted and find it very difficult to dispel certain adverse thoughts. In those moments, it may be easier to distract oneself by

changing place or activity or seeking good company. This may permit a change that facilitates prayer and assurance.

Thought is a very mysterious human process. We really don't know for sure even what it is or how exactly it works. In most cases, though, in the inner recesses of our consciousness, we alone make the choice regarding what we are going to think about. A thought can be changed in an instant. We simply have to make the choice to change it. (In some cases, though, mental illness can affect a person's ability to change their thoughts easily, and so professional treatment [if available] can be extremely beneficial.)

What about your thoughts? Next time the wrong ones come, what are you going to do?

Conclusion

"More precious than the golden wedge of Ophir is the power of right thought. We need to place a high value upon the right control of our thoughts. . . . Every impure thought defiles the soul, impairs the moral sense, and tends to obliterate the impressions of the Holy Spirit. It dims the spiritual vision, so that men cannot behold God. The Lord may and does forgive the repenting sinner; but though forgiven, the soul is marred. All impurity of speech and thought must be shunned by him who would have clear discernment of spiritual truth. . . . We are to use every means that God has placed within our reach for the government and cultivation of our thoughts. We are to bring our minds into harmony with Christ's mind. His truth will sanctify us, body, soul, and spirit, and we shall be enabled to rise above temptation."—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times,* August 23, 1905.

Discussion Questions:

What is the meaning of "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"? (2 Corinthians 10:5.) **How can we learn to do that?**

- **How do the Internet, TV programs, recreational reading, advertisement, etc. work in your mind? How much of your thinking and doing may be affected by these sources? Why do we fool ourselves if we believe that what we read or watch doesn't impact our thinking?**

- **What are ways in which our actions, even subconsciously, reveal the thoughts in our minds? How does body language show what's going on inside?**

- **What advice would you give to someone who is struggling with impulsive behavior? What promises can you present to them from the Bible? Why is it also important to keep before them all the promises of forgiveness and acceptance through Jesus? How can you keep them from giving up in complete despair, believing that, because they have not achieved the victory that they want, their relationship with God is somehow deficient? How can you help them learn never to give up on the promises of forgiveness, no matter how unworthy they feel?**

- **How careful are you with your words, which simply reflect your thoughts? How can you be sure your words always are working for good and not for evil?**

Workshop

FROM TRAUMA TO RESILIENCE
Outline for a PowerPoint presentation
By Dr. Julian Melgosa

(Note to Presenter: You may wish to plan additional time for group discussion or a question-and-answer session during this workshop. You may decide how much time to take based on the audience and allotted time frame for this short presentation.)

Introduction

When someone lives through a traumatic experience (either as victim or witness), he or she may suffer serious reactions, such as:

- Memories of the event that come to mind repeatedly and involuntarily.
- Dreams and nightmares about the event.
- Feeling as if the event was happening again.
- Distress when confronted with cues that resemble the event, like sounds, smells, people, places.
- Errors in cognition: they blame themselves for what happened, they cannot remember certain parts of the event, they are unable to concentrate, they believe that everyone is bad and that nobody should be trusted.
- Persistent negative feelings: they are unable to experience positive effects, like good mood, happiness, or loving feelings.
- Emotional disruptions: fear, horror, anger, irritability, shame, mistrust… sensation of being detached from the world or from their body.
- Sleep disturbances: insomnia, nightmares.

Some of these reactions stay with the person for a few days or weeks and they get resolved (this is called acute stress disorder). But oftentimes the symptoms persist for a longer time and it becomes Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

How to provide support

The effects of trauma can be experienced over years. However, there is hope if the victim makes use of spiritual and professional resources. Although many cases require specialized personnel for the treatment, a great deal of support can be obtained through loving, caring, and empathic individuals.

Here are some ways to help people overcome trauma and gain resiliency:

- Teach victims the signs and symptoms of post-trauma and offer a hopeful vision. This assures them that their problem is known, that others have experienced it, and that there is a way out. This will help them gain a hopeful outlook, which is a huge factor in recovery.
- Work with small groups, especially children. Gathering five or six youngsters to share their experience and to teach them healthy thoughts and behaviors has worked many times in school and community settings.

- Help victims develop basic trust. After their terrible experiences, most won't trust anyone. A caring Christian can, little by little, show compassion and offer practical help. This facilitates trust.
- Provide as many of the following as possible: Educational opportunities, presence of family members, a job in a safe and caring environment, sports/physical activities, and access to medical and mental health care. Data show that all of these contribute to healing.
- Facilitate religious experiences. Mollica's study[1] with refugees showed that those involved in religious activities were one-third less likely to meet PTSD criteria than their non-religious counterparts. This opens an opportunity for active church members to befriend, pray, and share God's promises as shown in the Bible.
- Provide opportunities for creative arts. Talking (a primary avenue for emotional healing) is not always possible because of inhibition, language, or cultural barriers. Music, painting, or clay shaping can facilitate the avenue for victims to disclose and process their traumatic experiences.
- Equip them with self-help strategies. This can be ably achieved by a mental health professional (psychologist, counselor, social worker…), but when those are not available, there may be astute and goodhearted persons who can share practical skills and even adaptive behavioral and mental styles that will help them face their challenges. The simple act of loving an individual in these circumstances will always be helpful.

Fervent prayer as well as repetition of Bible verses of reassurance are great tools to ease the pain of those suffering from post-traumatic symptoms. Here are some examples of Bible verses from the New International Version that can be read and re-read, memorized to develop faith and trust in God and to cope with anxious thoughts and feelings:

- "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains" (Psalms 107:13, 14).
- "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust" (Psalms 91:1, 2).
- "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday" (Psalms 91: 4-6).
- "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).
- "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (Psalms 34:4).
- "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion" (Isaiah 61:1-3).

Conclusion

The enemy has tried to bring much pain and despair to humanity. Much of this has been done by traumatic experiences that remain in people's memories and cause complications. But the good news is that God's power is infinitely superior and there is hope for women and men to be resilient. God can empower each one of you to be instruments of help in favor of those who suffer. With your genuine love and care for them, together with simple skills—listening, trusting, teaching, interacting, and bringing the love of Jesus to them, they can be resilient and overcome any trauma by the grace and power of the Lord.

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[1] R.F. Mollica, X. Cui, K. McInnes, and M.P. Massagli, "Science-based Policy for Psychosocial Interventions in Refugee Camps: A Cambodian Example," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease,* 190, no. 3 (2002), 158-166.