



Resilience

“Resilience” is the ability to respond creatively to stressful, pressure packed, anxiety-producing situations such as a caregiver might experience. A resilient person, rather than being deformed, diminished, or even destroyed by such traumatic, tension-filled circumstances, is able to engage those conditions in healthy, redemptive ways that bring some degree of wholeness.

St. Paul provides words from his extremely anxiety-producing situation. Consider his situation as he coined the words below. He was sitting in a Roman jail with no certainty that he would be released to continue this ministry or keep his life. In light of Paul’s circumstances, it would be wise to probe his advice as one in the midst of a life-threatening situation. We read in Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”. He opens the door to Christian resilience.

Caregivers need resilience. The person we are caring for needs us to be resilient, to meet so many different challenges of caregiving with creativity, hope, strength, and wisdom. The problem is no one has all those qualities innately within themselves. We value ideas and suggestions from others who might have traveled a road similar to ours. We find new energy when we can share our load with others. Or better yet, when we find a word from scripture speaking directly to us, like God understands. Maybe we find a book from an author whose journey was similar to ours. Some can find that even 15 minutes of meditation or inspiring music gives us a moment of sabbath time.

Paul is suggesting a rhythm to life for a resilient Christian. First, Paul finds a rhythm in prayer. For Paul, prayer is like breathing. He does not see prayer as a negotiation with God to get a particular result or resolve an issue in a favorable manner. Prayer for Paul is a life-giving, life-transforming relationship with God. Prayer affirms that we are not alone.

Then Paul mentions supplication as an acknowledgement that we lack necessary resources to meet what confronts us and affirms that God has the resources to provide what is needed. Supplication is a deep inner awareness of our radical dependence on God, offering ourselves to HIM.

The third declaration of Paul is thanksgiving, a word Paul mentions just before requesting. Thanksgiving is not the response to a fulfilled request. It is the hallmark of a heart abandoned to God, grateful for who God is for us.

God already knows what we need, so our request is not to inform. Our request is a response to Jesus’ offer to cast our care, our burden, our labor, in prayer, towards Jesus so that we might find rest and peace. Jesus invites us to ask, seek, and knock. We are not abdicating responsibility, but making ourselves available to God to be with us and do whatsoever God



leads us to do. Our desire is to become a means of God's grace in this situation on behalf of our loved one.

When we find ourselves enmeshed in stressful, pressure-packed, anxiety-producing situations, it is often impossible to understand how we can deal with such traumatic, tension-filled circumstances in creative, healthy, redemptive ways. What we find is God can go beyond our understanding or expectation. We can be surprised by grace.

Paul's redemptive word for us is not a "method" but a mode of being in God, in which all life is lived. It is not a "reaction" to circumstances but a rhythm of life hid with Christ in God and out of which circumstances are engaged.

What are the greatest anxiety/stress producing trials you experience?	Which words Paul writes to the Christians at Philippi are words to you?	What cues can you give yourself to remember Paul's words to stop your anxiety/stress?

Guided by Robert Mulholland in his article for Weavings magazine volume 28 number 2.