

Hewing Hope and the Mountain of Despair: Resilience for Change Leaders

Tod Bolsinger, MDiv., PhD.



“I don’t worry about whether I can learn to lead change, I worry about whether I can survive it.”

When the world changed while
I was in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Chat in:

What was the first sign that the world was changing for you?

Dispatches from the Future

Heifetz on How NOT to waste a crisis...

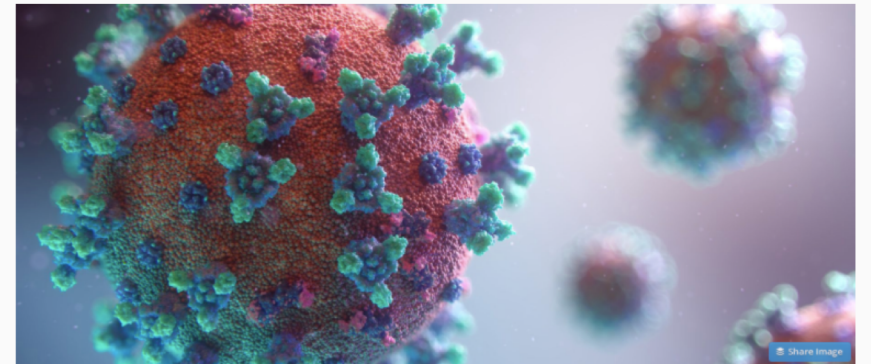
Acute Crisis: stabilize, protect, buy time. “blizzard mentality.”

Adaptive Crisis: address the underlying issues that we have not had the will to confront before the crisis. “Ice age mentality.”

“Adaptive leadership...seizes the opportunity of moments like this to hit the organizational reset button.” (Heifetz, et. al. *Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis*)

Chat in:

- What “underlying conditions” are being revealed in your congregation or organization?



Guiding Your Church Through the Pandemic

What do you do when you can't bring people together to worship, learn, and care for each other? The social distancing ordered to stem the spread of COVID-19 presents church leaders with challenges that they have not been trained to address. In this material, you'll gain adaptive leadership skills that will help you build trust with your congregation, experiment with fresh expressions of ministry, and implement new habits of learning and innovation.

We estimate that this will take you **23 hours** to complete (but not all in one sitting!).



Tod Bolsinger

Underlying Conditions

- The lack of deep, pervasive discipleship for a persevering church.
- The lack of community for keeping relational connections amidst turmoil and change
- The lack of extensive leadership capacity for a distributed church.
- **The lack of resilience for navigating change and disruption**

Resilience Defined

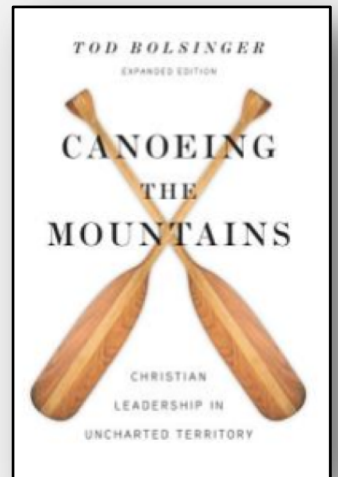
Resilience is the capacity to “maintain core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances.”

Andrew Zolli

Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back, p.7

Principles and Practices for Leading Adaptive Change

- People don't resist change, they resist loss
- For change to last, it must be a healthy adaptation of core DNA
- The future is here, it's just on the margins
- **You haven't succeeded until you've survived the sabotage**
- Everybody will be changed, especially the leaders





“IF YOU ARE A LEADER, EXPECT SABOTAGE.”
ED FRIEDMAN

THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF LEADERSHIP

“The capacity of a leader to be prepared for, to be aware of, and to learn how to skillfully deal with (sabotage) may be the most important aspect of leadership. It is literally the key to the kingdom.”

Edwin Friedman

Chat in, if you'd like...

Think back on one time when you experienced sabotage.

How did it impact you personally and as a leader?

The important thing to remember about the phenomenon of sabotage is that it is **a systemic part of leadership**— part and parcel of the leadership process. Another way of putting this is that a leader can never assume success because he or she has brought about a change. *It is only after having first brought about a change and then subsequently endured the resultant sabotage that the leader can feel truly successful.*

Edwin Friedman. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*

- Sabotage is normal, natural, and to be expected
- Sabotage is not the bad things that evil people do, but the human things that anxious people do.

MOSES IN THE FACE OF RESISTANCE

Exodus 14:11: “...it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”

Exodus 14:31: “So the people...believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

Exodus 16:3: “The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses...”

NUMBERS 11

“If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at...Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, all at the entrances of their tents. Then the LORD became very angry, and Moses was displeased. ¹¹ So Moses said to the LORD, “Why have you treated your servant so badly...¹⁴ I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me. ¹⁵ If this is the way you are going to treat me, put me to death at once—if I have found favor in your sight—and do not let me see my misery.”

NUMBERS 11

*“In the first occasion, Moses was faced with a technical challenge: the people needed food. On the second occasion he was faced with an adaptive challenge. The problem was no longer the food but the people. They had begun the second half of their journey, from Sinai to the Promised Land. They had escaped from slavery; they now needed to develop the strength and self-confidence necessary to fight battles and create a free society. They were the problem. They had to change. **That (is what makes) adaptive leadership so difficult. People resist change, and can become angry and hostile when faced with the need for it.**”*

- Jonathan Sacks, *Lessons in Leadership: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible*.

A FAILURE OF NERVE AND A FAILURE OF HEART

Failure of Nerve: “Returning Egypt”: Caving to the pressure of the anxiety of the group to return to the status quo. A failure of nerve is a loss of courage to further the mission.

Failure of Heart: “Put me to death”. When the leader’s own discouragement leads them to abandon their people and the charge they have been given.

Sabotage is often the cause for a change leader’s failure of nerve or failure of heart.

DISCUSSION

- Inspire. (!) What stands out positively so far and why?
- Inquire. (?) What questions have been raised?
- Irk. (#&*!) What has rubbed you wrong or created dissonance?
- Require. (Δ) What change(s) seem to be demanded of you?

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I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with.

HEWING HOPE...



*With this faith we will be able to **hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.** With this faith we will be able to **transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.***

Martin Luther King, Jr

HEWING HOPE...



*How do we become a tool
that can **hew**?*

Tempered Resilience

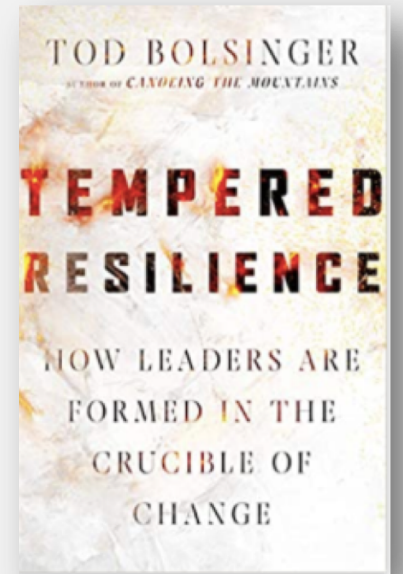
A grounded identity and resilient character that is shaped through

reflection,

relationships

and a *rule of life*

in a *rhythm* of leading and not leading.



AN ADVENTURE IN URBAN BLACKSMITHING



Becoming a Tempered Leader

Working: Leaders are formed in leading.

Heating: Strength is forged in self-reflection.

Holding: Vulnerable leadership requires relational security.

Hammering: Stress makes a leader.

Hewing: Resilience takes practice.

Tempering: Resilience comes through a rhythm of leading and not leading.



Quenching
through rest
and the **slow**
release of
leadership
responsibilities



Heating
through leading
and **reflection**



Holding through
personal and
professional
relationships



Hammering
through
spiritual
practices and
the practice of
leadership



HEATING: REFLECTION

- You don't learn by experiences, you learn by reflecting on experiences.
- A Ground-Zero Practice
- Prayer of Examen



FROM FIRE TO ANVIL



HOLDING: THE ANVIL OF RELATIONSHIPS

- The vulnerability of leadership requires the security of relationships
- Heifetz' Winter Coat
- Erving Goffman: "Front Stage, Back Stage, Off Stage."
- *Be a mentee*



“Let the hammer do the work.”

HAMMERING: STRESS MAKES A LEADER

- Embodied Cognition: What you do with your body changes your brain.
- Incarnation: What you do with your body changes your soul.
- *What you do with your body “hammers into you” lasting changes.*



HAMMER: A LEADERSHIP *RULE OF LIFE*

- Your embodied theology. It is what you do that demonstrates what you really believe and value.
- Everybody has a Rule of Life... either intentional or unconscious.
- A transforming ROL is specific to your *calling* and *context*.

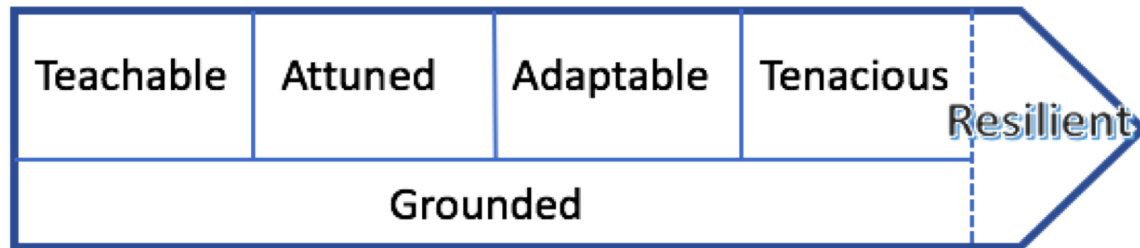


CONSIDER...

- What were the very first spiritual practices that you remember committing to in your life?
- What are the spiritual practices that make up your life as a leader today?
- How have they changed over the years?

HAMMERS: A LEADERSHIP *RULE OF LIFE*

- Learning: Hammering in Humility
- Listening: Hammering in Attunement
- Looking: Hammering in Adaptability
- Lamenting: Hammering in Tenacity



Tempered Resilience

A grounded identity and resilient character that is shaped through

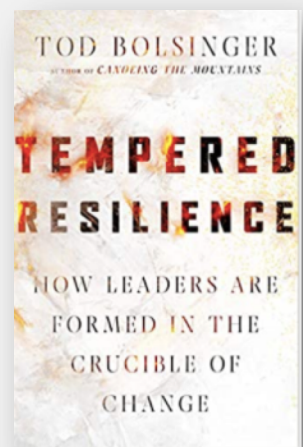
reflection,

relationships

and a *rule of life*

in a *rhythm* of leading and not leading.

From Grounded to Resilient



Grounding Jesus

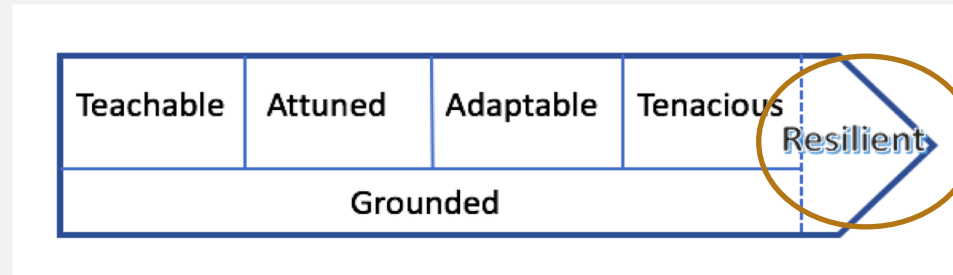
At this time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. The moment he came out of the water, he saw the sky split open and God's Spirit, looking like a dove, come down on him. Along with the Spirit, a voice: "You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life."

Mark 1:9-11 (MSG)

GROUNDED IDENTITY

- A change-leader's identity must be grounded in something other than their success in leading change.
- Lessons from Iron-Nun

Tempered Resilience: Becoming a Tool that Can Hew Hope from Despair



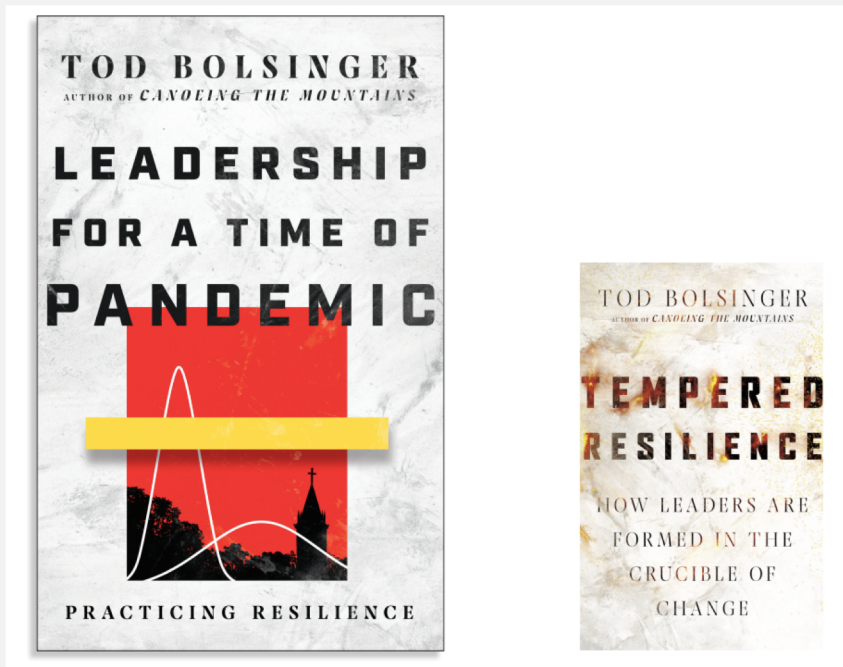
- What do you need to create spaces for vulnerable self-reflection?
- What do you need to add to the anvil of relationships for your life and leadership?
- In what ways do your spiritual practices need to be adapted for you to become a more resilient adaptive leader?

For your reflection:

- Inspire. (!) What stands out positively so far and why?
- Inquire. (?) What questions have been raised?
- Irk. (#&*!) What has rubbed you wrong or created dissonance?
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For More Resources

- ***Text uncharted to 66866***



- *Leadership in a Time of Pandemic: Practicing Resilience (IVP, 2020) ebook*
- *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders are Formed in the Crucible of Change (IVP, 2020) coming November 10, 2020*