

USG Small Group Ministry – February 2026 – Embodying Resilience

drawn from Soul Matters materials, see the full packet for more of all of these elements

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...Resilience is not just an intellectual exercise, but a matter of life and death. We all sense it: the road ahead for us human beings is going to get rough. So we simply can't afford to overlook a single source of resilience. Scott Tayler

Chalice Lighting Anyone can slay a dragon, he told me, but try waking up every morning and loving the world all over again. [Brian Andreas](#)

Check In *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

Introduction

When did we decide that resilience was a solo project? It's not that we consciously chose to define it that way. It's just what we were taught, from the time we were little right up to today: "Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps"; "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."; "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." The cultural consensus is clear: resilience depends on your personal toughness and inner strength. It's a solo act!

But other voices are on the rise. Take author and activist, [Soraya Chemaly](#), who writes, "In spectacular arrogance, our mainstream vision of resilience encourages us to ignore, minimize, and even punish the desire for our greatest resilience assets: interdependence, collective versatility, and shared care. Instead of revealing our relationships to one another, our environments, and the systems we live in, this vision highlights and glorifies self-sufficiency, limitless positivity, and individual strength against all odds. It makes us less resilient, not more."

In a world facing numerous threats [of collapse and conflict](#), Chemaly's words help us see that correctly defining resilience is not just an intellectual exercise, but a matter of life and death. We all sense it: the road ahead for us human beings is going to get rough. So we simply can't afford to overlook a single source of resilience.

Which is another way of saying the world needs **us** to start speaking up too! If those rough roads ahead are to be successfully navigated, we need people who challenge those old-school chants of "You can do it!" with a new mantra of "We can't do it on our own!" That doesn't mean we have to abandon old messages about personal resilience entirely, but it does mean that we need to get better at noticing when they get in our way. It's fine to celebrate the classic resilient image of a tree flexibly leaning and bending with the wind, but we can't let that distract us from the fact that, today, the kind of leaning that matters most is leaning on each other. So friends, this month, let's look around as much as look within. Let's let up on all the "grin and bear it" talk and instead grab the hand that is reaching our way.

Spiritual Exercises

Option A - Your Way to Keep Going?

At one time or another, we've all asked, "How do I keep going?" It's a question that comes up not only when life is especially challenging, scary or disorienting, but also when life is wearily routine and repetitive. In those moments, we hunger for renewal and new energy - some source of resilience will help us put one foot in front of the other and enable us to fall in love again with the path we're on.

Wanting to remember her own sources of resilience, the writer, Lisa Olivera, created a personal "[How To Keep Going Manifesto](#)." Basically, she made a list of the things that enabled her to keep going in the past so that she could more easily grab ahold of them in her present. Engaging her manifesto makes for a great spiritual exercise. So, here are your instructions:

Read through the *keep going strategies* in her manifesto:

<https://lisaolivera.substack.com/p/how-do-i-keep-going>

As you go through Olivera's list, identify one that is similar to a resilience strategy you've used *in the past*. Spend some time with the memory of this moment when you "kept going." Ask yourself how this memory might be trying to speak to you and offer a message of comfort or challenge for your life today?

Finally, go through the list again and identify another strategy of hers that you want to try *today*!

Extra Mile Idea: If you want to go deeper with this exercise, you could create your own How To Keep Going Manifesto, using Olivera's as inspiration.

Option B -Is Your Thinking a Help or Hindrance to Your Resilience?

Resilience and self-talk are tightly tangled together. While popular resilience strategies often focus on *positive* thinking, [psychologists](#) tell us that dealing with *negative* thinking is even [more critical](#) to resilience. And the key to addressing negative self-talk is [noticing it](#). So, that's what this exercise is all about.

To help us on our way, we turn to the beloved writer, Anne Lamott, who is known for looking at herself with brutal honesty as well as self-compassion. She once [stumbled on a sentence](#) that changed her life: "Stinking thinking is the universal addiction." This led to her confronting how addicted she was to toxic and obsessive thinking by reworking the widely-used Alcoholic Anonymous's "[20 Questions List](#)." In short, she substituted the word *Thinking* for the word *Drinking*. So, notice your own relationship to negative thinking by answering Lamott's revised 20 questions list:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10G_j4upylMc2fe4i1vEptdUoqQIATWfhBBJQjpA0rml/edit?usp=sharing

As you go through the questions, remember that this is not a pass/fail test. It's about helping you notice where you might need to do [some work](#) regarding [your relationship](#) to self-talk. So use Lamott's 20 questions in any way that feels useful. You can use the check boxes and reflect on what the *quantity* of your checks might be telling you. And here's the most important part of the exercise: Be gentle and compassionate with yourself as you answer the questions!

Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

If you see successes and failures as being placed in your path to teach you things, you are more likely to be psychologically hardy and therefore more resilient in the face of trauma.

[Andrew Zolli](#)

The truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.

[Pema Chödrön](#)

Forests may be gorgeous. But there's nothing more alive than a tree that learns how to grow in a cemetery. [Andrea Gibson](#)

A lot of people think about grit and resilience as having the ability to push through tough times to get to where you want to go. But the truth is, it's more about having a strong sense of purpose to pull you towards your ultimate goal. When you view challenges or setbacks in light of that all-important goal, they start feeling much smaller — sometimes almost irrelevant — in light of your bigger commitments. [Jonathan Fields](#)

You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, and when to run. Kenny Rogers

Questions

1. When do you remember first witnessing one or both of your parents act resiliently? How might that memory have a message for you today?
2. How has your life partner made you more resilient?
3. What is your most [beautiful scar](#)? What wound ended up giving you a surprising gift?
4. Why do you keep pushing through when you could save yourself by [courageously quitting](#)?
5. What if you allowed yourself to be [a work in progress](#)?
6. What if the biggest secret to resilience is [loving it all](#)?

Sitting in Silence *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

Sharing/Deep Listening *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

Reflection and Gratitude *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

Singing What a Wonderful World - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBrd_3VMC3c

Extinguishing the Chalice my heart, a cottonwood seed, landed on rock instead of soil—love says, time to trust the wind. [Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer](#)