

Resilient reflects Adam's ability as a scholar. He draws on a wide range of sources and grapples with deep issues, but in a way that is still accessible. His stories are amusing and apt, contributing enormously to the readability and relevance of the book.

Spiritual resilience is a crucial topic in a day when the pressures on Christians are great and faith can be shallow. Resilient comes from deep roots, and Adam helps us go deep in a range of areas central to Christian faith and life.

I have learnt a lot from this book – truths with the potential to change my life. I need to read it again, taking time to ponder, pray and apply the lessons. It is that sort of book: biblically rich, relevant, accessible yet insightful and important enough to read slowly.

Very Rev. Peter Cheyne

Mornington Presbyterian Church

Former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

Dodds' book is a gift to the church: pastoral direction for those wishing to follow Jesus faithfully over a lifetime, built upon a solid theological and scriptural foundation. Readers will be challenged by the probing questions throughout the book, designed to nurture the 'spiritual resilience' befitting true Christ-followers.

Dr Matthew C. Easter

Director of Christian Studies – Assistant Professor of Bible

Missouri Baptist University

A compelling masterpiece of biblical principles, insights, stories, and anecdotes that powerfully develops our spiritual resilience while skilfully drawing us closer to Christ, our First Love. I felt like I was reading it with the Lord in the room.

Dr Lesley Gill

PhD in emotional resilience

Assoc. Professor, School of Business,

Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand

Dr Adam Dodds has the rare ability to combine theology with everyday living. He takes a topic we all need today – resilience – and plants it within a sound biblical framework. His engaging relational style weaves together the warmth of his personal life with thoughtful biblical research. You will find his book ‘meaty’, but not complex. I would recommend Resilient to a young, growing Christian, as well as with someone mature in the faith.

Bill Mowry

The Navigators USA; Author of *The Ways of the Alongsider*

Dr Adam Dodds brings his great experience and advanced theological studies to this insightful book. It is packed full of practical advice on how to build spiritual resilience. This book is a must read for every Christian looking to strengthen and deepen their faith. I highly recommend it.

Pastor Boyd Ratnaraja

National Leader, Elim Churches of New Zealand

There is so much wisdom to be gleaned from Adam’s book! Packed with stories, thought-provoking quotes, fascinating snippets of history, relevant scriptures and entertaining stories, Adam had me thinking about so many areas of my life, character and Christian walk. I particularly resonated with his over-arching premise – that spiritual resilience is largely determined by how we view God, ourselves, the Christian life and the world. I found myself alternating between ‘Yes, I totally agree!’, ‘Of course – this makes so much sense’, and ‘okay, I need to work on that!’ If you want to check you’ve got the (spiritual, mental, emotional) foundations of your life right, then this is the book to read.

Belinda Stott

Counsellor, Speaker, Soul Tour Presenter

Author of the *Kainnan* series

I know that Dr Dodds doesn't claim to be a prophet, but the timing of this book is nothing else but prophetic. As the world is reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic and many are scrambling to make sense of an unprecedented season, it is obvious that our spiritual resilience is being tested more than ever.

Dr Dodds is both theologian and pastor, and I love that this book reflects that. It is both profound and accessible, revelatory and practical, in equal measure.

I personally believe that Resilient: Spiritual Formation for Mind and Heart should become essential reading in Bible Colleges and ministry training centres. It has now officially become my 'go-to text' on the subject and I highly recommend it to everyone. Has there been a greater need for spiritual resilience in our lifetime than now?

Vicki Simpson

International speaker, Prophet - C3 Church, Sydney, Australia



About the author

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RESILIENT

SPIRITUAL FORMATION
FOR MIND AND HEART

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Introducing Spiritual Resilience

One of my sons is a passionate little boy. Whatever he does, he throws himself into with gusto. One of his favourite things to do on weekends is to play Nintendo with his brother. It is something they look forward to all week, even though it typically ends in tears. As they play, his level of frustration builds up like the atoms of a dinner in the microwave. He will accuse his brother of playing unfairly, or he will get angry and annoyed that the game is too difficult, or he will be upset that he didn't win. Either way, like a dinner that is heated for ten minutes rather than three, the impending explosion is inevitable. Crying. Shouting. Accusing. Stomping. Shouting and crying again. It is volcanic. He is only a kid, of course. My wife and I are in the process of training him how to handle his emotions, and how to adapt behaviourally when he cannot control them. To his credit, my little boy is growing at this, albeit slowly. He is at a very early stage in the development of his inner resilience.

Resilience is our ability to cope in difficult situations, and then recover to the pre-difficulty state relatively quickly. There is a springiness to resilience, an inner strength that enables us to rebound from the knocks of life. Resilience belongs to the important area of mental-emotional development and is part of that field of emotional intelligence that is increasingly being given recognition for its importance. This book is about developing *spiritual resilience*. How can we, as Christ-followers, develop inner spiritual resilience, so that, when the storms and waves hit, we do not respond with the adult version of stomping, screaming, or sulking? As a pastor, I have seen committed Christians who, when an unexpected challenge comes their way, spiritually implode, or explode, or lose vitality like a leaky bucket. As if this were not tragic enough, I am convinced that

these spiritual meltdowns are preventable. How? Through preparedness. Through the intentional cultivation of the quality I call 'spiritual resilience'.

How, then, does a disciple of Jesus grow in spiritual resilience? Much spiritual growth comes about through growing in knowledge of the truth and replacing lies with truth (see Jn 8:31–32 and Rom 12:2). Conversely, much spiritual warfare happens on the battlefield of the mind (2 Cor 10:3–5). In the Garden of Eden and in Jesus' wilderness temptations, temptation starts with an idea. Jesus' response to those temptations was to affirm God's truth that was already stored up in his mind and heart. Developing spiritual resilience involves feasting on a steady diet of God's truth and embracing that truth in such a way that it forms and fortifies the heart and mind. As we establish layers of truths and incorporate them into our core beliefs and practices, God's truth will increasingly direct who we are and how we live. With God's help, the fortress of our minds will be impregnable to the enemy, and we will be known for our spiritual toughness, endurance and buoyancy. It also involves proactively identifying those areas that regularly cause people to stumble and addressing them ahead of time. That way, as Christ-followers we may be better prepared for whatever comes our way.

In an Edinburgh hospital in the 1950s, a child tragically died on an operating table. Later, two friends spoke of this sad event, one expressing sympathy for the surgeon who had encountered an unexpected complication. The other friend, a colleague of the surgeon, strongly disagreed, with these words:

I think the man is to blame. If anybody had handed me ether instead of chloroform I would have known from the weight it was the wrong thing. You see, I know the man well. We were students together at Aberdeen, and he could have become one of the finest surgeons in Europe if only he had given his mind to it. But he didn't. He was more interested in golf. So, he just used to do enough work to pass his examinations and no more. And that is how he has lived his life – just enough to get through, but no more; so he has never picked up those seemingly 'peripheral' bits of knowledge that can one day be crucial. The other day in that theatre a bit of 'peripheral' knowledge was crucial and he didn't have it. But it wasn't the other day that he failed – it was thirty-nine years ago, when he only gave himself half-heartedly to medicine.¹

¹ Donald Nicholl quoted in Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*

1. *Introducing Spiritual Resilience*

Wells suggests that life can be divided into two: periods of training (the lecture theatre) and moments of crisis (the operating theatre). Moments of crisis are decision moments in which many significant matters hang in the balance. An accountant taking their professional exams. A musician performing to a sold-out crowd. A tennis player who has reached the final. A doctoral student in their viva.² A police officer facing a violent criminal who is endangering the public. A chef cooking for a very important guest. A counsellor dealing with a client's particularly difficult situation. An electrician repairing a substation that has cut power to hundreds of homes during sub-zero temperatures. A powerlifter in their first competition. A preacher speaking to their congregation after a traumatic event that has affected the whole congregation. A bride and groom taking their first dance at their wedding reception.

Moments of crisis are when everything is on the line, when mistakes are costly and simply must be avoided. These crisis moments are rare, and disproportionately important. Preparation for those moments happens in the period of training. For the accountant, the musician, the tennis player, the doctoral student, the powerlifter, the preacher, the bride and groom, the key is practice. The time of practice or training is the time of effort; repeatedly deciding over and over again to give yourself to your chosen field, whether music, tennis, medicine, or so on. These efforts produce habits that develop skill.

Yang-won Son was a Korean Presbyterian Church pastor in the early to mid-twentieth century. Within his quite remarkable life,³ one particular incident stands out as exceptional. After World War II there were communist uprisings in parts of the country. Some Christians had already been persecuted under the earlier Japanese occupation for failing to worship at Shinto shrines. But in the communist uprisings, the persecution of Christians was more brutal. After a brief period, the communist uprising subsided, but not before it had inflicted lasting damage. Pastor Son's two oldest sons were both killed for being Christians. I cannot begin to imagine what this experience was like for Son, nor do I wish to dwell on it. After the communist uprising, the killer of Son's children – Ahn Chae Sun – was

(London: SPCK, 2004), p. 74.

² Oral examination upon completion of the doctoral thesis.

³ Yong Choon Ahn, *The Triumph of Pastor Son* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1974).

arrested and faced the death penalty. Son's response was to send a pastor friend and his daughter to seek out Ahn so that he could plead with the officials to spare Ahn's life. Son chose to forgive Ahn and he desired to share the gospel of forgiveness in Jesus with him. As if this were not enough, Son went unimaginably further: he offered to adopt Ahn as his own son. The officer in charge was deeply moved. Ahn's real parents gave permission, so that Son did indeed adopt the killer of his own sons.

When a person has been deeply wronged, it is natural to feel intense anger, and a desire for revenge. As the saying goes, 'hurt people' hurt people. What accounts for Son's extraordinary response? Author Dallas Willard explains that as Christians grow in their apprenticeship with Jesus, he enables them to do what they cannot do in their own strength or capacity. This growth in Christlikeness comes through appropriating God's grace through what are often called the 'means of grace', or the spiritual disciplines. This includes Bible study, prayer, fellowship, being disciplined, fasting, solitude, silence, giving, serving, confession and so on. Willard observes that 'Grace is God acting in our lives to bring about what we do not deserve and *cannot accomplish on our own*. But we are not passive in this process.'⁴ Willard elaborates on how this works.

Disciplines are, in essence, activities in our power that enable us, by grace, to do what we cannot do by direct effort – by 'just trying.' We cannot, by 'just trying,' succeed in loving our enemies and heartily blessing those who curse us. But by a wise practice of disciplines in the presence of Christ, we can become people who will routinely and easily do so.⁵

It is in life's crisis moments that we find out more about ourselves. Those crisis moments are moments of disclosure; they have a revelatory value, revealing how robust and sufficient our training in Christlikeness has been. When the plumber arrives at the house, they will quickly learn the sufficiency or insufficiency of their training. When the lecturer stands up to teach, or the musician starts to perform, or the chef starts cooking for a famous guest – it is in those crisis moments that a person's quality of training is revealed, for better or worse.

⁴ Dallas Willard, 'How Does the Disciple Live?', *Radix Magazine* 34:3 (Spring 2009), <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/individual/how-does-the-disciple-live>, accessed 20 March 2019, emphasis added.

⁵ Willard, 'How Does the Disciple Live?'

1. Introducing Spiritual Resilience

The moments of crisis are the times when habits take over, when the hidden hard work pays off. While effort in those moments is still required, the quality of the habits produced reflect the sustained effort invested over time during a person's training.

To live as effectively as possible for the Lord requires building inner spiritual capacity, or spiritual resilience. By deliberately cultivating spiritual resilience, a Christian will live more effectively for the Lord. He or she will be more steadfast and grounded in their Christian life and will be less destabilised when difficult moments come their way. A spiritually resilient person will be more prepared, in their mind and heart, for whatever crises or opportunities are presented to them. Cultivating spiritual resilience will not pay off in the short term, but it will pay dividends over the long term, and thus essential to developing spiritual resilience is embracing the art of delayed gratification.

C. S. Lewis, who was a professional academic at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, observed how delayed gratification affected the wellbeing of his students. As an experienced educator, he observed, in general, two types of student. The first would study hard throughout the university semester. When exam time came, they were not especially stressed and did not have to exert a huge effort to prepare, because they had been preparing all semester. The other type of student would do the bare minimum to get by, and then switch into cramming mode as the exams loomed. They would exert far more effort at exam revision because they needed to. His observation was that the latter kind of student typically ended up putting more effort in than the former. Lewis advises that it is more intelligent, and requires less overall effort, to put in sustained effort throughout the course of study than to do the bare minimum and then cram like crazy.

I can recall studying for New Testament Greek many moons ago. I fell behind and stopped going to lectures. My experience in language learning is that once you fall behind in lectures, it is impossible to catch up. I studied on my own, did the bare minimum, and then wanted to do well at the end. So, I prepared to cram. I studied at St Mary's College, which is the Divinity faculty at Scotland's oldest university, the University of St Andrews. The students there had a trick that was passed down from one year to the next. Some older students taught me the way to do really well in my Greek exam.

We were told ahead of time that a major portion of the exam would be to do our own English translation of a Greek passage taken from somewhere in the first three chapters of Mark's Gospel. So the trick, I was told, was to memorise those chapters in English. Then, even with some very bad Greek, you would recognise enough Greek in the given passage to know which passage it was, and then you could rely on your memory to get perfect marks for that chunk of the exam.

So I approached a friend of mine who has a lovely Edinburgh accent. With her willing cooperation I recorded her reading Mark's Gospel, chapters one, two, and three. With the recording in hand, back in the days of the Walkman (a music listening device, for all you millennials), I duly listened to my friend reading those chapters. I listened over and over and over again. And to add sophistication to my trickery, I became familiar with a second modern English translation of the same passage. That way, when I trotted out my memorised 'translation', I could draw on two English translations so it wouldn't look like I had memorised one specific English version.

What was the outcome? Success, and foolishness. I have never been strong at languages, but through swatting up and through my devious plan, I did reasonably well. I passed my Greek exam with a fairly good grade. This is because I had stored certain things in my short-term memory, which for the purposes of the exam were very useful. But it was foolishness. If you ask me today how much Greek I know, the answer is very little, because I had largely utilised my short-term memory rather than my long-term memory. And since the purpose of education is learning rather than simply getting a passing grade, it was foolishness. I learned very little. I discovered that in life you can choose whatever you want, but you cannot escape the consequences of your choices.

The friend who was critical of the surgeon in our previous story was pointing out that his failure was not in the operating theatre, but in the repeated choices he made during the training phase of his career, in which he repeatedly chose to do 'just enough' rather than to really give himself wholeheartedly to his training. His habits were found to be insufficient, with deadly consequence, because his sustained effort over time during his training was insufficient. The surgeon chose golf over really applying himself. In life you can choose whatever you want, but you cannot escape the consequences of your choices. And that is scary when, inevitably, our

choices affect the lives of other people as well as ourselves.

The spiritual dimension of life works much the same way. It is, theoretically, possible to do the bare minimum and, to put it crudely, secure a 'get out of jail free' card. The Apostle Paul talks about a person who is saved, but 'only as one escaping from the flames' (1 Cor 3:15, NIV). I say *theoretically* possible, because, over time, we become what we choose. So, if a person repeatedly chooses to say no to Jesus' lordship and to keep him at arm's length, they might just get what they have chosen. Whether or not securing this minimum spiritual life insurance is possible, it strikes me as foolish to actually make that my life's aim. Should such a person succeed, perhaps the most lasting thought and feeling they will have is one of regret, and of opportunities missed. Jesus doesn't call us to be fools. He calls us to be his followers, his apprentices in kingdom living, as a medical student is an apprentice doctor and upon completion of training becomes a doctor. Jesus the Rabbi, speaking to his students or disciples, said, 'The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher' (Lk 6:40, NIV).

I don't know about you, but I don't want to live my life aiming for the new creation's minimum entry requirement. I want to live my life in the power of the Holy Spirit so that it creates such a splash that the ripples keep going for eternity. I want to live in such a way that when I finally depart to be with the Lord, the powers of hell rejoice that I am finally out of the way. I want my life to glorify God and affect as many people in a Godward direction as possible. I want to leave such a kingdom legacy that when I am blessed with seeing the Father face-to-face (1 Jn 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12), he says, 'Well done my child, you have made me proud.'

Let's set our sights high. Let's set our dreams for the Lord so high that they are intimidating. As my friend Dani Flatt says, 'If your dreams are not intimidating to you, they are insulting to God.' I think the great William Carey, accredited to be the pioneer and founder of the modern missionary movement, embodied this well when he said, 'Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.'

To achieve great things for the Lord, there is a quality of character that is essential to develop; that I must develop, that you must develop. It is resilience. Toughness, steadfastness, battle-hardiness, buoyancy and perseverance with deep joy. Becoming increasingly resilient is what this book is about.

E+R=O (Event plus Response equals Outcome)

It is my observation in life that people are not so much shaped by the events that happen to them as they are by how they respond to those events. If you haven't figured it out already, know this: life is unfair. Profoundly unfair. Bad things happen to good people. All the time. Look at the cross, or twentieth-century heroes like Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Martin Luther King Jr. The direct cause of some suffering is malicious and malevolent, but other times it appears to be accidental. A person's position at work is made redundant. A relationship breaks up. A recent graduate has applied for one hundred jobs and has been turned down for all of them due to insufficient experience and too much competition. A tragic death in the family. Spiteful words spoken by someone who was a trusted friend. A bad medical diagnosis. A car crash involving you or people close to you. In addition, positive life-changing events also come our way. Meeting the love of your life and starting a relationship with them. Becoming a parent for the first time. Being promoted to a position of significant power and influence. Experiencing supernatural healing in you or through you. Inheriting a large sum of money. All of these events significantly shape our lives. A person's life will never be the same again.

We have a hand in some of these life-changing events. But equally, many events in life happen *to* us, whether we like it or not. Life happens. We contribute to some of what happens to us, but by no means all of it. The complexity of creation is such that we can never trace the root causes of everything that comes our way. In God's creation we are surrounded by a sea of mystery, with the complex web of cause and effect too dense to comprehend. In many cases we had no say in the matter, and usually there is no fault to be apportioned. Many events are completely outside of our control. It is my contention that what shapes our lives even more than what happens to us is *our response* to these life-changing events. And this is good news, because while much of what happens to us is outside of our control, our response is within our control. Kind of. Track with me.

You could express this in a formula shared with me by a friend, Lois Little.

It is not true that *event = outcome*. For example, 'I am this way because this event happened to me.' 'My son screams and stomps because the computer game is too difficult.' 'I am of a slightly nervous disposition and

lacking in confidence because I had an angry, or absent, father.’ I am easily hurt because I had an emotionally distant mother. There is nothing I can do about it.’ This is what I call a victim mentality, and it is as seductive as it is poisonous.⁶ Rather, it is true that event + *response* = outcome.⁷ It is *how we respond* to life-altering events that mostly determines the outcome for our lives. In general, it is our response to life events that has the largest effect on our lives. As I said before, this is good news because it is empowering. But knowing this does not automatically mean our problem is solved. No. It is not that simple, because life-altering events are, by definition, life altering. These moments are intrinsically disorienting and can be mentally and emotionally intense. In such circumstances it can be very hard to choose to respond well. I praise God that Christianity is not about ‘trying really hard to make good choices.’⁸ The Christian faith is not a more ancient and revered version of the self-help movement. No. It is good news that God’s love freely invades our life and our world with his goodness, to transform us and empower us to live to him.

So, it is our *response* to life-altering events that has the largest impact on our lives. But responding well in such moments is extremely difficult. Such moments are what I call crisis moments. The surgeon in the operating theatre. The sports player in the cup final. We can be well prepared for our crisis moments in the same way that they can be well prepared for theirs. Here’s how it works:

In moments of crisis, I suggest that our response is largely determined by a host of other factors – specifically our picture of God (Chapter 2), our understanding of the world (Chapters 3 and 4), our sense of identity and

⁶ For more on this, see psychologist Jonathan Haidt’s fascinating work on ‘victimhood culture’, such as his article ‘Where Microaggressions Really Come From: A Sociological Account’ (7 September 2015), <https://righteousmind.com/where-microaggressions-really-come-from/>, and his talk ‘The Rise of Victimhood Culture on Campus’ (published by Gravitahn on 8 March 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3H20jwYq8WI> (both accessed 15 March 2019).

⁷ This was shared with me in the year 2015, when I proceeded to preach a sermon series on this in my church (see <https://www.elimdunedin.com/sermon-event-response-outcome>). Recently, Urban Meyer has published his bestselling book *Above the Line* (Penguin Random House, 2017), in which he makes much of the E+R=O formula. I have not been able to trace the origin of this formula.

⁸ The early church condemned a version of this in the fifth century. It is a heresy known as Pelagianism.

character (Chapters 5–7), and the nature of the Christian life (Chapters 8–10). In other words, what governs our response in such crisis moments are the core beliefs that we have learned and embraced, and the habits that we have cultivated and now form who we are. It is the person we have become, the instincts we have nurtured, the things we have believed and incorporated into who we are; these will govern the nature of our response. Once the surgeon is in the operating theatre and the tennis player is in the final, it is too late to add other arrows to their quiver, other skills to their repertoire. What they bring into that moment of crisis is the cumulative product of how they have been living for years.

What we bring into those life-altering events is the person we have become over previous years. It is this that will determine how well we respond to the life-altering events that are sure to come our way. There is no shortcut to spiritual resilience, to maturity in Christ.

New Testament scholar Tom Wright suggests that no one is courageous by nature, but people can become courageous through second nature. He explains:

Courage is what happens when you take a thousand small decisions, consciously thought-out, to put somebody else's safety ahead of your own. So then, on the thousand and first occasion, when somebody has just thrown a hand grenade into the middle of a group of your friends, you will unhesitatingly and instinctively, by second nature, go and grab it and throw it away ... Nobody does that by nature; some people, thank God, do it by second nature.⁹

Second nature comes from choosing to act a certain way today, and then choosing to act that way again tomorrow. It takes moral effort, but if continued over time, that repetition of action coalesces and consolidates into an attribute of that person's character.

It is advantageous to develop resilience in many areas of life: intellectual, physical, technical, emotional, and certainly spiritual. As a pastor whose responsibility includes spiritual care for those entrusted to my leadership, I long to see greater resilience in my brothers and sisters in Christ, and in myself. To set people up to win in life means helping them to become

⁹ N. T. Wright, 'After you Believe: Why Christian Character Matters', Redeemer CFW, May 18, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukyNU51OcnA>, accessed 10 September 2018.

resilient. This is by no means just about us. God is a missionary God and has enlisted the church to be a central instrument in his mission. His mission is nothing less than world transformation. God longs to see the lost found, the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the poor loved and uplifted, the hungry fed and empowered to feed themselves, injustices set right, the lonely placed in families, and vibrant communities of Jesus-followers growing and reproducing right across this planet. That is what Jesus intended when he commissioned his disciples, saying,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you (Mt 28:18–20).

God desires that the church partner with him in this glorious mission. However, an immature church with a fragile spirituality will not cut the mustard. We need to be resilient – for our good, for the world’s good, and for God’s glory.

While I believe we need to develop mental–emotional resilience, that is a subject on which I lack expertise and for which there are already many good resources.¹⁰ Physical resilience is also important, and the rise of a gym culture and the increased awareness of the importance of diet are helpful in this regard. Intellectual resilience is also essential, and there are great theological and practical resources available online and in print to strengthen this aspect of ourselves. For accessible theological resources and cultural engagement, www.reknew.org and <https://www.bethinking.org/> are helpful. For apologetics, see www.reasonablefaith.org (William Lane Craig). For theologically rich sermons searchable by topic and freely available, I recommend <https://whchurch.org/watchlisten/search-sermons/> (Greg Boyd) and <https://gospelinlife.com/free-sermon-resource/> (the late Tim Keller). For loads of free seminary courses online, see www.

¹⁰ One outstanding resource that has made a large impact on many people I know is attending a course called Soul Tour. This course is run regularly in New Zealand and Australia (see www.soultour.co.nz). Other helpful resources include the writings of psychologists Henry Cloud and John Townsend (see www.cloudtownsend.com, www.drcloud.com, and www.drcloudtownsend.com), and Pastor Peter Scazzero’s resources on emotionally healthy spirituality and emotionally healthy relationships (see www.emotionallyhealthy.org).

biblicaltraining.org.¹¹ Alongside these other important aspects of resilience, this book concerns developing spiritual resilience, with all its implications for mind and heart.

The saying goes that the best form of defence is a good offence. Now, we know that the Christian life will involve hardship and difficulty. Jesus put it succinctly: 'In this world you will have trouble' (Jn 16:33, NIV), and Paul bluntly states in one of the most unclaimed promises in all Scripture, 'For he [God] has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well' (Phil 1:29). We know that general hardships will come, and we know that intense and potentially destabilising and disorienting challenges will also come. We generally don't know when crises will come or in what area of life they will come, but they are coming. What if you could prepare for life's most challenging experiences *years* ahead of time? The best form of defence is a good offence, which we develop by carefully cultivating that quality called spiritual resilience.

¹¹ Some of the resources here require academic discernment. In *theology*, I recommend starting with Kenneth Collins, I. Howard Marshall, Gerry Breshears, and Steve Seamands.