

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 1)

by Bayless Conley

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley

Hello friends. I am so glad that you have joined me. I want to ask you a question that I already know the answer to. Have you ever faced any difficult pressing circumstances? We all do, whether it's physical, financial, with family, with just battling fears, whatever it might be. Well, you know what? We can flourish in the midst of trials. I'm going to be sharing some thoughts with you to help you navigate difficult times. You're not going to want to miss a minute of it.

I want to welcome you to the program today. I'm going to be sharing some really practical things with you that, if you'll listen to them and apply them, as simple as they might be, it can help you navigate difficult seasons. We all go through hard times. This is not a word of knowledge. This is not some supernatural word that I've got from the Holy Spirit, but I know that there are people watching me right now. You're at your wits' end. Some of you feel like you're treading water and going down for the final time. That if one more wave comes, you're just not going to be able to make it.

Well, you know, God has an answer for you. I just want to talk to you about flourishing in the midst of trials. I want to give you some simple thoughts that can help you navigate difficult times. The first one is this: just know that you're not alone. You're not the only one suffering the things you're suffering. You're not the only one facing the obstacles that you are facing. You are not alone.

Yet, sometimes we can feel so isolated and feel so alone when we're going through things. I think about this single mom that is sleep deprived and thinks if this baby cries one more minute, I'm going to lose my mind. You're thinking, "Man, I thought having this child was going to be a blessing," but because you're so worn out, it's like everything is blown out of proportion, and the problems are much bigger than they seem to be.

I know there's someone watching me; you're going through financial difficulties right now. Someone else, you just received a bad report from the doctor, and fear has tried to grip your mind. There are others facing persecution at work. There are others that are out of work, and on and on and on. We go through these things, but my friend, you're not the only one to experience what you're experiencing.

Let me read this to you. It's 1 Corinthians 10:13, it says, there is no temptation. And that Greek word "temptation" there can also be translated as test, trial, difficulty.

¹³ No temptation (no difficulty, no trial) has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation (with the trouble, with the trial) will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

There's nothing that we go through except that which is common to men. Another translation says you've never been tempted in any different way than other people. Another translation

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 1)

says the trials that you've had to bear are no more than people normally have. I like the Living Bible; it says,

¹³ Many others have faced exactly the same problems before you.

There is actually comfort in that. I remember I was attending a ministers' convention many years ago. It was a Christian convention, but the main thing was leadership, and there were hundreds and hundreds of pastors there. I really found myself being encouraged. The funny thing is, is what the encouragement came from. Now, I went expecting to be blessed. I went expecting to grow and to learn some things. But the thing that encouraged me the most is there was a pastor there. He was one of the speakers, had a church similar in size to ours, and he very openly shared about some of the struggles he was facing. There had been a betrayal by someone that was close to him on the team. There was this trial. He just talked about these different things he was going through, and I actually derived great comfort from the fact that this guy was going through trials.

You might say, well, that's weird, but actually, it wasn't. The reason I derived encouragement from it is because I was facing the exact same things, and just knowing that I wasn't the only one. Now, I was trusting God, I was looking to God for wisdom, and I knew I was going to make it. I wasn't stressed out necessarily, but just the fact that the brother in similar circumstances was facing similar things and had found God to be faithful, just like I was finding God to be faithful, brought great comfort to me. It's good to know that you're not alone.

Do you know that there are people no doubt watching this—maybe that you've never met—but they have had a similar sickness to you? In some cases, maybe it's something diagnosed that's incurable. Maybe you've been given a death sentence by the doctor. And they have experienced the healing power of Jesus, yet they know what it is to be gripped with fear.

They know what it is to have doubts assail their mind. To have these thoughts pounding on them like the waves of the sea, thinking "Oh, am I just going to degrade and go downhill? And what's going to happen to my family?" "Why is this happening to me." There are other people that have experienced the same things that you have, yet they have found God to be faithful in the midst of that.

There are a number of people in our church, who have been given terminal diagnoses by their doctors, and the doctors do all they can, and we love them. We actually have a lot of physicians in our church, and they're just attacking the enemy of sickness from a natural standpoint, while we take the Word of God, and we go after it from a spiritual standpoint. But I have friends, and there are people in our church that were given a death sentence and told that medical science can do nothing more for you, and they have been healed by the mighty power of God.

There are people that have stood in your shoes, my friend. There are people that have known the bitter feelings that go from a divorce. Having been betrayed by a spouse and having to go through the fires of divorce and they've come out on the other side and found out that God is faithful sometimes, even when men and women are not faithful. You've never experienced things that other folks have not gone through.

Others have faced challenges of unbelievable proportions, just like you. There are people that have experienced the horrors of sexual abuse, and they found that God is a healer of broken hearts. He's a rebuilder of broken lives. They found that even in the despair of knowing that that

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 1)

person that should have been your protector ended up being your betrayer and your abuser, that they found healing, and I just want you to know there's grace for you. You are not alone in your sufferings.

There are other people that have experienced the same kind of financial trials. Other people that have lost their job, maybe just like you have. They battle the same depressions, the same fears, the same thoughts have assailed their minds.

When Elijah ran away from Jezebel after the victory on Mount Carmel, when the people said, "The Lord is God, we're going to serve Him," and Elijah killed the 400 false prophets of Baal. But then Jezebel said to him, "Hey, I'm going to take your head off your shoulders." He ran actually 100 miles, sat down under a juniper tree, and wished to die.

He was suicidal. He said, "God, I'm the only one. I'm the only one that's serving You. Everyone else's abandoning You." God said, "Hey, little buddy, you're not the only one. I have 7,000 more that haven't bowed the knee to bail. 7,000 more that are going forward and serving Me in the midst of difficult times. Elijah, you're not the only one." My friend, I want to tell you, you are not the only one either. Others have faced and are facing the same things that you have faced. I want to read something to you. It's from 1 Peter 5:8–9. It's from The Message Bible. It says,

⁸⁻⁹ Keep a cool head. Stay alert. The Devil is poised to pounce, and would like nothing better than to catch you napping. Keep your guard up. You're not the only ones plunged into these hard times. It's the same with Christians all over the world. So keep a firm grip on the faith.

You're not the only one. I'm not the only one. We are not alone. We have a whole brotherhood throughout the world. They're experiencing the same trials that we are, and they're finding out that God is faithful in the midst of those trials. Verses 10 and 11, from this same chapter, 1 Peter 5 says,

¹⁰⁻¹¹ The suffering won't last forever. It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ—eternal and glorious plans they are!—will have you put together and on your feet for good. He gets the last word; yes, he does.

My friend, God gets the last word. Yes, He does. I honestly have found it comforting that I'm not the only one. The devil would love to isolate us in our own thinking. And thinking nobody knows the troubles I've seen, nobody knows the depth of what I'm going through. No, others have experienced the same things that you have experienced. It's a good thing to know.

All right, let me give you a second thought that can help you navigate difficult times. It's pretty simple, when you're going through a trial, when you're facing difficulty, remember to look to God and not to man for your answer. God alone is your source. Yes, I know God uses people. We are thankful for that. We're aware of that. We expect God to use people in our lives. We expect God to use us to bring blessing and relief, and healing to others. Yet, we look beyond the natural. We look beyond the flesh, and we realize that it is God by His Spirit. He's the one supplying our needs. He's the one that is guiding our way.

The verse that I read a moment ago, 1 Corinthians 10:13 it says, "No temptation, no trial, no troubles taking you but such as this common a man. But God is faithful." Who's faithful? God is faithful. He won't allow you to be tempted above what you're able. He will make a way of

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 1)

escape. God will make a way of escape that you also may be able to bear it, to get through it victoriously.

Many times, I think people they—and I'm talking about God's people—they end up coming to God as a last-ditch effort rather than as their first line of defense. My friend, we need to look to God first and foremost.

We need to pray first. Not after we've exhausted the arm of the flesh, not after we've gone here to this person and to that, and we've tried everything humanly possible: "I'm going to pray. Oh God, I'm going to throw up this Hail Mary prayer and hope that You can come through." We need to go to Him first. And His Spirit will direct us, and He will direct people, if that's the way He chooses to do things, to help us. He is a God who hears and answers prayer.

Psalms 121:1–2 says,

¹ I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? ² My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

We need to remember that, to lift up our eyes, to look to Him. Our help comes from Him. When our kids were small, I was asked by the teacher of the class to work with the boys. They had a whole half of a day. Someone had donated all of these bits of wood and different things to the school. They were actually pretty interesting pieces of wood. Most of them had been laid into different shapes. Some were laid into like a perfect wooden ball. Others looked like a little table leg, another one had been laid into a different shape. Some of them were square, there were rectangles, triangles, there was a whole box full of these things.

They had screws and just other bits of things there. The idea was the kids—I took all the boys in the class—they had several hours to make something. I was asked to help them, some of the little boys, these were just little boys. I said, "Can I help?" "I don't need any help. I'll do it myself." I said, "Okay."

Some of the other boys, "Mr. Conley, can you help me? I don't know where to start. I don't know what to do." I said, "Okay, would you like to maybe make a car, or a little bench, or a chair?" "I'd like to make a car." I said, "Okay. Does this little piece of wood look like that could be the body?" "Yes, that would work." I said, "What if we put this on top and we glued that down? Would that look like the top?" "Yes, it would." I said, "Look at these little round things here." "Yes, those are perfect wheels." We'd work for a little while and get him going. Another boy would say, "Mr. Conley can you help me?" I would help him, and he'd make some bookends to give to his mother, another one would make this. And those stubborn kids—I suppose it's part of being human, we've got a stubborn streak in our flesh—eventually, those little boys would come.

The other ones have almost finished their project. Those little boys at first that refused my help, they'd come and say, "Mr. Conley, can you help me?" They hadn't done anything. I said, "Sure, I can help you."

But it's a lot better if we go to the One that's greater than us for help to begin with. Remember to look to God. I know I'm speaking to someone right now, and you're going through it. Listen to me, it's not a coincidence, it is not a coincidence you're listening to me or watching me right now. God sees you. He knows your difficulties. He knows the repeated failures. He knows the stress you're under, and He wants to help you. It's always best to go to Him first, but even if it's a last resort, God is a God that is full of mercy.

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 1)

Let me read to you 1 Corinthians 10:13, just part of the verse. This is from the Passion Translation. I love it. It says,

¹³ And each test is an opportunity to trust him more, for along with every trial God has provided for you a way of escape that will bring you out of it victoriously.

Think about that. Each test is an opportunity to trust the Lord more. We're looking to Him. Every difficulty is an opportunity to trust Him more. For along with every trial, think about it, God has provided you a way of escape that will bring you out of it victoriously. That's what God wants to do. He wants to bring you out victoriously. Remember to look to Him.

All right, let me give you a third thought just to help you navigate when you're going through difficult times and through trials and tribulations. When you're in the middle of a trial, remember there is a way of escape. We just read it. God provides a way of escape. It says that with the trial, with the trouble, God also provides a way of escape. Meaning that the way of escape was there with the trial, when it arrived. You may not be able to readily see it, but my friend, God in eternity passed, saw your life, every detail of your life. He knew you'd be listening to me right now. He knew you'd be facing the things that you're facing. And it may be troubles that you brought on yourself because of wrong decisions. God sees that. He knows that, and He's merciful, and He loves you.

Back in eternity past, he knew you'd be where you are right now. With the trouble, He makes a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. With the trial, He brings a way of escape, a pathway for you to walk, a way for you to come out. As the passion translation said, a way for you to come out of it victoriously even if you cannot see it.

I've shared the story many times. You may have heard me share it. We had a building, the old place where we had church. The building next door, the owner of that building was a Christian, a fine man. He told me one day, he said, "Bayless, if you can get the city to pass it, I'll give you my underground parking garage and you can use it on Sundays for church." So, I went down there one day to check it out and walk it off, and figure out how many chairs we could get down there. I think we had 160 chairs in our present auditorium. It was quite a few buildings ago.

I walked it off, figured we could probably get 250, maybe more chairs in this garage with no cars in there. I went to leave, and the door had locked behind me to the garage. Well, I thought, no worry. They had an electronic gate that the guys coming in would push the button on their little remote, the gate would open, they'd come in the garage. I go to this gate with bars on it, and I can't get it to open. I'm stuck there. It's actually pouring rain outside. I went back and tried the door, tried the gate, and I'm stuck down in this parking garage in a downpour. Eventually, I was down there, I think, for 45 minutes. Maybe it was even an hour. It was quite a while.

Finally, I saw a postman walking by. I could see him up on the street up above. I yelled at him and said, "Hey, I'm stuck down here." He eventually came down the stairs and opened that door for me. When I told the owner, I was meeting with him, we were talking about the possibility again. I'm sitting in his office, I told him how I got locked down in the garage and how the postman let me out. He starts laughing, just uproarious laughter. I said, "What's so funny," He said, "Well, the gate that's down there, the bars that are on there," he said, "One of the bars is missing. You could have just walked right through." I said, "It's not true." He said, "It's true."

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 1)

I went down in the parking garage and right—I'm holding onto the bars for a long time, just looking out, waiting for somebody to come—the bar right next to me was missing. There was a gap this wide. I could have walked out probably without even turning sideways. I was incredulous. I couldn't believe it, but in my mind, I was stuck. In my mind, there wasn't a way out. I could not see the way of escape, even though it was right in front of me.

My friend, whatever you're going through right now, God has a step for you to take. God has something for you to do. There is a way of escape. An old Proverb says, even the longest journey, a journey of a thousand miles, begins with the first step. God has a step for you to take, and it is there. Maybe you feel like you're stuck, like there is no way, that is not true. God's promises—His promise is that in every trial, every temptation, every trouble, He makes a way of escape. Pray, ask God to show you what to do. Spend some unhurried time in His Word, seeking His face, and He will guide you.

I want to pray for you right now. If you would just touch heart with me as we pray. Father, I pray for my friend wherever they are, if they're on the other side of the world, if they feel like they're completely abandoned and alone. They may be sitting with a group of people right now, and yet internally, they're isolated. I pray that comfort from the Holy Spirit would come to them. I pray that encouragement would come to them in Jesus Christ's Name. I ask You to bless them, Lord. I ask You to help them open the eyes of their understanding, that they might see their way of escape.

Friend, I want to thank you for joining me today. Do not miss next time. We're going to continue along this same line. Until then, I pray that God's richest and best would be yours always.

As I think about the fact that God does make a way of escape. And that He looked down through the corridors of time, and He saw me, and He saw you, and He made a pathway for us to walk in every season, through every difficulty. I'm reminded of a story. I actually have the newspaper clipping. I lived in Oregon for about four years. If you're in another place outside of the U.S., it's a state that sits right above the state of California. That's where I came to Christ in a little street mission.

I spent a lot of time between the town that I lived in that was called Ashland. Then there was another town we had to drive up this road to Klamath Falls, Oregon. I remember it was a long desolate road, and it would snow. One winter, I got stuck in the snow on that road, and some guys came and actually pulled me out from where my car was stuck. I'm quite aware of all the ins and outs and how long the road was. I drove it many, many times. Drove it on snowy days in bad weather, drove it in the summertime, and was just very familiar with it.

I got an article, and I couldn't believe it when I read it. A man actually had died on that road, and it wasn't because he got into a car accident. He had a little motor home, and he's driving in the winter, and there was an unexpected snowfall, and he got stuck on the road. I know right where he was stuck.

And he couldn't go up or down, it was quite a bit of snow. Actually, the road was snowed in for a number of days. I think five days or so, that they couldn't clear the road. This guy was a Christian, and he actually left a diary. He died in his motor home, stuck in the snow on this road that I'm very familiar with.

In his diary, he talked about the Lord. And thank God he went to heaven. But he wrote in the diary, and they had excerpts from his diary in this article that I have. He said, "I guess the Lord

Flourishing in the Midst of Trials (Part 1)

must want me here, He can rescue me and maybe He'll send help." The guy actually died in the motor home. I think, from starvation.

He may have not have been in great health anyway, because I think, basically someone goes five days without food, they're not going to die from that, but I think it was compounded with some other things. On day four or the beginning of day five, he expired.

Where he was stuck, maybe he didn't know it, but he could have gotten out of the motor home. And it wouldn't have been easy walking, but he could have walked down the road. Real easy to follow because the road was right next to where the hill came down. He could have walked down that snowy road, and there may have been snow up above his knees. Wouldn't have been easygoing, but in a minimum of three or four hours, maximum of maybe five and a half hours, if he was just really slow, he could have walked down to where there were houses, where there were people. He could have walked out in hours, but in his mind, according to his little diary, he was stuck, but there was a way out.

I just want to tell you there is a way out for you. Jesus is the great way out. He's the way out of hell. He's the way out of eternal destruction. When we were lost and undone, dead in our trespasses, in sins, when we were enemies of God, Christ died for us. He shed His precious blood on Calvary's tree and paid the price for our sins. And after three days and three nights, the claims of God's eternal justice were forever satisfied.

Jesus was raised from the dead, and if you'll put your trust in Him, my friend, you will find the way out. Jesus said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life." He's the way to heaven, to depart from hell. He's the way to glory, to depart from destruction. If you'll call upon Jesus today, you can come into an eternal relationship with Him. He loves you, He sees you, and He's waiting.

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley