

Hope...for the uprooted woman

Resilience by Ann Kelley

The 2020 pandemic has affected us all. For some, the impact has been devastating – the death of a loved one, orders to shelter in place, loss of a job, home, or business. For others, these months have meant stress and inconvenience – living with others in close quarters, supervising children required to do distance learning, empty store shelves, travel plans canceled, even Zoom fatigue.

Many would say that they experience a degree of fear of Covid-19 infection, especially if they or someone they live with already has compromised health.

Eight months ago in an issue of *Bloom* we addressed the problem of suffering and I revealed that my husband had just been diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia. His stem cell transplant was six months ago and we thank God daily that he is doing well, but he is still at high risk should he contract Covid-19. Our isolation is essential.

Each choice I make to venture out is filled with uncertainty and exhausting mental calculations: Do I go to the store to pick up the two things I need for a recipe? Are the hiking trails behind our house too crowded with people for us to feel at ease? Is it safe for me to work one day each week in the office again, even with staggered shifts and social distancing? Did I wash my hands after handling the mail? Did I touch my face after using the vacuum hose at the carwash?

It's stressful and exhausting!

Though the future is uncertain, there is one thing we can be certain of: life can be difficult.

During times like these, Scripture is encouraging and meaningful. **"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go"** (Joshua 1:9) and **"For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control"** (2 Timothy 1:7) are wonderful reminders of the availability of God's presence and strength. Prayer and reading scripture can help us look beyond our circumstances to a Source of peace that is beyond ourselves.

But even those who pray and read the Bible can be riddled with fear and anxiety. So why are some people resilient and others are not? Why do some seem able to eventually bounce back after loss or trauma, while others continue to struggle? Is resilience a trait that some are born with and some are not? Is there something we can do to become more resilient? This issue of *Bloom* will attempt to provide some answers and inspiration.

The Perfect Summer Read While Social Distancing

There's no better or more timely book to read this summer than *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles. While you're continuing to social distance and spend lots of time at home, this delightful tale of resiliency while under house arrest will inspire you to make the most of this time of isolation.

The novel is the 30-year saga of the Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov, who, instead of being sentenced to death or Siberia by the Bolsheviks, is placed under house arrest inside the Metropol Hotel in Moscow in 1922.

"Brimming with humor, a glittering cast of characters, and one beautifully rendered scene after another, this singular novel casts a spell as it relates the Count's endeavor to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a man of purpose."*

*book flyleaf

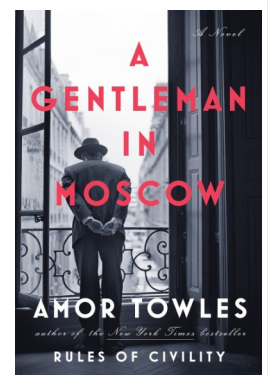


Photo by: Masha Pavlovich

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Bloom provides inspiration as you seek to grow and thrive during times of life change.

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The Gift of Resilience

"Life is difficult." M. Scott Peck, Christian psychiatrist and best-selling author, wastes no time getting to the point in this opening line of his well-known book *The Road Less Traveled*. His premise is that when we fail to accept that life is difficult, we will not respond to difficulty in healthy ways.

Peck continues:

"Most do not fully see this truth that life is difficult. Instead they moan more or less incessantly, noisily or subtly, about the enormity of their problems, their burdens, and their difficulties as if life were generally easy, as if life should be easy.... I know about this moaning because I have done my share.

What makes life difficult is that the process of confronting and solving problems is a painful one.

Yet it is in this whole process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning. Problems call forth our courage and our wisdom; indeed, they create our courage and our wisdom. It is only because of problems that we grow mentally and spiritually. When we desire to encourage the growth of the human spirit, we challenge and encourage the human capacity to solve problems, just as in school we deliberately set problems for our children to solve. It is through the pain of confronting and resolving problems that we learn.

In other words, resilience resides in courage, wisdom, creativity, and the capacity to solve problems. Scripture echoes these truths. James tells us:

"Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.

If you don't know what you're doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You'll get his help, and won't be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought.

Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life (James 1:2-6, 12, MSG).

When we meet challenges, instead of running from them, we open the door to maturity and growth as we let them do their work; as we allow God to do His work in the midst of our problems. The Apostle Paul assures us that good can emerge from the struggle, that God is with us:

"Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves...and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good (Romans 8:26-28, MSG).

God promises to walk with us through the "valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23). He may not remove the valley or reroute our trip, but He walks with us. Our part is to acknowledge that He is there. To step into the valley — not avoid it, not ignore it, not run from it — with God at our side, is to trust the journey and to experience life-changing resilience through God's care and love.

"It is in this...process of meeting and solving problems that life has its meaning."

I am with you
DECLARES THE LORD



My scars remind me that I did indeed survive my deepest wounds. That in itself is an accomplishment. And they bring to mind something else, too. They remind me that the damage life has inflicted on me has, in many places, left me stronger and more resilient. What hurt me in the past has actually made me better equipped to face the present." — Steve Goodier, M.Div., United Methodist minister and author of numerous books

Three Important Steps to Build Resilience

Lucy and her family were planning a day at the lake with friends. Her 12-year-old daughter Abi decided at the last minute to ride in the car with her best friend Ella and Ella's mom, Sally. As they drove, a car sped through a stop sign and crashed into them. Abi, Ella, and Sally died instantly.

The crushing news sent Lucy into shock – as it would for any mom. But Lucy wasn't just any mom. Lucy was a resilience expert. She had been contracted to train the U.S. military to be “mentally fit” and, following a devastating earthquake in Australia, worked with many organizations “teaching them the ways of thinking and acting [to]...boost resilience.”

Suddenly, she found herself “flung to the other side of the equation, waking up with a whole new identity. Instead of being the resilience expert, suddenly I'm the grieving mother. Waking up not knowing who I am, trying to wrap my head around unthinkable news, my world smashed to smithereens. Suddenly I'm the one on the end of all this expert advice and I can tell you I didn't like what I heard one little bit.”

Lucy knew the chances of getting through the grief process with her family intact were slim. All the best advice left her feeling powerless – a victim. She decided to follow what she knew to be true from her research and her work with others in crisis.

That was five years ago and Dr. Lucy Hone, author of *Resilient Grieving*, can now look back on three strategies that she chose to practice that helped her and her family in their darkest days. Here's an excerpt of what she said on the TED stage:

“1. **Resilient people know that suffering is part of life.** This doesn't mean they actually welcome it. It's just that when the tough times come they seem to know that suffering is part of every human existence. Terrible things happen to you just like they do to everybody else. The real tragedy is that not enough of us seem to know this any longer. We seem to live in an age where [we think] we're entitled to a perfect life where shiny happy photos on Instagram are the norm.

2. **Resilient people are good at choosing where they put their attention.** They have a habit of realistically appraising situations and managing to focus on the things that they can change and somehow accept the things that they can't. Resilient people don't diminish the negative but they also have worked out a way of tuning in to the good. In my brave new world, it involved trying to find things to be grateful for.

3. **Resilient people ask themselves, 'Is what I'm doing helping or harming me?'** This was my go-to question in the days after the girls died. I would ask it again and again: should I go to the trial and see the driver? Would that help me or would it harm me? Late at night I'd find myself sometimes pouring over old photos of Abi and getting more and more upset. I'd ask myself, “Really? Is this helping you or is it harming you? Put away the photos. Go to bed for the night. Be kind to yourself.”

Lucy recognized that staying up pouring over photos late at night was, at that stage of her grief, doing more harm than good. For someone else or for a time in the future this process could be healing. Each person must evaluate for herself or himself what is helpful or harmful.

These three steps can be practiced by anyone. Whether it's the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, the stress of isolation, or the fear of the Coronavirus, practicing these steps may be able to make a difference in your life and strengthen your resilience.

Resilience isn't something you're born with, it's something you can learn by accepting the fact that life is difficult, by taking action on the things you can change, accepting the things you can't change, looking for things you can be grateful for, and asking yourself, “Is what I'm doing helping or harming me?” You won't do this perfectly. At times, you'll find your mind racing off into visions of doom or discontent, but you can choose in those moments to lasso those thoughts and redirect them. As with any pursuit, this way of thinking and acting will require practice, but isn't that true of anything that is worthwhile?

“Resilient people ask themselves: is what I'm doing helping or harming me?”

Yes, I Can!

from *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* by Susan Miller

A friend gave me a little wooden angel that sits on my kitchen counter. She has both arms stretched out and raised above her head as if to say, “Yes, I can!” Every morning when I walk into my kitchen, that little angel reminds me that I want to be a woman who, in the midst of life-changing loss, says “Yes, I can!” I can be grateful for the immeasurable blessings in my life. I can focus, not on my loss, but on the faithfulness of God, and trust Him in all things. I can lift up my hands with thanksgiving and praise for a Savior who comforts and soothes me in my loss.

You can too.

God will not leave us or forget us. His mercies are indeed new every morning. Because of this, you and I can say, “Yes, we can!”

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun.*

*His love has no limit, His grace
has no measure,
His power no boundary known
unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.*

- Annie Johnson Flint, “He Giveth More Grace”

Join or lead an ONLINE *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* study group!

No matter where you live in the world, you can find connection in an online study group! If ever there was a time to join up, it is NOW.

When you're new to your community, it's common to feel disconnected and isolated without local friendships and support. Then, when your new community is practicing social distancing and many public places are closed, anxiety ramps up and your sense of isolation is magnified.

An *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* group gets the conversation going about emotional realities, practical ideas, and paths to spiritual growth as you begin a new stage of life in a new town. Going through the study with others who understand what you're going through can become a lifeline – especially in a Coronavirus world.

For an online study, all you need is a copy of *After the Boxes Are Unpacked* by Susan Miller and the companion *Newcomer Study Guide*. **Get \$2.00 off when you buy them together.** Each online group will have a facilitator and will meet via an online meeting platform. For those interested in facilitating, Just Moved will provide guidance and encouragement. [Learn more at justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study](https://justmoved.org/after-the-boxes-study)



Just Moved Ministry is celebrating 25 years!

We are asking God to provide 25 new monthly donors—one donor for every year since Susan Miller followed God's call to start the ministry in 1995.

Will you be one of the 25? Set up your monthly donation online at justmoved.org/donate, complete the enclosed reply card, or call Just Moved Mon-Thur, 480.991.5268. Thank you!