

I. Set Up

A. Introduction, welcome

B. How tough are you? How resilient? It's an important question – and one that is about to come up as we look at some of the very last things Jesus says to his followers before his arrest.

C. Right now...

II. Introduction

A. In his book, *Living with a Seal, 31 Days Training with the Toughest Man on the Planet*, Jesse Itzler tells about making the decision to invite a former Navy Seal to move into his house and train him.

B. Itzler had noticed this guy during a 100 mile race he was in. He participated as part of a team – they had a large support group that included tents, cooks, a masseuse and more. The Navy Seal, who is referred to simply as “Seal,” ran alone. And even though he broke bones in bone feet and went into liver failure, he finished the race.

C. Itzler, who is a very accomplished guy in athletics and business, thought, “That guy is moving at a different level than I am, and I need some of that.”

D. So he traced Seal down and asked him to come live with him for thirty days. And then wrote a book about it.

1. There are several interesting stories about overcoming self-imposed limits, including the idea that “When you are completely and utterly exhausted and finished in every way and can't go another inch, you're at 40 percent. You haven't even gotten to half way.”

E. Itzler's book is selling well because there is a robust appetite for motivation and encouragement. Lots of people feed off of this stuff.

1. Life is hard this side of heaven. We keep getting knocked down and we have to keep getting up and some need encouragement to do so. The stories and advice of those who find a way to keep on keeping on, play well.

F. And so we hear these lines over and over:

1. Never give up. Never give in. Keep on keeping on.

2. Turn lemons into lemonade;

3. Turn your scars into stars.

4. Get back in the game.

5. Get back on the horse.

6. Never say die.

G. Today we get some helpful advice about resilience from Jesus. It's not the stuff you get from Itzler's book, or from most speakers out there. But there is some overlap.

III. We are in slow motion now.

A. Remember, the Gospels focus on the last week of Christ's life.

B. The first four books of the New Testament – Mathew, Mark, Luke and John – are called Gospels in part because they contain *good news*. The Greek word is *euangelion*, from which we get the word *evangelism*. Evangelism is telling other people the good news that God so loved the world that He gave His Son. That in Jesus we can be forgiven, reconciled to God and gain eternal life. One of the reasons we call the Gospels the Gospels is because they tell us that story.

C. A second reason we call them Gospels is because they are not biographies. We do not get the broad life story you would expect in a biography. What we get is information designed to persuade us that: 1) Jesus is God and the Savior of the world; and 2) that his death changes everything.

D. In light of this, nearly one-third of Luke (and one-half of John) is turned over to the last few days of his life.

E. That is where we are now.

IV. Last week we had a bunch of young preachers speaking.

A. Thank you for giving them that chance. We want to be a church that helps launch people into service. That starts with you. We want you serving. We think everyone wins when you serve, starting with you. Paul says that we were created in Christ Jesus to do good works. We want everyone serving. It starts with you and it also includes those who are studying for vocational ministry – as most of them who preached last week are.

B. The fact is, at some point you have to preach your first sermon to a real congregation. You can preach in front of a mirror or in a preaching lab. But at some point you have to stand in front of normal people and give it a go.

C. Listening to the first sermon someone preaches can be painful, but it's not as big of ask as volunteering to be the first patient a surgeon ever has. No one died last week! But it's an ask. Thankyou.

D. Anyway, last week the text they were assigned focused on Peter's denial of Christ. But we had them skip a small section.

1. They looked at the set up – Luke 22:24 – 35 where Jesus says Peter will deny him, and Peter says he will not.

2. Then we told them to skip to 54-62 to see where Peter denies Christ.

E. The events we are going to focus on are from the verses they skipped over, and they contain a bit of last minute advice from Jesus to his followers.

V. Luke 22:35: **Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?”**

A. He is referring to what he said to them back in Luke 10:3 & 4:¹ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals.

B. This was early in their development. He was giving them a chance to preach their first sermon. Jesus very intentionally turned this group of very unimpressive people into a group that will launch the movement that changes the world.

1. In fact, this is one of the most amazing things He did and He seldom gets credit for it. As you may know, most organizations do not last. The companies that lit up the 80s faded by the 90s, which faded themselves.

2. Say what you will about the church, there is nothing like it. It is the oldest, largest, most ethnically and geographically diverse organization on the planet. Most organizations have a hard time surviving thirty years. The church is still going strong after 2,000. Jesus started it with a very unimpressive group of people.

3. He had three years to train them and he did an amazing job. Now, they also change in large part because of the Holy Spirit. It's hard to know where to draw that line.

C. For now, simply note that he did run a management training program, and early on he gave them an easy assignment. It was a first step. A pretty controlled environment in which they would gain some confidence. So Jesus starts by saying, "Remember that first assignment I gave you?"

VI. Remember **"when I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered.** God provided. It was easy. We didn't have to pack a bag. He met all our needs.

A. "OK," Jesus says, "well, now I am going to tell you something different. What's coming your way isn't going to be like that."

VII. V36: **"Now if you have a purse,** in other words, if you have money, take it.

VIII. **... and also a bag** - luggage. A change of clothes. Don't expect someone to provide for you. Don't expect great hospitality. Be prepared to take care of yourself.

IX. **...and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.**

A. This is a bit shocking. For starters, selling your cloak suggests this is really important when you were traveling. Secondly, a weapon? Really? The Greek word here is *machaira* – so, not a sword, more like a dagger.

B. Some people do not think Jesus would have encouraged people to get a sword,² but in just a few verses Peter is going to grab something and cut off a guy's ear. So it wasn't a hypothetical sword. It wasn't a metaphorical sword.

C. This is not a suggestion that you go out and get a concealed carry permit. Stay with me. I'll explain in a minute.

X. **"When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered.** OK, well, now I am going to tell you something different.

XI. V36 **"Now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It is written: And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."**

- A. Jesus quotes here from Isaiah, applying this famous passage directly to himself.
- B. Isaiah 53 is a messianic prophecy.
 - 1. It was given by Isaiah hundreds of years before Jesus was born.
 - 2. It describes crucifixion even though it does not appear to be invented for several hundred more years.
 - 3. It is so powerful that many Jewish leaders do not have it read in their services. My experience is that few Jews are familiar with it.
- C. Jesus is saying several things:
 - 1. First, Isaiah was talking about me.
 - 2. Second, things are about to get very difficult. In fact, I am about to die.
 - 3. You need to get ready.

XII. V38: The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.” After hearing this, the disciples show that they can be counted on to miss the point. They point to two swords, which is not the point.

XIII. “That’s enough!” Jesus replied.

- A. Jesus wasn’t ultimately talking about weapons.³ For starters, a few hours later when Peter pulls a sword to fight the guards trying to arrest Jesus, Jesus immediately says, “Put it away!” He makes it clear that He is not going to use that kind of force to bring about His kingdom.⁴
- B. Secondly, if he was focused on swords, two would not be enough.

XIV. Discussions about weapons are complicated. Christians have long struggled to figure out how to handle power and when to fight wars.

- A. It is clear that from God’s Word that the kingdom of God is not coming via military power.
- B. It is also clear – from what Paul writes in Romans and other passages – that government needs power to stop bad guys. We need a police force and we need soldiers. There are problems with them, but there are bigger problems without them.
- C. There is lots of discussion about this, including the development of Just War Theory, which says – there are situations when war is just:
 - 1. When the cause is righteous – i.e., you are not the aggressor, you are trying to stop a bad guy;
 - 2. When war is limited – you keep civilians out of it;
 - 3. When it’s pretty clear that you will win – i.e., it’s not a lost cause;
- D. There is more, such as clear indication that you are not getting revenge.
- E. It’s complicated and layered and there is disagreement about this.
- F. I do not envy those who have to make these calls.
- G. I keep two situations in mind as I think about the need for the sword.
- H. The first was the response of a friend in Nigeria who was Dean of a seminary.

1. We – you – helped support them while she was doing her PhD at Trinity. They then went back to Jos, Nigeria, where he became the Dean of Jos Evangelical Divinity School (JETS). And not long after he arrived there they received a report that that night a group of radical Muslims – please note, not all Muslims are radical.

a) This past week I met with the President of the Islamic Foundation in Libertyville.

b) I asked for the meeting to learn what I could about the Muslim community here and to find out how they are being treated. He thanked me. He assured me that they were being well cared for. Showed me cards from Christian school kids saying that they were praying for them.

c) He also told me that they have nothing in common with ISIS and Al Qaeda and other radical groups. I stayed and listened to the sermon given by their Imam and left.

2. I have met with Muslim leaders in various parts of the world and the US and hear the same thing. And I have studied Islam and tried to get a handle on what is happening. And I realize that this is a huge conversation – one I do not intend to get into today.

3. For now let me note that most Muslims are moderate and peace-loving. But not all. The group in Jos where my friend was leading the seminary were not.

4. Not long after he took over there he heard that a group of radical Muslims intended to burn down their school and impose Sharia Law in the area.

5. This guy is a soft-spoken academic. I asked, what did you do? And he said, I got all of the men and we got bats and knives and we surrounded the school – where more than a hundred people lived – and when they showed up we said, “We’re not going to let you burn down this school or hurt any of the people here. You are not going to impose Sharia Law. We do not want a fight but we are not going to run.”

6. They made a show of force and the group backed down.

I. The second thing this idea of a sword leads me to is a scene in *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkiens – the epic tale about good versus evil, where Frodo has the task of destroying the ring and keeping it from the enemy in the dark land of Mordor.

1. So they leave the shire – where they do not need weapons – but as they travel they go equipped to defend themselves. And more than that, equipped to be sure that they do not fail. They have to accomplish their mission.

J. Men and women, discussions about the use of force raise lots of questions. I think we need to be suspicious of any desire to power up.

K. And I do not think that is the main thing Jesus is saying here. He tells them to have swords, they say, “we have two.” He says “enough.”

L. I think he was saying, “this really isn’t about swords.”

- M. I think the focus here is we are called to courage. We are being told that things may be hard and we need resolve and resilience.
- N. Jesus is saying, “Things are about to get difficult. You need to be ready for the challenges ahead.”
- O. Remember the first time I sent you out? It was easy? Yeah, this next time is not going to be like that. You need to toughen up.
- P. Men and women, the thrust of this passage is not about swords, it’s a warning that says, you should expect to get knocked down.
- Q. Some of you know this all too well. You are close to quitting right now. Quitting your job, or quitting on God, or giving in to temptation. You do not see how you go on. Jesus was speaking to you.
- XV. This passage leads to a few questions: What season are we living in: easy or hard?
- A. Is this a, “People will like you,” period or a, “prepare to get knocked down” moment? I think the answer is, we’re in a bit of both.
- B. It’s popular to say that things are bad. Christians in particular seem to delight in talking about how bad things are: how toxic the culture is; how we are losing our rights; how drugs are everywhere, debt is spiraling out of control; the inner cities are falling apart; pornography is ubiquitous. North Korea has nukes. Russia is muscling up and we all weigh too much.
- C. Hey, it’s not hard to make that case.
1. There are lots of things to be alarmed about.
 2. I have not known a time when people are so polarized.
 3. If you want to find things to keep you up at night you do not have to work very hard. They are out there.
- D. On the one hand – there are lots of things that are going well:
1. Life expectancy and literacy rates have never been higher;
 2. We are poised to wipe out extreme poverty;
 3. The stock market is over 20,000 – which means we have wealth most people could never comprehend
- XVI. What I hear from those who are worried is more concern over where we are headed than where we are.
- A. I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about that in the last couple years. This time last year I was writing a book about it.
- B. I’m not going to drag you through that again any time soon. I think the future will be mixed: more good and more bad. But I know it includes bad.

1. Some people think if we follow God life should be easy. The New Testament makes no such promise.
 2. Around the world last year Christians in 50 countries faced persecution – not the discomfort some of us might occasionally feel. I mean, loss of jobs or homes or freedom or life. Open Door’s report says that 100 – 300 Christians are killed for their faith each day.
 3. We need to realize, we are not promised easy, in this passage Jesus tells us to expect persecution and hardship.
- C. I think we need to enjoy the good more than we do. I also think we need to be prepared for the second.

XVII. Which leads to a key question: How do I gain resilience? There is a surprising amount of stuff being written about resilience today. Much of it is pretty simplistic.

- A. There are a set of very basic suggestions:
1. Drink certain energy drinks
 2. Listen to a certain motivational speaker we’ll make it
- B. There is another level where we are told to toughen up – to act like a Seal.
1. Tough Mudder races and cold showers
 2. Recently it seems like every other article is about getting more sleep
 3. I find some value here. I enjoy reading about elite athletes and seeing what it takes for them to succeed. There are a few for whom it is easier, but most learn how to overcome pain. They are willing to suffer to reach certain levels or win certain events. And they also get back on the bike, so to speak. They fail but they get back up. I hear a bit of that in what Jesus is saying here.
- C. There is a fair bit written about resilience right now by “preppers.” People who are stock piling food and gold and guns.
- D. There is a lot being written about friends. One of the people who came to visit me in RIC was a quiet man. He sat on my bed and asked me questions for about thirty minutes. Then he said, “I think you’re going to be OK.”
1. I remember asking, and who are you?
 2. He said, “I’m the floor psychologist.”
 3. And you asked me some questions and from my answers you think I’m going to be OK. He said, 80 percent of people who have a stroke get depressed. But you seem motivated and it looks to me like you have lots of support from your family and friends.

XVIII. Some of this advice has some merit. But I think Jesus is calling us to something way past this. I think the Bible is a bit of a handbook on resilience. I think Job and Moses and Joseph and David and Daniel are great models of resilience. As is Jesus. I also think that in addition to giving us examples we get some great counsel.

- A. We get some here. Jesus tells us to expect hard - to expect difficulties. It’s a broken world. Bad things are coming your way. Jesus says, “I am about to die, so don’t expect a cake walk.”

- B. I believe we also need to think more about eternity – we need to live today more in light of forever.
- C. And in general I believe we need to be more formed by Christ’s example and by the Gospel.
1. When we realize how bad we are – which suggests what we deserve.
 2. And we realize what we have been promised by God
 3. And when we realize what Jesus did to secure that for us – I think we find energy to raise our game. I want to encourage you to do that.
- XIX. Some of you are struggling. Life is hard. You do not know how long you can keep going.
- A. How much longer you can have faith
- B. How much longer you can stay with the job or, keep looking for a job, or whatever.
- C. I’m sorry. I wish it were easier. We pray for a world that works. We ask for God’s will. It is coming. Between now and then, don’t give up. When you think you are at the end, that’s forty percent. You can keep going.

¹ See also, Luke 9:1-6

² Boniface VIII uses this passage to argue for the “double sword of papal authority” – the spiritual and the temporal.

³ There are only two times in Acts where someone uses the *machiara* – Acts 12:2 and 16:7 – the execution of James and the potential suicide of the jailer. Both are clearly not approved of.

⁴ Matthew 26:51