

*Grace*

for *Your*

*Journey*

---

**Sermons of Survival in the Wilderness**

---



Greetings, my sister!

I pray that you enjoy this excerpt from my book entitled, “*Grace For Your Journey: Sermons of Survival in the Wilderness!*” I pray that the words found within this chapter will be a source of comfort and healing as you transition through life’s challenges to a place of victory.

Blessings...

*Pastor Michele Irby Johnson*

[www.livingbygraceministries.org](http://www.livingbygraceministries.org)

[www.iam-mij.com](http://www.iam-mij.com)

YouTube: Grace Point TV Official

YouTube: Life Matters with Michele TV Official



## 2

### Where Do I Go From Here?

*“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:20 – 21)*

When I read the first chapter of Job, I could not imagine the depth of loss that he felt, nor could I fathom the intensity of emptiness that rests in his soul over the loss of everything he once had. He lost his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his camels in a “fire rained from God,” and his servants. While taking in the news, Job receives word that in one fall sweep he lost all of his sons and daughters who had gathered together at the eldest son’s house for a meal. The magnitude of loss most assuredly was unbearable and difficult to grasp. One day you have all that you want and need and in the next moment – in one day no less – you lose it all!

Every day we hear more and more of people suffering loss. Companies are going under – People are losing their jobs. Crime is on the rise – People are losing their possessions to theft and burglary. People have lost their financial stability – Stocks are on the downfall. Family structure is virtually non-existent. Marriages are falling apart, and children are slipping from the parental grip due to peer pressure and self-destructive behavior. There are senseless killings – People are being killed in the streets, killed in their homes. Murder and suicide is at an all-time high. Unstable individuals are going on shooting rampages in nursing homes, in community centers, on military installations, in public parks, and even in churches.

Loss surrounds us everywhere we turn. We hear of otherwise healthy people being diagnosed with cancer, AIDS, lupus, diabetes, mental breakdowns, debilitating diseases... We hear of people having to sell their possessions just to survive... They have transitioned from buying name brand products to buying generic... Those who used to shop Sack’s 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue now have to shop the Salvation Army. We hear of couples throwing in the towel because of financial stress

and strain! Let's face it, people want to bail out! People want to check out! Society as a whole is on edge!

In one week's time, I had three co-workers whose spouses lost their jobs; another person's daughter just found out she has cancer; another had a friend commit suicide; another person is trying to hold onto their family, and the list goes on. People are turning to God during these turbulent times. They are seeking refuge, help, and solutions to their present situations. They want and need relief! They are looking for answers from somewhere – anywhere!

I don't know about you, but I can hear people screaming (whether audibly or in their spirits)...WHAT'S NEXT?

I'm sure that Job was screaming internally at his instantaneous and overwhelming loss! Even his health was attacked. To top it all off, his wife told him to “cure God and die!” She had lost her mind! Job was a man of substance and wealth, and was considered to be the greatest of all men in the East. He was well loved, surrounded by a host of family and friends. A man of character and integrity, Job feared – revered – God and hated evil. In fact, he was “perfect and upright” (Job 1:1).

Noted for the pain and the suffering that Job endures, this book can easily be named the “Book of Persecution” exuding the basic message of “blessing through suffering.” We see the torture, the agony, the despair, the depression, and the persistent trouble on every side!

All of us have had a Job experience at one time or another in our lives! We can all relate to Job's predicament to some degree or another! We may not have lost as much as he did at the same time (or maybe we have), but loss has made us who we are today. None of us are strangers to loss, depression, vexation, frustration, disillusionment, trouble, annoyance, and worry! We are not strangers to the range of emotions that one can feel when their world has been turned upside down! We entertain the stream of questions that run through our minds – *Why me? Why now? How much more? What did I do to deserve this? When does it end?* In essence, we want to know “*Where do I go from here?*”

I don't know about you, but I have asked this question time and time again! With the onset of life's ups, downs, and turn-arounds, I have asked this same question! In the midst of what I thought to be the right decisions, but turned out to be the wrong decisions, I have asked this very question! This question can ride on the heels of any situation we encounter in life. Think about it! You may have gotten married and then divorced (even more than once) and asked the question, “Where do I go from here?” You may have had an abortion or had a child out of wedlock and asked yourself, “Where do I go from here?” Perhaps you were one of the many entrepreneurial-driven individuals who invested all of your savings in a business that went belly up and you asked, “Where do I go from here?” Maybe you had a job, lost your job, or your spouse quit their job for whatever reason and you have asked yourself, “Where do I go from here?” Perhaps you have been deeply rooted in a relationship, a partnership, or any other “ship,” or a ministry, and have been figuratively “raped” of your innocence, your character, your dreams, your dignity, your reputation, your purpose, and you screamed the question, “Where do I go from here?”

If you have not had to bear the weight of any of those situations, I'm sure that you have had your share of the medley of life's issues that makes you ask, "Where do I go from here?" None of us are immune to tests and trials. Your family name or fame doesn't excuse you from turmoil. Your title doesn't make you exempt from pain. Your social status and intellect doesn't take you out of the equation of suffering. Your material wealth doesn't take you out of the game of life's upheavals.

What can we glean from Job's experience? How did he move on?

### ***JOB WORSHIPPED!***

Just like Job, many of us are in quite the situation – in a pickle, if you will! We are living in some very real situations! Heart-wrenching and life-altering situations! We feel like our world is falling apart and there is nothing that we can do about it (at least not in our own strength). When we read of Job's loss, we get a rather unexpected response from him. Although he felt the immense pain in the wake of his loss, the Bible tells us that, "*he (Job) fell down to the ground and worshiped...*" (Job 1:20). I'm sure Job wanted to know "where does he go from here?" after such tragedy. In light of his situation, Job turned to the only solution that he knew...He turned to worship God. He knew that this was a hard place, but he made the conscious decision to show reverent adoration, appreciation, and respect to God...to the God Who was always there before the family, before the wealth, before any and everything.

Regardless of his pain, his suffering, and his loss, Job worshipped God! Job realized that what he lost did not make him who he was. Things, wealth, family, friends, and fame didn't define who he was! He proved this by "renting" or tearing his clothes and shaving his head, which spoke to the fact that what he wore didn't matter. How he looked externally to others didn't matter. He needed to get to God at all cost. I believe that Job said, "*I don't care what (or who) I have to get rid of, I have got to get to the God of my soul.*" I believe that Job understood what it truly meant to "*seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all these things will be added unto you...*" (Matthew 6:33). He understood that his self-worth did not rest in the tangible, but in the fact that he knew Who was his Source! We get it twisted. We think that the job is our source. We believe that family is our source. We rely on our intellects and college degrees to be our source. All of these are wonderful resources, but God is our only true Source. How soon we forget – through the storms of life – that "*my God shall supply all my need according to His riches in glory*" (Philippians 4:19).

Job knew to acknowledge God as the One Who had blessed him! He knew that God was holding him even in his losses. Through it all "*...Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*" (Job 1:22). Our mistake is that we blame God for the confusion. We blame God when things don't go our way – even when we step outside His will and do our own thing. We curse God for "allowing" this or that to happen when in actuality we failed to consider Him in our plans and we fell flat. I admit times are hard. Things can look bleak. This is no excuse for charging God "foolishly" for the havoc, the hurt, or the affliction we experience. Humanly speaking, there is great concern that rises when we don't know what to do, where to turn, or where to go when the bottom has fallen out from under us. The blessed thing is to know Who holds our present and our future. God has

not changed! His promises are still yes and amen – even in this! Jesus is still the same yesterday, today, and forever more – even in this!

Just as Job did, we must learn to go to God in worship – Thanking Him for what He has already done; Thanking Him for what He is working out; Thanking Him for things getting better; and yes even thanking Him for the trials that we must endure to come forth as purified gold. Although it is hard to do at the time, our focus must not be on the current trial, but it should be on the end result that comes once we come through the storm. Do you recall how you felt (or how you feel) while going through your storm? It did not and does feel good at all. You fussed (and some of you cussed). You complained with each passing day, month, and year that you remained in the valley. But then eventually you were able to look back and realize that there was something that God was perfecting within you through the test, making you better than you were before the loss, the pain, and the suffering.

One of my favorite scriptures that constantly rings in my spirit, *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18). In other words, our present day suffering can’t be compared to the wonder of what is coming! In spite of how it looks or feels, now is not the time to turn away from God. Now is not the time to question if there is a God or if He cares about what you’re dealing with in your life. Now is not the time to wonder if God is punishing you by taking you through the bedlam of troubles.

My dear friend, now is the time to worship! It is time to honor God for sparing us from a fate worse than economic disaster...worse than heartbreak and failed relationships...worse than infidelity or divorce...worse than loss of limb, financial ruin, material loss, or shattered dreams. It is time to honor God for providing a passageway from hell! The Bible declares, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). So, instead of walking away – Worship! Instead of whining and complaining – Worship! Instead of getting angry – Worship! Instead of having an attitude or a temper tantrum – Worship! Instead of turning to addictions of sex, drugs, alcohol, gambling or the like – Worship!

If we turn to God and seek Him through worship, we can rest assured that He will see us through until we actually get through. He is saying, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). If you really want to know “where to go from here,” know that God has got you and He is requiring that you go to worship!

### ***JOB TRUSTED!***

Job knew enough about God to know what not to do! He knew not to curse God. He knew not to turn from God. He knew to *trust* God, declaring *“Though they slay me, yet will I trust Him”* (Job 13:15). Job knew not to listen to the voice of his friends. Although we love our friends, our families, our co-workers, and our associates, we can’t go to everybody when trouble strikes! With the best of intentions, family and friends will give their opinions, but where will those opinions lead you? Far too often the enemy will speak lies into our ear, but we can’t listen to his foolishness!

Worst of all, our own self-talk will steer us wrong if we listen long enough! In most cases, we will talk ourselves right out of the will of God.

Job didn't allow his suffering and loss to blur what he knew about God! He didn't run to God with a tongue tainted with disgust or hatred. He didn't run to God spewing off angry insults because he didn't understand why he was in a wilderness experience. The Bible says, "*In all this did not Job sin with his lips*" (Job 2:10). Ecclesiastes says, "*Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin*" (Ecclesiastes 5:6). We cannot let our mouths lead us into sin. Job didn't let his mouth get him into trouble!

Far too many times, when things aren't going our way the first thing we do is run off at the mouth. We shift the blame accusing God foolishly. We are in denial saying it wasn't our fault. We turn the tables to someone else saying, "If it had not been for so and so or this and that, things would be different." We insult God by questioning His love for us, saying "If you really loved me...Why this?"

It's not on God – it is on us! Take responsibility for the consequences that follow the decisions that we make. When we fail a test, we can't blame the teacher. We failed because we just didn't study. When we lose our job, we can't blame the boss. We get fired because our work was unacceptable or we didn't follow the policies of our employment. When we lose our car, we can't blame the snatch man. We didn't pay the car note as promised. When we lose our health, we can't blame the doctor. We were greedy, gluttonous, or hardheaded – eating what we knew we shouldn't have eaten. When our marriage is on the rocks, we blame our spouse, but we've not taken the time to examine ourselves and our role in the breakdown.

Job knew better than to falsely point the finger at God! Before he would even think to curse God, he cursed himself for the day he was born. Job knew where his help was coming from! He couldn't survive this devastating loss alone! Job knew that if it had not been for the Lord on his side, things would have been a lot worse! Job trusted God to be God and turn things around in his favor, "knowing all things are working together for his good" because he loved God!

Where does your trust rest? Do you trust God? I mean *really* trust him! Do you trust God when the money runs out or your investments go down the drain? Do you trust God when the people you trusted turned their backs on you? Do you trust God when your hours are cut back? Do you trust God when the doctor tells you the hard news about your health? Do you trust God when they are laying people off on your job? Do you trust God when your leadership has abused and misused you? Do you trust God when all that you owned was burned in a fire or lost to acts of nature? Do you trust God when your child is rebellious or giving in to peer pressure? Do you trust God when the loan falls through? Do you trust God when your spouse wants to leave or has already left? Do you trust God when your credit can't buy you a cup of water? Do you trust God when you have to wait until the blessing comes through?

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path!*"

What am I saying? We need to give our troubles, our problems, our issues, our pain, our discouragement, our suffering, and our disappointments to God! We don't have all of the answers! In the natural, we don't have the solution! But we still have a God that we can trust completely. He has the power to heal...the power to restore...the power to build you back up!

This is a faith walk – especially in times of trouble and uncertainty! Hebrews 11:1 tells us, “*Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen.*” The only thing any of us can do from this point or in this moment is to trust God!

### ***JOB KEPT LIVING!***

Job could have easily given up! He could have said, “I can't take it! I won't take it any longer!” He could have shouted from the roof tops that God had failed him! He could have listened to his crazy friends and gone in the wrong direction! He could have listened to his deranged wife and been cursed himself! He could have hated God and the rest of the world! But no! Job kept moving! He kept on believing! He kept on living!

Like many of us, Job made mistakes, but he kept moving – he kept living! He felt like his life had come to an end, but he kept living! He didn't see any light at the end of the tunnel, but he kept living! He didn't know when the “turn around” was coming, but he kept living! He didn't know when the blessing was going to show up, but he kept living! Job kept pressing! He knew God's track record to deliver! He rested in the fact that God is not a man and is incapable of lying! God keeps every promise that He makes!

My brother, my sister, we have to keep living even when we want to roll over and die! We have to keep living when everything around us is drying up! We have to keep living when there seems like there is no reason to go forward! God's Word is still active and it still works. God is our Keeper – Keep living! God is our Provider – Keep living! God is our Doctor – Keep living! God is our Helper – Keep living! God is our Deliverer – Keep living! God is our Way-Maker – Keep living! All that we know God is to us and in us, we must keep living!

I know that you may still want to know, “Where do you go from here?” You would love to see other side of suffering, whether it is physical, emotional, mental, financial, social, material or whatever. None of us wants to be subjected to, to endure, or to feel pain or distress. Admittedly, suffering is a hard thing for the flesh!

We can get comfort in these nuggets found in the Word of God:

*“It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”*(I Peter 3:17 NIV)

*“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,”*  
(II Timothy 3:12 NIV)

*“If we endure, we will also reign with him...”* (II Timothy 2:12 NIV)



*“If we die with him, we'll live with him; If we stick it out with him, we'll rule with him;” (II Timothy 2:12 The Message)*

Let me leave you with this... *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;” (II Corinthians 4:8-9)*

We must ask ourselves: Will we worship or will we complain? Will we trust or will we curse God? Will we keep living or will we allow our circumstances to take us out? We must determine in our hearts not to allow the pain and loss push us into a corner to sin. We will not allow the hard times to entice us to an addiction of any kind. We will not allow the spirit of lack to make us disobey the will of God and forfeit His purpose for our lives.

As God continues to order my steps – leading me in the way I should go, I will worship! I will trust God! I will keep living!

***Let's pray together...***

*Father, we thank You for Your all-encompassing power and ability to be our Help in times of devastation, pain, and struggle. We thank You, Father, that when we have no idea as to where we are to go – when we are searching for direction for our next move, we know that You will continue to order every footstep and to prepare the way for us. We may feel as if life has dealt us a devastating blow, but we will choose to worship You, to trust You, and to keep living until You deliver us from our situation. We may ask the question “Where do we go from here?” at some other time in our lives, but we know beyond a shadow of doubt that You will lovingly guide us to the place where we can find You, Your purpose, and Your rest. We receive it in Jesus' name. Amen!*

**To purchase the complete book, visit:**  
<https://livingbygraceministries.org/publications>





