

## **How God Remains in All Things**

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Hi, everybody. My name's Mary Lenaberg. I am so excited to be walking with you over the course of the next few weeks, and, today, we're going to talk about how God remains in all things. First, we're going to pray. We're always going to ask the Holy Spirit into our talks together, so let's begin with the prayer

### **Come Holy Spirit**

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Come, Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Oh, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

### **God Remains with You**

So, I wanted to talk to you today about this idea that God remains in all things. There are many times that we enter seasons of life where we are praying, right? And we do not feel God's presence. You know, we are in a time of crisis, we are in a time of distress, and we go to our knees, and we are begging the Lord to come to our assistance and our aid, and we don't feel Him. We don't hear Him. And so, many of us, in that situation, quit. We're like, fine. God, if you don't want to have anything to do with my distress, then I don't want to have anything to do with you in times of my distress, right? And so, we kind of quit on God, and here's the secret, y'all. He never, ever left you. He never left you. He remains with you.

So how is this? How does God remain? How are we to continue to come to Him, to continue to keep our hearts and our ears open to His voice in those times of distress when we don't feel His presence? We have to remember a couple of things. The first is God is love, right? He feels the pain that you are feeling. He is present in it, and He works to bring good out of every situation there is.

Many of you know me and know my story. I had the great privilege of being a wife of over 30 years, being a mom to four souls, two I did not get to hold this side of heaven, and two I did. And our second child, our daughter, Courtney, passed away almost, it's been seven years now, and she had needs and her life was very, very challenging, and our life with her was challenging. And it was a beautiful challenge, right? It was a gift. She was a gift to us. But there were many, many times during the 22 years I had the privilege of loving her this side of heaven she had a seizure disorder, she was medically fragile, we were in and out of the hospital, there were many times where I was begging God, "Make it stop, Lord. Make it stop. Heal her." I would beg Him to heal her. I would beg Him to heal our family. Her disabilities, and the stress of caring for her had brought great strife to my marriage, great difficulties to our family life, and we were in a

constant state of crisis. And there were many, many times throughout those 22 years where I did not feel the presence of God. But I learned over time that He was there. He had remained, He had been listening, He had been ministering. He brought us people. He brought us answers, just not in the way that I thought He should, right? He wasn't listening to my plan. He was following His plan. And so, His love remained with us in those times of crisis. Took us a while to figure that out. But we get discouraged when we find ourselves becoming lax or even stopping the prayers. There were many times I would yell at God and be like, that's it, I don't want anything to do with you. You're not listening to me. You're not hearing me. You're not honoring my pain. You're not acknowledging how hard this is for us. And so, I had to figure out, in those seasons, what was I going to do, or what could I do? How could I go about maintaining my relationship with the Lord, even though I did not feel His presence daily?

### **Believe and Acknowledge God Daily**

So, the first thing I learned how to do was I had to believe in and acknowledge who God is, right? Because that's where Satan speaks. He speaks in our doubt. He speaks in our frustration. He speaks in our crisis. He speaks in our loneliness. So, I had to remind myself, and in my prayer, remind God that I knew who He was. And I acknowledged that God was God, and I was not. I could not see the whole plan. Only He could. My job was to be radically obedient in those times of crisis, and to surrender my expectations and what I thought should be to the Lord, because He knew how it was all going to go. And my job was to love my daughter and love my husband and love my son and love my God and love my neighbor as best I could.

I didn't always succeed. I was not always successful in that. I still struggle to this day during these times of spiritual dryness. But the first step is acknowledging that God is God and that He has you in the palm of His hand, that He loves you and that He has a purpose for you and for your life, no matter what is happening.

### **Focus on God not on You**

The second thing I had to learn was to keep my eyes on Jesus, not on my current circumstances, right? We can get lost in the crisis du jour. We can get frustrated, and that's when that doubt seeps in, if we're looking at our circumstances and we don't keep our eyes on the prize, which is heaven. We were not meant for this world. We are simply sojourners here. We are on a journey. We are being prepared to spend an eternity praising and worshiping our God. When we forget that heaven is the end goal, then everything that's happening, all the suffering, all of the hardship, all of the crisis overwhelms us, and we begin to lose our faith.

So, we have to keep our eyes on Jesus. We have to remain focused on the cross and what He did for us. He loved us so much that He gave His life for us. And when we are in crisis, when we turn to the cross and we cling to the cross, knowing what He did for us and how much He loved us, we, in turn, are able to bear that suffering in His name. Keep your eyes on the cross and not your current circumstance.

## **Talk to God Everyday**

The third thing I learned was to talk to God every single day, to continue to pray and speak the words that I read every day in the inspired word of God, in the Bible, right? We teach our teens and youth ministry the Bible means “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.” I’ll never forget it, because it’s true. This is the divine, inspired word of God. He speaks to us. It is where we find out who we are to Him and who He is to us. In our prayer, we speak to God. In scripture, God speaks to us, so we must keep that door open. We must keep our hearts open, our minds open to that communication, that sacred communication with Him. Even if you don’t feel His presence, read His words and remember who He is and what He has done for you.

## **Share Your Feelings to God**

The fourth thing is very important, and it took me a while to kind of grasp this idea. Don’t deny your feelings of your distress and your loneliness, your conflict. Don’t deny those feelings. That’s one of the biggest mistakes I made early in my young journey with the Lord, in my young life with Him, was I would be ashamed that I felt doubt, that I felt confusion. I would kind of try and hide those feelings from the Lord. And here’s the thing, my friends, God gave you those feelings for a reason and a purpose. We have to remember that our emotions are God-given. What we do with them is our choice, right?

So, we think something, I think I am lonely. I think I am in distress, and what happens? I have emotions related to that. Then what happens? Well, those emotions drive me to action, and action drives to a result. Now, sometimes my action is to sit down and binge watch something on Netflix. That’s when Satan wins. He wins in my giving over of my emotions. Like, fine, I can’t do anything about it. I quit, right? But when my emotion, when that thought of, oh, my gosh, I’m lonely, I’m in distress, leads me to go to adoration, leads me to seek the sacraments, leads me to a friend’s house, then what happens? God’s there. He sends His people. He sends His angels, His helpers, my best friend and a cranberry orange muffin and a hot cup of coffee and an ear to listen and a heart open to my distress and my loneliness. He sends a coworker over to your desk with a piece of chocolate. He sends your mother, your mother-in-law. He sends your five-year-old child who needs a book read. He’ll send someone when we cry out in our distress, and we use that emotion. We don’t deny that emotion, but we allow that emotion to lead us into action.

So don’t be ashamed of your emotions. Offer them back to the Lord in thanksgiving. Like, what do you want me to do? I feel lonely. I am in distress. Lord, what do I do? You come to Him, you cling to that cross, you keep your eyes on Him, not your current circumstances. You acknowledge that He is God, and you are not, and that He has a plan, and you surrender. Surrender your expectations of how it’s all going to work out.

## **Remember What God has done for You**

The fifth thing, the final thing, really, is to remember what God has done for you. When we remember the truth of who God is and the miracles He has worked in our life, our feelings, those emotions, are transformed, right? We remember that thought leads to emotion, emotion leads to action, action leads to results. But when we come before the Lord and we remind Him, Lord,

thank you. Thank you. You know, in my circumstance with my daughter, thank you for giving me Dr. Santos, an amazing neurologist, that, through many steps that I did not see coming, God provided this incredible physician for us to guide us through the last 10 years of her life. God brought me people from the internet to pray for us and to surround us with love. God brought our son to a place of healing and wholeness in the midst of all of this distress of our daughter's life. God redeemed and restored my marriage, through the teachings of theology of the body, again among the crisis and the background of distress.

Because I learned to do these five things, right? I learned to acknowledge that God is God. I learned to keep my eyes on Him and not my current circumstance. I learned that, when I didn't feel His presence, that I needed to go to Him, right? Not to deny my emotions, not to deny what was going on, but to talk to Him and to bring all of it to Him. And in that openness and in that prayer, to allow Him to minister to me, sometimes through His word, sometimes through people and through situations.

### **1 John 2:15-17**

I wanted to leave you with a specific scripture. This is from 1 John 2, and its verse 17. Now, I'm going to read you verse 15 and 16 first, but it's verse 17 that I really want you to pray with at the end of this talk. Verse 15 says, *"Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not for Him, not in Him. For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and the pretentious life is not from the Father, but from the world."* And here is verse 17, *"Yet the world and its enticement are passing away, but whoever does the will of God remains forever."*

Whoever does the will of God remains forever. God remains in all things because He is in us, because we are made in His image and likeness. And we look like Him, and He created us because He thought we would love it. He thought we would enjoy the experience, right? And so, He created this beautiful world, but because of the sins of our first parents, we now live in a time where we feel separate from Him. We feel distant from Him.

### **Five Steps to Remember**

And so, just a gentle reminder that when you do not feel the presence of the Lord in your prayer life, five things. Remember who God is. God is God and I am not, right? Remember who He is. Keep your eyes on the crucifix. Keep your eyes on Him. Keep your eyes on heaven, and not on your current circumstance. Talk to Him, do not stop that conversation. Talk to Him. Tell Him everything. Don't deny your emotions or your feelings. Offer them back to Him, right? And then remind yourself and remind Him the good that He has done in your life. Thank you so much for joining me for this talk. I want you to pray over 1 John 2:17. Write down these five steps, put them inside your Bible. Think on them when you're in times of distress and in turmoil, and know always that God remains in all things, until the end of time. Thanks so much for joining me today, guys. God bless you all.