

Resilient — Group Discussion Questions

Discuss any or all of the questions below with your group. Choose some questions ahead of time, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them:

Session 1: The Strength That Prevails

Luke 21:36 (NLT): *Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape . . . and stand before the Son of Man.*

1. The past several years have been times of severe testing on both global and personal levels. How would you describe your current mental, emotional, and spiritual state as you begin this study?
2. In Luke 21:29–36, Jesus offers an illustration of the fig tree to prepare us for the trials for an hour like this one. What advance council does he give for the strength to escape the madness of these times?
3. What does the olive oil represent in the parable of the ten bridesmaids found in Matthew 25:1–10? What can we learn from the foolish bridesmaids about the dangers of running out of the very thing our souls most need?
4. According to 2 Chronicles 16:9, what type of people is God actively searching the earth for . . . and what does he promise to give them? How is this essential for your resilience?

Session 2: Glory or Desolation

Ephesians 3:14-17: When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

1. The tragic opening story of Timothy Treadwell reveals that the world is a dangerous place. Do you live with that awareness? How so?
2. What impact has Desolation had on you in the past few years?
3. In Ephesians 3:17, Paul says that Christ will make his home in your heart. What does that mean in terms of what your heart now represents?
4. What supernatural graces—Scriptures, songs, or prayer practices—help you tap into the resources of God's kingdom?

Session 3: Unconverted Places

Matthew 26:69-74: *Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said.*

But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away."

Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed.

1. As the Mount Everest story reveals, crisis exposes who we are. Did the selfish actions of the two climbers surprise you? Why or why not?
2. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again" (NLT). How will this keep you resilient during times of severe testing?
3. The Comfort Culture offers countless other goals than the pursuit of holiness. What do you find most alluring about today's Comfort Culture? How might you pursue greater resilience here?
4. Jesus is doing everything he can to form single-heartedness in us while Satan is using every form of seduction and threat to take our hearts captive. How do you see this playing out in your life and those you love?
5. Have you considered that all the past hardships you've faced may actually be developing resilience in you? How does that change how you interpret the story of your life?

Session 4: The Deep Well Inside Us

Hebrews 10:36-39: *Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.*

*"For in just a little while,
the Coming One will come and not delay.*

*And my righteous ones will live by faith.
But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away."*

But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.

1. Can you relate to Colter Barnes' adventure story and his refusal to give up as he kept repeating the words, "I gotta dig deep; I gotta dig deep"? Explain.
2. We tend to think our strength is up to us, so we grit our teeth and double down—yet Psalm 73:26 says, "God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." How does this verse reframe where the strength that prevails actually comes from?
3. When you pray, where does it seem God is located? Does he feel far away, next to you, or even closer? Explain.
4. First Peter 5:7 invites you to cast all your cares upon God. Where do you find it most difficult to let go and surrender control in your life? Why?

Session 5: Don't Look Back

Genesis 19:16-17, 23-26: *When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the Lord was merciful. When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered, "Run for your lives! And don't look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!" . . .*

Lot reached the village just as the sun was rising over the horizon. Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation. But Lot's wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

1. In the opening adventure story, when the six men on a log raft approach their greatest peril yet—twenty-foot breakers pounding them into a jagged barrier reef—all they can think is: "Hold on, hold on, hold, hold, hold!" Have you ever had a situation where all you could do was just hold on? Would you share it with the group?
2. If your heightened state of longing for things to be good again is actually your heart responding to the imminent return of Jesus, would that interpretation help you re-think those longings . . . and how to fulfill them?
3. As we near the end of this study on resilience, what supernatural grace, story, or teaching was especially significant to you? How will it impact your life going forward?
4. To weather the coming storm, you need a plan. Although it may not be fully developed yet, what are one or two components of your plan? What are one or two practical ways you can rearrange your life to center more around God?

LEADER'S GUIDE

What does it take to lead this study? Get together and watch God show up. Seriously, that's the basics of how a small group works. Gather several people together who have a hunger for God, and are willing to be open and honest with God and themselves. The Lord will honor this every time and show up in the group. You don't have to be a pastor, priest, theologian, or counselor to lead a group through this study. Just invite people to watch the video together and talk about it. All you need is a willing heart, a little courage, and God will do the rest. Really.

A FEW TIPS FOR LEADING A GROUP:

- ***Be honest.*** Remember that your honesty will set the tone for your time together. Be willing to answer questions personally, as this will set the pace for the length of your group members' responses and will make others more comfortable in sharing.
- ***Stick to the schedule.*** Strive to begin and end at the same time each week. It's helpful that the people in your group can trust you to be a good steward of their time, and they will be more willing to come back each week. Of course, you want to be open to the work God is doing in the group members as they are challenged to reconsider some of their preconceived ideas about the availability of the kingdom of God to bring them joy in their everyday lives, and at times you may want to *linger* in prayer or discussion. Remember the clock serves *you*; your group doesn't serve the clock. But work to respect the group's time, especially when it comes to limiting the discussion times. You don't have to get to every question suggested.
- ***Don't be afraid of silence or emotion.*** Welcome awkward moments. The material presented during this study will likely bring to the surface areas of pain and suffering. Don't be afraid to ease into the material with the group to allow space for honoring one another's stories and personal questions.
- ***Don't dominate the conversation.*** Even though you are the leader, you are also a member of this small group. So, don't steamroll over others in an attempt to lead—and don't let anyone else in the group do so either.
- ***Prepare for your meeting.*** Watch the video for the meeting ahead of time. Though it may feel a bit like cheating because you'll know what's coming, you'll be better prepared for what the session might stir in the hearts of your group members. Also review the material in this guide and be sure to spend time in prayer. In fact, the *most important* thing you can do is simply pray ahead of time each week:
Lord Jesus, come and rule this time. Let your Spirit fill this place. Bring your kingdom here. Take us right to the things we really need to talk about and rescue us from every distraction. Show us the heart of the Father. Meet each person here. Give us your grace and love for one another. In your name I pray.
- ***Make sure your group members are prepared.*** Send out a reminder email with the Zoom link a couple of days before the meeting to make sure folks don't forget about it.

AS YOU GATHER:

You will find the following counsel to be especially helpful when you meet for the first time as a group. I offer these comments in the spirit of “here is what I would do if I were leading a group through this study.”

As your group gathers for the first time, start your time with introductions if people don’t know each other. Begin with yourself and share your name and what you want to learn most from this study. Going first will put the group more at ease.

After each person has introduced themselves, share—in no more than five minutes—what *your* hopes are for the group. Then jump right into watching the video session, as this will help get things started on a strong note. In the following weeks you will then want to start by allowing folks to catch up a *little* with some “hey, so how are you?” kind of banter. Too much of this burns up your meeting time, but you have to allow some room for it because it helps build relationships among the group members.

Note that each group will have its own personality and dynamics. Typically, people will hold back the first week or two until they feel the group is “safe.” Then they will begin to share. Again, don’t let it throw you if your group seems a bit awkward at first. Of course, some people *never* want to talk, so you’ll need to coax them out as time goes on. But let it go the first week.

INSIGHT FOR DISCUSSION:

If the group members are in any way open to talking about their lives as it relates to this material, you will *not* have enough time for every question suggested. That’s okay! Pick a few questions ahead of time that you know you want to cover, just in case you end up only having time to discuss a few of them.

You set the tone for the group. Your honesty and vulnerability during discussion times will tell them what they can share. How *long* you talk will give them an example of how long they should. So give some thought to what stories or insights from your own work in the study guide you want to highlight. WARNING: The greatest temptation for most small group leaders is to add to the video teaching with a little “teaching session” of their own. This is unhelpful for three reasons:

1. The discussion time will be the richest time during your meeting. The video sessions have been intentionally kept short so you can have plenty of time for discussion. If you add to the teaching, you sacrifice this precious time.
2. You don’t want your group members *teaching*, *lecturing*, or *correcting* one another. Every person is at a different place in her spiritual journey—and that’s good. But if you set a tone by teaching, the group will feel like they have the freedom to teach one another. That can be disastrous for group dynamics.
3. The participants will have watched the video teaching and possibly read the corresponding chapters in *Resilient*. They don’t need more content! They want a chance to talk and process their own lives in light of all they have taken in.

A STRONG CLOSE:

Some of the best learning times will take place after the group time as God brings new insights to the participants during the week. Encourage group members to write down any questions they have as they read through *Resilient* and do the preparation work. Make sure they know you are available for them as they explore what God has to say about any of the concepts that might be new or challenging to them. Finally, make sure you close your time by praying together. Perhaps ask two or three people to pray, inviting God to fill your group and lead each person during this study.

Finally, make sure you close your time by—praying together! Perhaps ask two or three people to pray, inviting God to fill your group and lead each person during this study. Also, be sure to “practice” some of the specific prayers your group will be learning about during the sessions. Many of these prayers can be found in the corresponding chapters to the sessions or in the appendix in the *Resilient* book.

Thank you again for taking the time to lead your group. May God reward your efforts and dedication and make your time together in *Resilient* fruitful for His kingdom.