

# charis



## Building Emotional Resilience: Discussion Guide



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This discussion guide can be used with the "*Building Emotional Resilience*" handouts which are located on the Urban Alliance website in the resource library.

# Building Emotional Resilience: Discussion Guide

**Today more than ever, it is important for all people to learn to be resilient.** Resilience is the ability to cope, adjust, and even grow in the midst of adversity.

## The Wise and Foolish Builder

The parable of the wise and foolish builder found in Matthew 24 offers a Biblical framework for resilience and coping. In this parable there are two men: one who builds his house on a rock and another who builds his house on the sand. When a storm comes, the house built on the sand “comes crashing down,” but the house built on the rock stands. The rock represents Jesus and the storm represents the trials of life. When a person’s life is built on Jesus, they are resilient. However, building one’s life on the rock requires more than just professing faith and attending church. It requires bringing all aspects of oneself (e.g. thoughts, feelings, behaviors) into alignment with God’s truth. As this happens, we hear God’s Word and do what it says and can endure the storm.

When coping with a stressful situation people need to holistically care for themselves. The “Building Emotional Resilience” handouts offer practical suggestions for habits that a person can build into their day-to-day life to help them cope effectively and be more resilient when life presents unexpected challenges. There is a total of 10 different resilience skills included in the handouts, each drawing on research and scripture.

## Overview of Resilience Skills

The following “resilience skills” are presented as a set of handouts. Each can be thought of as a stand-alone skill. People who regularly practice multiple resilience skills are better prepared to cope with stressful situations. Each resilience skill falls into one of four areas: emotional, mental/thinking, physical, and relational.

### Emotional

- ✓ **Understanding Emotions:** Labeling emotions and being aware of how your body experiences them
- ✓ **Managing Emotions:** Practicing activities that ease distressing emotions
- ✓ **Processing Change:** Grieving losses; both big and small

### Thinking/Mental

- ✓ **Taking Thoughts Captive:** Identifying and replacing thoughts that do not align with God’s truth
- ✓ **Being Thankful:** Maintaining an attitude of gratefulness in all circumstances

### Physical

- ✓ **Caring for your Body:** Becoming aware of your body’s needs and responding
- ✓ **Being Present:** Learning to be still and attend to the present moment

### Relational

- ✓ **Seeking God’s Presence:** Regularly spending time with God and allowing Him to transform your heart
- ✓ **Building a Support Network:** Engaging with other people and asking for help when you need it
- ✓ **Helping Others:** Using your gifts, skills, and abilities to help other people

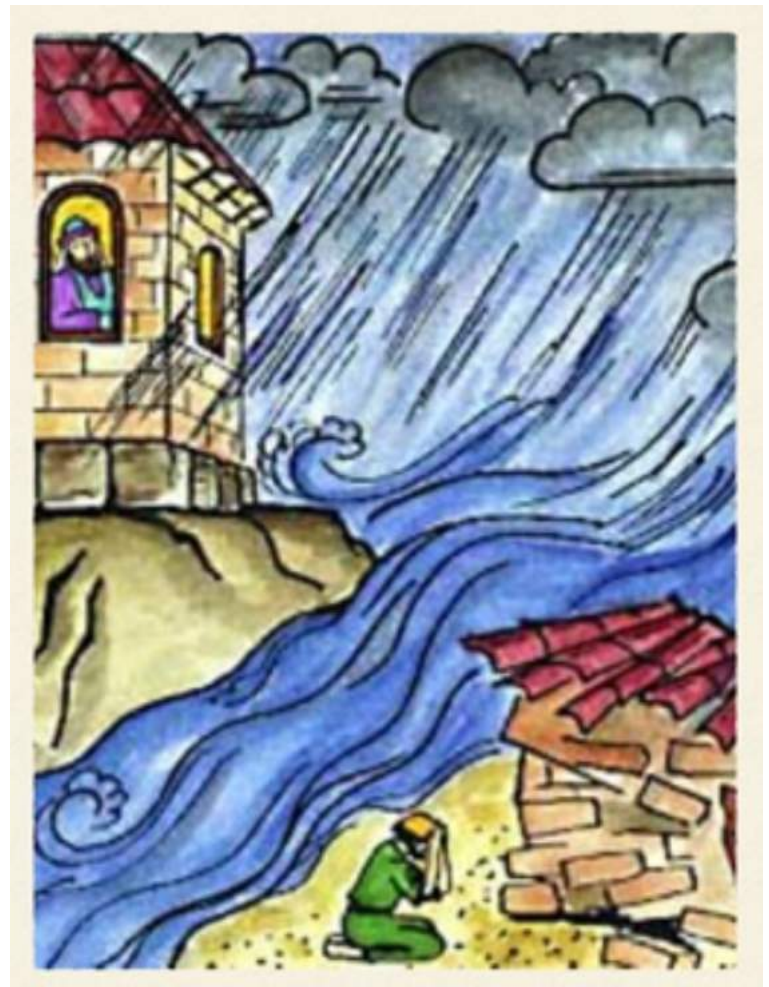
## How to Use These Materials in Group Settings

These materials can be used in small group settings where leaders facilitate discussion on each of the 10 resilience skills. Group members can read each handout in advance or the group can read the handout together and the leader can follow-up with a facilitated discussion. Questions and a suggested closing prayer are offered for each resilience skill.

The *Resilience Skills Check-up* can be used to help group members determine the degree to which each skill is incorporated into their day-to-day life. The questions for each resilience skill are listed below. Scores for each skill range from 3-15 and can be categorized as low, medium and high.

- **Low:** Scores of 3-7 indicate that the resilience skill is rarely or not at all used. To learn more about the resilience skill, read Urban Alliance's "Building Emotional Resilience" handouts. Look at the suggested activities for that skill and consider ways you can incorporate them into your day-to-day life.
- **Medium:** Scores of 8-11 indicate that a resilience skill is used some of the time or inconsistently. Read Urban Alliance's "Building Emotional Resilience" booklet, to learn more about skills you are sometimes using. Look at the suggested activities for that skill and consider ways you can more regularly incorporate it into your day-to-day life.
- **High:** Scores of 12-15 indicate that a resilience skill is used regularly or often. To learn more about the skill read Urban Alliance's "Building Emotional Resilience" booklet. Skills that fall in the high score range are already built into your day-to-day life. Continue practicing them regularly.

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."*  
Matthew 7: 24-27



# Discussion Questions for Each Resilience Skill

## Introduction

1. The parable of the wise and foolish builder offers a biblical way to think about resilience. Metaphorically speaking, what does it look like to build your house on sand? What about on the rock?
2. In the parable, storms test the two houses. What are some of the storms you have encountered in your life over the last few years?
3. How do you feel about James 1:2-4 which says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”?

*Pray together as a group that God would use storms to “produce perseverance” and make each person’s faith “mature and complete”. Also pray specifically for anyone who is currently in the middle of a storm.*

## Understanding Emotions

1. Think of a situation over the last week that was stressful. What happened? What were you feeling (label the emotion)? On a scale of 1-10, how intensely were you feeling the emotion? How did you experience the emotion in your body?
2. What positive emotion do you feel most often (e.g. joy, excitement, peace, contentment, love)? What types of situations might make you feel that emotion?
3. Which distressing emotion do you find yourself feeling most often (e.g. anger, anxiety, frustration, sadness, disappointment, envy, shame)? What types of situations might make you feel that emotion?

*Take time as a group to pray for one another. Ask Jesus to help each person with the distressing emotion they feel the most. Ask Jesus to help each person better understand themselves when they feel that emotion. Ask that God would fill each person with His peace, comfort, joy, and love.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
When I am upset, it is easy for me to label the emotion I am feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable talking about my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
I am aware of how my body feels (e.g. sweaty palms, butterflies in stomach, flushed face) when I experience different emotions.	1	2	3	4	5

**Scoring:** Scores for each skill range from 3-15 and can be categorized as low, medium and high. Sum each of the numbers to determine your score.

## Managing Emotions

- 1 Peter 5:7 says, “Cast all your anxiety [or cares] on Him because He cares for you”. What is one situation you would like to cast onto Jesus? What emotions does this situation stir in you?
- Review the list of “Tools to Calm Distressing Emotions.” Which tools do you already use to calm yourself when you are upset? What is one tool that you would like to use more often?
- What makes it hard to calm down when you are upset?

*Take time as a group to pray for each other. Specifically pray about the situations each person would like to “cast onto Jesus.” Pray that God would help them with their situation and emotions.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I know when I need to take a break from a conversation because I am too upset.	1	2	3	4	5
When I am upset, I am able to calm myself down.	1	2	3	4	5
I have many different ideas of things I can do to calm down when I am upset.	1	2	3	4	5

## Processing Change

- List some places where you have experienced loss (change) over the last year. Remember that there is loss in just about any life change.
- Why do you think it is important to acknowledge loss and grieve? What happens when losses go unacknowledged?
- Share about a time you experienced comfort, either from other people or God? What did you find most comforting in the situation?

*Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 together. It is important to acknowledge losses, grieve, and receive comfort. Pray together that God would reveal places where people have unacknowledged or ungrieved losses. Pray also that He would comfort each person as they grieve losses (big and small).*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of the losses (big and small) I have experienced over the last year.	1	2	3	4	5
When I experience a loss, I am able to grieve (express my emotions about the loss).	1	2	3	4	5
I am comfortable talking about losses and allowing myself to grieve.	1	2	3	4	5

## Taking Thoughts Captive

1. Identify a situation that sparked a strong emotional reaction in you. Consider the following questions:
  - What was the situation?
  - What were you feeling? How intensely were you feeling it?
  - What were your thoughts and beliefs about this situation?
  - How well do these thoughts align with the truth contained in God's Word?
  - If it does not align, what truth can it be replaced with?
2. Describe your personal process for taking thoughts captive. What do you do, say, pray, etc. as you replace unhealthy thoughts/lies with God's truth.
3. Identify one truth contained in scripture and an accompanying Bible verse that is important for you to remember this week. Share that truth and verse with the group.

*Pray together that the Holy Spirit would speak truth/scripture to each person's mind, heart, and soul so it would be deeply known to them.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of the connection between situations, my emotions, and my thoughts.	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly reflect on my thoughts and consider if they are healthy and reflect truth.	1	2	3	4	5
When I think of a thought that is unhealthy or untrue, I can find a healthier thought to replace it with.	1	2	3	4	5

## Being Grateful

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." What makes it hard to be thankful in all circumstances?
2. List three things you are thankful for.
3. Which of the practices listed on the handout have you used to help cultivate a grateful heart? Are there other habits not listed that you have used?

*Close in prayer, thanking God for the ways He has blessed each person. Also take time to thank God for His love, mercy, protection, comfort, goodness, patience, etc.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can identify things to be grateful for each day.	1	2	3	4	5
Generally, I feel content and thankful.	1	2	3	4	5
I see new things each day to be grateful for.	1	2	3	4	5

## Caring for Your Body

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.” What are some ways you honor God with your body?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where your physical health impacted your emotional health or vice versa? If so, describe the situation.
- Which of the examples of “Ways to Care for Your Body” do you engage in regularly? Which are harder for you to engage in?

*Pray for each person’s physical body. Ask God to show each person how they can better care for their body. If there is anyone who is sick or has a physical condition, pray for healing.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I regularly eat healthy balanced meals.	1	2	3	4	5
I exercise regularly.	1	2	3	4	5
I get enough sleep each night.	1	2	3	4	5

## Being Present

- What makes it difficult for you to slow down and attend to the present moment?
- Right now, take a moment and be still and consider what each of your five senses is experiencing. What do you feel (emotionally and physically), hear, see, taste, and smell?
- Which of the activities listed in the handout might help you to slow down and be more present?

*In Psalm 46:10 God says, “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted among the earth.” Take a moment and be still before God, consider how wonderful He is. Close in prayer acknowledging His greatness and nearness right now.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is easy for me to slow down and appreciate the present moment.	1	2	3	4	5
I rarely miss the present moment because I am thinking about the next thing I have to do.	1	2	3	4	5
I take time to notice the sights, smells, sensations, and sounds around me.	1	2	3	4	5



## Seeking God's Presence

1. Consider the ways God's love transformed Paul, Zacchaeus, and Mary Magdalene. What do you find encouraging about their stories?
2. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." How do you seek God's presence?
3. What spiritual disciplines (e.g. reading the Bible, prayer, attending church, Bible study, worship, fasting) do you engage in to root your heart in His love and truth?

Pray Ephesians 3:16-19 as a group:

*"We pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And we pray that, being rooted and established in love, we may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I spend time seeking God each day.	1	2	3	4	5
I engage in a variety of activities to connect with God, such as praying, reading the Bible, or going to church.	1	2	3	4	5
It is very important to me to know God more intimately.	1	2	3	4	5

## Building a Support Network

1. Why is it important to have a strong network of support?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul uses the metaphor of a body to describe believers' relationships with one another. According to this verse, what are some ways we encourage and support one another?
3. Which type of support do you have the most and least of (emotional, practical, informational appraisal, or spiritual)?
4. What are some things you can do to cultivate supportive relationships in your life?

*We are designed by God to be interdependent. That means people need one another. Pray as a group that God would meet each person's need for relationship and support.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have people in my life who I can talk to when I am upset.	1	2	3	4	5
I have people in my life who will help me with practical things, such as fixing something at my house, moving something heavy, childcare, or transportation.	1	2	3	4	5
I have people in my life who offer helpful feedback, advice, and information.	1	2	3	4	5

## Helping Others

1. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are God’s handiwork [or masterpiece], created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” How does this truth make you feel about yourself and your life?
2. Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30. God wants us to invest the talents He gives us into His kingdom. What are some of your talents (e.g. spiritual gifts, special skills, passions, or personal experiences) that God might use to help other people?
3. What keeps you from using your talents? (e.g. fear of failure, lack of confidence, busyness)

*Pray as a group that God would help each person to invest their talents to help others. Ask God to reveal to each person anything that hinders them from investing their talents.*

Resilience Skills Check-up Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am aware of my strengths, gifts, and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to use my strengths, gifts, and abilities to help other people.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe I can make a difference in other people’s lives.	1	2	3	4	5

