



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Priests Wives

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Supportive Individuals

Volume 1

In the next four volumes we will discuss four of the most important criteria of supportive individuals based on scientific and spiritual concepts with references.

1- Criteria: Emotional Resilience

Scientific Definition: Emotional resilience refers to an individual's ability to adapt and cope effectively with stress, adversity, and challenging life events. It involves maintaining a balanced emotional state and bouncing back from difficult situations. (Reference: Masten, A. S. (2001). "Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development." *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238.)

Biblical Story: The story of Job exemplifies emotional resilience. Despite facing immense suffering and loss, Job remained steadfast in his faith and maintained his emotional equilibrium. He endured the trials with remarkable resilience and emerged stronger in his trust in God's plan. (Reference: The Book of Job)

Funny Story: Imagine a priest's wife struggling to keep her cool while dealing with a series of mishaps during a church event—tripping over cords, accidentally spilling coffee on herself, and misplacing important documents. Through it all, she maintains her composure, eventually earning the nickname "Graceful Giggles" among the parishioners.

Practical Exercise: To develop emotional resilience, practice mindfulness meditation. Set aside time each day to sit quietly and focus on your breath, observing your thoughts and emotions without judgment. This exercise can help you build the capacity to remain composed in challenging situations.

Here are five biblical verses that highlight the concept of emotional resilience, along with their references in the New King James Version (NKJV):

- **James 1:2-4** "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
- **Romans 5:3-5** "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
- **1 Peter 5:10** "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."

- **Proverbs 24:16** "For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity."
- **Philippians 4:11-13** "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

And here are five sayings from Church Fathers that support the idea of emotional resilience:

- **St. Augustine of Hippo** "Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song." Reference: Attributed to St. Augustine
- **St. John Chrysostom** "Trials and tribulations offer us a chance to make reparation for our past faults and sins. On such occasions the Lord comes to us like a physician to heal the wounds left by our sins." Reference: Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew
- **St. John Cassian** "A soul that is hard pressed by suffering and adversity should not lose courage but believe that after winter comes summer, that after night comes day, and that after a storm comes a great calm." Reference: "Conferences" by St. John Cassian
- **St. Cyril of Alexandria** "God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters." Reference: Attributed to St. Cyril of Alexandria
- **St. Ignatius of Loyola** "If God sends you many sufferings, it is a sign that He has great plans for you and certainly wants to make you a saint." Reference: Attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola

One challenge that a wife's priest in the Coptic Orthodox Church might face in dealing with emotional resilience is helping couples navigate infertility issues while maintaining their faith and emotional well-being. Infertility can be an emotionally distressing experience that tests a couple's resilience, faith, and relationship. The wife's priest plays a crucial role in providing spiritual guidance and support during such difficult times.

Story Example:

Once upon a time, in a Coptic Orthodox parish, there lived a couple named M and J. They were deeply devoted to their faith and had always dreamed of building a strong family centered around their shared beliefs. However, as years went by after their marriage, they found themselves struggling with infertility.

M and J were heartbroken by their inability to conceive a child. They felt isolated and questioned their worthiness in the eyes of God. As their emotional turmoil grew, they turned to their wife's priest for guidance and solace.

The priest was known for his compassionate nature and understanding demeanor. He listened to their story, empathizing with their pain and frustration. He recognized the importance of addressing not only their spiritual concerns but also their emotional well-being.

Over the next few months, the priest delegated his wife to do counseling sessions with M and J. She shared stories from the Bible about individuals and couples who faced challenges, emphasizing the importance of unwavering faith in times of trial. She also connected them with support groups within the church where they could meet others who had gone through similar experiences.

M and J gradually began to find solace in the priest teachings and his wife's sessions. They started to view their struggle with infertility as an opportunity for growth rather than an insurmountable obstacle. Their faith in God's plan deepened, and their relationship with each other became even stronger as they leaned on one another for support.

After years of emotional resilience, M and J eventually decided to explore adoption. The priest's wife continued to stand by their side, offering prayers and guidance throughout the adoption process. When they finally welcomed a child into their family, the entire congregation celebrated their journey of faith and perseverance.

This story illustrates how a wife's priest in the Coptic Orthodox Church can play a pivotal role in helping couples like M and J navigate emotional challenges, drawing on their faith to build emotional resilience and find meaning even in the face of adversity.

(Reference based on true story).