

How to be as resilient as a rock rose

If you've ever walked through the Baakens Valley here in Port Elizabeth, you may have noticed a succulent fondly known as the desert rose.

My wife and I have observed how this drought tolerant plant manages to grow in some of the most unlikely places, like in between rocks where they manage to find just enough soil and moisture to burst into life.

Even now they are not just surviving, but thriving on minimal water as rain is so scarce at the moment. We call them resilient plants.

If God could build so much resilience into a succulent, I can't but believe that He's designed us with a measure of resilience to weather the tough times.

Resilience is the ability an object has to bounce back into shape after being stretched or taking a knock.

It's the ability of an object to not only be able to bounce back, but keep moving forward. The same applies to resilience in people.

It's the ability to come back from a disappointment, setback or blow and keep going.

Another definition of resilience is the ability to bounce back from disruptions. Life is full of disruptions. We experience pain and loss and grief. We experience frustration and delays.

We're living through a major disruption in our lives right now. A disruption at the level of a World War.

Beyond the pandemic, life will still be full of disruptions. Resilience in all of this is so important, because if we stay down too long, if we are bent out of shape for too long, then we run the risk of not being positioned for the next opportunity.

God has opportunities for us in the middle of what for many feels like a desert. God has opportunities for us to grow even when we're between a rock and a hard place – just ask the desert rose in the Baakens Valley!

In the words of Admiral Jim Stockdale, a Vietnam war hero who survived seven years in a prisoner of war camp in Hanoi "...despite all those circumstances, I never ever wavered in my absolute faith that not only would I prevail — get out of this — but I would also prevail by turning it into the defining event of my life that would make me a stronger and better person."

Of course, we need time to mourn the loss of a loved one, or the loss of a business or income.

There has been much suffering over this time, but as a pastor, I look around at the world and I realize that resilience is going to be a key characteristic needed in all of us as we look to the next few years.

We need a resilient mindset for 2021 and beyond, because we can't keep living for the next date when "this might all be over." We need to learn to grow through the knocks and through the "drought".

We need to be resilient people as we look to rebuilding society as we emerge from the pandemic.

There are opportunities for us to find life and bring life to other people in a meaningful way, but if we remain bent out of shape for too long, we might miss them.

We know the story of Joseph, who was promoted to prime minister of Egypt, straight out of the dungeon.

It was Joseph's resilience that positioned him to be able to step into this opportunity. Joseph had been knocked down, by being sent to prison for a crime he didn't commit.

He didn't curl up into a ball in prison and wait to die, no he began to serve the prison warden.

He'd used his giftings to serve right where he was and he was ready when the call came for an audience with pharaoh.

My prayer for you today is that you will adopt a resilient mindset, that you will position yourself for the opportunities that lie ahead.

You have to be in the game to have a chance of winning.

This is not just about personal victory because we are a community and our community has a better chance of winning when you stay in the game!

We have a better chance of rising and rebuilding when resilient people bounce back from the knocks and keep moving forward.

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