

Shake It Off

We all have times in life when it seems like we've hit a dead end or things aren't turning out the way we hoped or expected. However, I've learned from experience that when we feel stuck, discouraged, or disappointed, that's not the time to throw in the towel and give up!

I realize this isn't easy. There have been times in my life when I've felt discouraged and even wondered if I could hold on and keep going to get through the pain to the place of victory.

Through these experiences, I've learned that when you're in the middle of a painful situation, it can often feel like God isn't doing anything about it. But it's vitally important to trust Him during this time, because He is working in your heart to make you more like Christ. And the good news is you will never flunk a test with God because you get as many "do-overs" as you need until you pass!

The truth is, God uses the difficult times in your life to build your faith, develop your character, and make you stronger. It helps if you can remember that testimonies come by passing tests. And Jesus says in John 16:33 (NIV): "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

So when you're facing a painful issue or situation, the best advice I can give you is...

- Never give up! Fight the temptation to think there's no way out of your situation. *Jesus is the Way* (John 14:6). This is your time to draw close and follow Him.

- Avoid blaming God or thinking He is punishing you for some sin. He is just using the situation to work in your life. And while it may not always feel good, His purpose will always be for your good (Rom. 8:28).
- Do what's right even when you're hurting, when it doesn't feel right, or when others treat you badly. Do something good for as many people as you can, as often as you can.
- Don't withdraw and sulk or isolate yourself from others. Remember, you can be pitiful or powerful, but you can't be both! Many times, God may use others to encourage you in this time.
- Keep your word and honor your commitments. This is a character-building time and you are being prepared for promotion and greater things.
- Don't stop 't give up hope that God can improve your situation!

Maybe you've heard the story about a donkey that fell into a pit. Upon seeing what had happened, his owner thought about it for a while, then decided the pit was too deep and the donkey was too old, so he would just bury him there.



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He called some friends and neighbors to help, and they began to shovel dirt into the pit.

At first the donkey cried out, obviously terrified of his

situation. Later, however, his owner noticed that he'd gotten quiet and thought he'd probably already died. But the donkey had *not* died.

- When the owner looked down in the pit, he saw that every time dirt fell on its back, the donkey would shake it off and step on it, packing it down under his hoofs. This continued for hours until, finally, the donkey had packed the dirt enough to lift himself up and *out* of that pit!
- We can learn something from that donkey. Life will throw dirt on us from time to time. It may be in relationships or our finances or health. But this is a time to learn how to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will show you how to shake off the dirt and step up, giving you glimpses of His glory in each step you take.

There will always be obstacles to overcome. There will always be “issues” to get past. But there will also be do-overs, second chances, and new beginnings.

Remember, it's never too late—just don't give up! As you do your part—as you hold on to hope, move forward, and refuse to give up on God—He will be faithful to do what you *can't* do.

So, if you're in a “pit” and don't know what to do, don't give up hope. Make a determined decision to trust God through it all, because He wants to restore you. He wants to take all of the bad and make something good out of it. In Christ, you can shake off the “tribulation and distress and suffering” and step into the fresh start God has planned for your life!

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 150 books, including *BATTLEFIELD OF THE MIND* and *OVERCOMING EVERY PROBLEM (FaithWords)*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* program, which is broadcast to millions in over 110 languages.

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