

Wow. This week has not turned out as I had planned! How about you? Did you think that we would be at home with everything cancelled? It has been an unusual week – grocery store trips trying to find needed items, moving my daughter home from college, and trying to find a rhythm as everyone works from home. It is chaotic, but in the midst of it all, there is a peace that can only come from our amazing God.

This week has brought a great slowing down in our lives. You may remember a devotion that I wrote last year called Snow Down? Trusting God's plan when the snow comes seems much easier now! We know about snow! We know what to do if it snows...how to prepare, the fun that we can have when it hits, and we can estimate when the melting will occur. Snow give us a timetable to work within. There is uncertainty about it, but since we live in North Carolina, we know it is an event that won't last long.

Being asked to stay home during a virus is much different. There are many scientists trying to learn more about it – how it functions, how to protect people, and how long it lasts. But the truth is, it may be a while before we know more about it. While we know that the snow is going to melt and everything is going to go back to normal within a reasonable amount of time, this is just different.

Different is hard. It brings worry and anxiety - uncertainty and frustration. Different causes us to pause because we don't know what to do. But, when we pause, we have an opportunity. We can stop and seek the Lord, asking Him what His plans are for us as we navigate different. While different is hard, I want you to know that God reminds us in His Word that He will never leave us. God is with you, even though life is very different right now. While we know this is true, we might need to practice His presence to keep us from being anxious.

How can we practice His presence? An easy way is to go outside! There is a song from **Anything But Normal** that talks about creation singing praise to God. It is a beautiful reminder – especially in the spring. Walk outside in the morning and listen. The birds are creating a symphony of praise! The flowers and trees are blooming and budding, covering the landscape with color. The sunrises and sunsets paint pictures that remind us that the heavens are really declaring the glory of God! He is with us!!

Another thing that you can do to practice His presence? Open your Bible! Dust off the devotional book that you received at Christmas and begin again! Find a page in a journal that you've been meaning to use, grab the fancy gel pens or the colored pencils and write or draw about who God is. Take a favorite Bible verse, hum a melody, and turn it into a song! God has given us so many ways to connect with Him – give it a try!

Service is another great way to practice God's presence. Serve your family in love. You aren't the only one who is struggling with different! Speak gently. Find ways to be helpful. Obey your parents. Smile. Be a good sport when you lose the game. Simple actions that show our family God's grace as we love them through the different.

Know that you and your family are in my prayers during this time! Please pray for those who are sick, caring for others, and serving in other ways during this time. And remember God is with you and you are loved!

KEY VERSE: Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. John 14:27