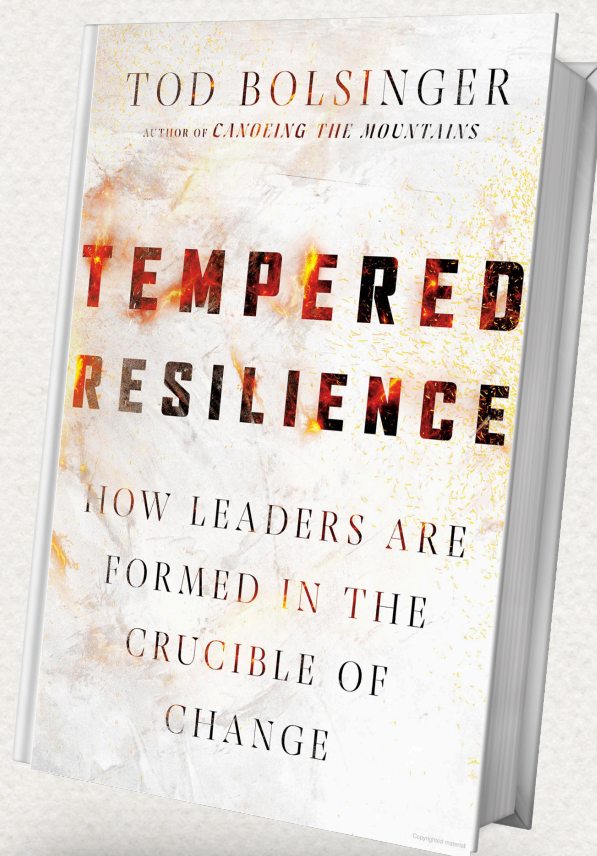


# GCORR Book Study Guide

## *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders are Formed in the Crucible of Change*

By Tod E. Bolsinger

FOR SMALL GROUP & INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION



**RELIGION & RACE**

The United Methodist Church

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This book study guide follows the structure of the book:

Session 1: Introduction & Crises of Leading Change

Session 2: Resilience

Session 3: Working

Session 4: Heating

Session 5: Holding

Session 6: Hammering

Session 7: Hewing

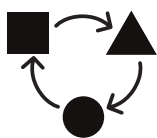
Session 8: Tempering & Epilogue

Sessions may be completed each week for an 8-week study or may be completed in four weeks by engaging two chapters each week. Each session opens with a prayer and scripture verse or opening quotation from the book.

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

Author Tod Bolsinger discusses a key characteristic all leaders must possess if they are to sustain great leadership – resilience. Bolsinger names the fact that leading is difficult and, often, it is crises that propel leaders into the act of leading. The author mentions failure of nerve and failure of heart as two primary conditions that prevent leaders from leading well specifically amid crisis and change. Bolsinger lays out a process for a leader forming resilience within themselves and the practice of leadership – recognizing the crises present in leading change, formation in the act of leading, self-reflection, relational security, handling stress well, practicing the act of leading, and engaging rhythms of leading and not leading.

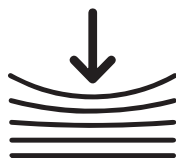
## KEY THEMES



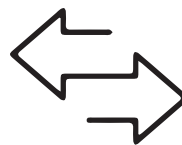
Adaptability



Leadership



Resilience



Change



Vulnerability

# KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**ADAPTABLE:** the ability to encounter the reality of a situation, pivot, make meaning in whatever challenges are present, and “make do with whatever is at hand” (p. 67)

**ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP:** an approach to organizational problem-solving that starts with a diagnosis: Is this problem something that an expert can solve or not? (p. 18)

**ATTUNED:** the action of seeing ourselves and others realistically through engaging emotional intelligence

**EMPATHY:** an emotional intelligence tool necessary for resilient leaders that gives them the ability to “give others courage, lessen anxiety, lower defenses, encourage collaboration, and move forward with changes that need to be made” (p. 64)

**FAILURE OF HEART:** an instance in leadership in which “the empathy and attunement necessary to help a group adjust to loss and resist despair turns to cynicism” (p. 29) causing the leader to abandon the people and the change effort

**FAILURE OF NERVE:** “caving to the pressure of the anxiety of the group to return to the status quo” (p. 29)

**HEWING:** the action of carving, creating, and shaping using the materials present

**HUMILITY (TEACHABILITY):** the capacity and ability to learn from others (p. 61)

**SELF-AWARENESS:** a component of emotional intelligence in which one is able to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and regulate their emotional responses well in team settings

**SELF-REFLECTION:** the action of examining oneself that, when engaged courageously and authentically, leads to being vulnerable (p. 90)

**TEMPERING:** a term in metallurgy that refers to heating a tool to a very high temperature on anvil then quickly putting it in water to cool it; in leadership, “tempering comes through cooling periods of rest and release from leading, and then repeated” (p. 197).

**TENACIOUS:** “persistence in the face of resistance and downright rejection” (Edwin Friedman as quoted by Bolsinger, p. 70)

# SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION & THE CRISES OF LEADING CHANGE

# 01

## OPENING PRAYER

God of the ages, you create us and call us to be shaped and formed by Your loving grace all the time. This call is amazing and miraculous! Help us remember that our call to be formed by You is amazing and miraculous. Help us remember that this formation is not just for our good, but for the redemption of our world and for Your glory. God of the ages, help us remember that You have called us – Your wondrous creation – to co-labor with all creation in leading change...the change You wish to see in the world, God.....change which is produced in challenge and crises. In Your name we pray. Amen.

## OPENING THOUGHT

“To lead, especially in the face of resistance, requires that we develop resilience” (Introduction, p. 5)

“Sabotage happens every time a leader takes initiative to start a change process” (Chapter 1, p. 24)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Bolsinger use the imagery of blacksmithing to introduce the idea of resilience that is tempered?
2. What is the process of becoming a tempered leader?
3. Why is leading change difficult? What is the challenge of adaptive leadership?
4. How is adaptive leadership different from leadership?
5. Bolsinger discusses a failure of nerve and failure of heart in leaders when leading in crises. How are failures of nerve and heart related to our identity as leaders?
6. How do failures of nerve and heart reveal weaknesses in our identity as leaders?
7. Consider this question posed by the author: “When in your leadership have you suffered from either a failure of nerve or failure of heart? To which are you more susceptible and why?” (p. 29)

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session offering leadership weaknesses and/or “failures of nerve and heart” to God in prayer. The prayer may be a time of silence or spoken saying the following:

We are grateful, God, that we can offer our weaknesses to you knowing that your grace is enough. Thank you that your strength strengthens us. Amen.

## OPENING PRAYER

God of seasons and all creation, You are dynamic and always doing a new thing! You, the One whose character never changes, constantly call us – Your creation – to be transformed for the good of all and your glory. Mighty One, help us see how You see. Help us labor with You in all the ways You call us, O God. And when we get discouraged, feel hopeless, and lost, help us get up, dust one another off, and continue laboring and loving by your Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## OPENING THOUGHT

"Resilience requires both strength and flexibility; both toughness and adaptability to endure and to bring transformation. Resilience comes through tempering." (Chapter 2, p. 35)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bolsinger opens the chapter on resilience by discussing the Civil Rights movement and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. How does Bolsinger paint the picture of Rev. Dr. King as a tempered and resilient leader?
2. What is the difference between a resilient leader and a tempered and resilient leader? Why is this distinction important?
3. How does tempering and resilience form one's call and vocation?
4. Why is tempering an ongoing process in becoming a resilient leader?

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session by inviting each person, through mutual invitation\*, to lift one thing they may need to become a more resilient leader. After participants have named their needs, pray the following:

*Lord, you have heard us. You alone know exactly what each of us needs to keep answering your call and serving You in community with one another. Continue tempering us by your Spirit. Amen.*

**\*MUTUAL INVITATION:** To ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way: The leader or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, they then invite another to share. Whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is allowed to invite another to share. If you are not ready to share yet, say, "I pass for now," and we will invite you to share later. If you don't want to say anything, say "pass" and ask another to share. We will do this until everyone has been invited. We invite you to listen and not immediately respond to someone's sharing. Instead, there will be time to respond and to ask clarifying questions after everyone has had an opportunity to share. (From *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb* by Eric H. F. Law) The following video provides more information about Mutual Invitation and can be used in your session to teach people the process.

An Introduction to Mutual Invitation:  
[www.youtu.be/jfDMC9PH3YQ](http://www.youtu.be/jfDMC9PH3YQ)

## OPENING PRAYER

"Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay. We should like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new. And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability and that it may take a very long time. And so I think it is with you. Your ideas mature gradually – let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste. Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow. Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be. Give Our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete." - Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (1881-1955)

## OPENING THOUGHT

"Leadership is disappointing your own people at a rate they can absorb." (Chapter 3, p. 48)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Bolsinger mean when he writes "hewed for transformation" (p. 49)? How does "hewing" form resilience in a leader?
2. What are the different ways people can lead change (p. 55-56)? How do these ways challenge and/or affirm your current understanding of leading change?
3. What is the difference between cultural competency and cultural humility? How do you think cultural humility might deepen resiliency in a leader?
4. Reflect on a time in your life and/or ministry in which you disappointed people you were leading. What was the context and situation? How did this time shape you as a disciple of Jesus and a leader? What would you have done differently?

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session with a time of silence or a spoken prayer saying the following:

*Ever living, ever moving, ever present God, thank you that You keep going when we are tired. Thank you, Lord, that Your faithfulness never ends. Thank you that the divine work to which You have called us was prepared in advance for us to do. Help us to remember that we do not work alone, but in community with You and one another. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

## OPENING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for times of challenge, trial, and fire. Thank you for your divine strength and love that undergirds our weaknesses and carries us in these times. Help us, by your grace, to surrender to how we are being formed and shaped by you, how we are being molded in fiery times by your faithful Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## OPENING THOUGHT

"Strength is forged in self-reflection." (Chapter 4, p. 78)

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." (Isaiah 43:2)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Bolsinger advises that leaders do nothing when they "forge change" in their organizations. Why do you think the author offers this advice?
2. How does forging change affect a leader's identity?
3. How might "vulnerable self-reflection" (p. 89) and cultivating self-awareness help ground a leader's identity?
4. Think about a season of life and/or ministry in which you were able to engage vulnerable self-reflection and cultivate self-awareness. What was the context and situation? What

characteristics were present in your environment and/or ministry context that fostered vulnerable self-reflection as a leader?

5. If you are a leader in your organization or ministry setting, how might you create a culture and environment in which others can engage vulnerable self-reflection to grow as leaders? How might you need to change your current organizational or ministry culture to create it?

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session reciting Isaiah 43:2 in unison as an offered prayer to God:

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." (Isaiah 43:2)*

## OPENING PRAYER

Hold us in your loving care, O God, especially when Your divine action in our lives and world do not seem so loving. Help us place our trust in You each day and strengthen us to reflect Jesus' love in all the relationships with which You give us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

## OPENING THOUGHT

"Each one helps the other, saying to one another, "Take courage!" The artisan encourages the goldsmith, and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good." (Isaiah 41:6-7)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read and reflect on the opening thought in this session – Isaiah 41:6-7. How do these two verses capture Bolsinger's discussion in Chapter 5 titled "Holding?"
2. What is the correlation between having resilience and safe, solid relationships?
3. Bolsinger talks about "leading on the front stage, learning on the backstage, and letting down offstage" (p. 112-122). Why is it vital for leaders to have safe, strong relationships on the front stage, backstage and offstage?
4. Reflect on the presence and quality of your relationships on the front stage, backstage and offstage of your ministry leadership. Which relationships are the

strongest? Which ones are the weakest? What steps might you consider taking to strengthen your relationships?

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session inviting participants to offer up to God a relationship for which they need prayer. Then, after the final offering, say the following:

*God, thank you for the relationships in our lives – relationships that bless us, grow us, fill us, nurture us and challenge us. Continue forming and shaping us through them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



## OPENING PRAYER

"I lift my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. God will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. God who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; God will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore." (Psalm 121)

God of all creation, help us trust you always and stand on the promise of your eternal presence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## OPENING THOUGHT

"The testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:3-4)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on the following quotation: "Stress makes a leader when that stress is focused on a particular formational purpose" (p. 129). How does this quotation resonate with you as a leader? Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. How might "deliberate practice" (p. 131) of spiritual disciplines and leadership training equip us to engage leadership crises well?
3. What is the difference between engaging leadership practices and spiritual practices intellectually versus in an embodied way? Why are embodied practices as a leader vital to navigating leadership stresses well?
4. Consider the following quotation by Bolsinger: "Practices create a kind of spiritual muscle memory, training us to respond to a crisis and resistance like it is second nature" (p. 132). Now, reflect on the current spiritual disciplines you have around learning, listening, looking and lamenting (p. 137-161) to form leadership resilience. What area(s) are the strongest? What area(s) need to be strengthened? How might you develop one or two new spiritual disciplines to grow as a leader?

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session with the following prayer based on James 1:3-4:

*Divine Shepherd, the One who works all things for our good, help us trust Your process of forming faith in us. Help us endure, by Your grace, when our faith is tested. Work patience and endurance in us so we can be mature and complete in You. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*

## OPENING PRAYER

God of community, thank you for your eternal presence with us and your image in us. Thank you that, by your grace-filled Spirit, you do not call us to hew hope and new life alone. Help us remember - in our hewing, in our laboring, in our laughter and tears - that our formation in You and by You can only be done in community. We are better together because that is the way You created us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## OPENING THOUGHT

"Nothing creates more resilience within a leader than to be surrounded by and work with resilient people toward missional goals that inspired the need for change in the first place." (p. 165)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do resilient leaders create resilient people?
2. What is the process for hewing resilient people in organizations? How does each component of the process work to create a capacity of resilience?
3. What is the difference between leadership and adaptive leadership? What competencies are necessary in an adaptive leader?
4. Reflect on your current leadership practices. Do your current practices foster adaptive capacity or dependency among those you lead? How might you

shift your leadership practices to create adaptive capacity and develop adaptive leaders?

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session by praying the prayer titled "A Prayer of Oscar Romero," found on the next page (page 11).

# SESSION 7 CLOSING PRAYER

## “A Prayer of Oscar Romero”

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.  
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete,  
which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.  
No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.  
This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.  
We cannot do everything,  
and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.  
We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders;  
ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future that is not our own.*

*Amen.*

## OPENING PRAYER

Everwise and loving God, thank you for leading us and guiding us in seasons of abundance, seasons of hardship, and season in which we are not quite sure what is happening. Temper our hearts, minds, and spirits to be leaders of resilience, adaptability, grace, and wisdom – leaders who reflect Your glory. Give us more grace to know when to lead and not lead, when to rest and work, and do all worshipping and praising you, O Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## OPENING THOUGHT

"As important as the work of leading is, it is the moments of not leading that tempers the resilient leader" (p. 199).

"Christian leadership that flows from the center of our being must begin in aligning our motivations with the purposes of God; the intentions and activities we see in the Scriptures come from the center of Jesus' being – the things God deeply cares about." (p. 211)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on the creation story in Genesis 1. How does a rhythm of leading and not leading mirror God's rhythm of creation? Why is this rhythm important as a leader?
2. What rhythms of rest and recreation do you practice as a leader? If you do not have a rhythm of rest and recreation, why not? How might you create space for rest and recreation in your practice of leadership?
3. Why is practice Sabbath as a lifestyle important to sustain resilient, adaptive leadership?
4. What is your 'why' for leadership? In other words, why do you do what you do?
5. How does "giving the work back to the people" create resilient, adaptive organizations?
6. Why is engaging the continual process of becoming a tempered, resilient leader so difficult?

Note for the group facilitator for ending this session: Consider ending this session inviting participants to lift up, by mutual invitation, one or two learnings from their time together. Then, consider closing with the following prayer:

*Spirit of Wisdom and Truth, thank you for tempering our hearts, minds, and spirits over these weeks as we have learned through one another. Keep forming humble hearts in us as we continue to yield our lives to you, God. Shape us in your divine love always. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*



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