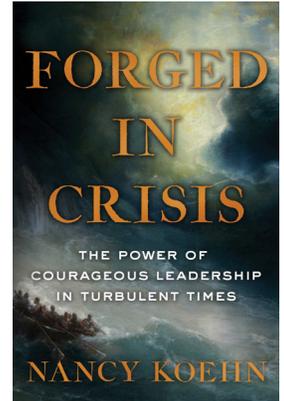


NANCY KOEHN

FORGED IN CRISIS: COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP IN TURBULENT TIMES DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

“One of the most important threads connecting these stories is that all of these leaders were made. They were not born. Nothing was genetically or divinely ordained about what they accomplished, or how they motivated other people to meet serious challenges. The four men and one woman here became effective leaders by dint of working on themselves: intentionally choosing to make something better of who they were, even in the midst of crisis, and never losing sight of the larger, dynamic stage on which they found themselves. Relatively early in their lives, each came to see his or her setbacks as classrooms in which they could sharpen their skills, improve their emotional strengths, and minimize specific weaknesses. With experience, they learned to detach themselves enough from the immediacy of their circumstances to observe the bigger landscape and their place in it, and to take **action** - within themselves and in relation to external goals - from this perspective.” (p. 6)



QUESTION 1: In the beginning of *Forged in Crisis* (p. 8) the author quotes Wallace:

“Deep down, you almost always like how a real leader makes you feel, how you find yourself working harder and pushing yourself and thinking in ways you wouldn’t be able to if there weren’t this person you respected and believed in and wanted to please.”

Can you think of an example of a leader who “raised the bar” for their followers, moving people to do better and harder things than they could have accomplished on their own? What could your group learn from any specific example you could offer?

QUESTION 2: Only two exemplars from the book (Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln) are from the same moment in history. We know that they met each other on numerous occasions and struggled for the same causes. What leadership principle(s) did they embody that allowed these two very different individuals to work together?

QUESTION 3: Despite his commitment to fighting Nazism, Dietrich Bonhoeffer himself was only responsible for saving the lives of fourteen people. All the various plots to assassinate Hitler ultimately failed. How do you view Bonhoeffer? Is he a failure? What can we learn from his life’s work and what does it teach leaders today?

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QUESTION 4: Carson, as a woman in leadership, faced unique challenges, especially in the earlier part of her life as she cared for her family. What are the challenges that women in leadership positions often face today? How can these challenges become a context for leadership development?

“Carson’s experience researching her book, *Silent Spring*, reminds us of the importance of doing one’s homework. This means looking carefully for credible sources of information, absorbing and analyzing that information, conforming what we’re learning, and revising our work accordingly. Her process also illuminates the need for leaders to move beyond data and facts. Leaders are obligated - whether they work on paper, in a conference room, or in front of a camera - to translate information into knowledge, to use this knowledge to develop understanding, and, if possible to turn that understanding into wisdom.” (p. 415)

QUESTION 4A:

The Advancing Women in Leadership theme for 2021 is **Lead with Action**. How can you use the information you’ve collected or have available to you, including today’s session, to help you move your ideas forward, acting on wisdom that can lead to action?

QUESTION 5: There is an ongoing debate in the leadership field regarding whether leaders are “made” or “born.” What insights would you share about each side of that debate? In what ways do the leadership stories we heard about today by Nancy Koehn tilt the scales toward one or the other? (see p. 6 and p. 437). To what extent did today’s presentation change your thinking about this topic?

QUESTION 6: During Koehn’s talk, you heard several qualities and characteristics of these five leaders; for example, dedication to a higher cause and willingness to accept great personal risk. What other characteristics did you “hear” across the five stories? Did any particular characteristic resonate with you as a new concept, particularly one that might be applicable to your own situation?

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- QUESTION 7:** All five individuals found themselves in the middle of very challenging circumstances. None of them suspected they would be brought to their knees by the disaster they would face. In the midst of hardship, or even calamity, what attitudes or actions did you observe in the lives of these leaders? What insights did you gain about how leaders (in terms of attitudes and behaviors) can navigate through turbulence toward constructive ends?
- QUESTION 8:** The leaders depicted in this book were driven by a strong desire to improve themselves (often on their own without formal education), a desire to serve the greater good, to drive for success, and to embody strength in the face of crisis. What other threads did you hear that tie these leaders together?
- QUESTION 9:** The author references that leaders often must “disturb and disrupt” (pp. 420–421) a status quo that perpetuates inequality, injustice, or undermines well-being for the greater good. Given all of the needs facing our country and the world today, why do you think there are so few effective leaders? What can we do to find our vision and passion (review Ephesians 2:10—each person was “designed” to do certain “good works that God prepared in advance for us to do”)?
- QUESTION 10:** What is your main “take-away” from today’s session? What seed thought will you continue to process and/or strive to adopt in your own life?

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