

I AM WITH YOU

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"Shhhhh. I'm here." If you've been a parent for longer than labor you have absolutely showered your baby with this promise. Because it would take the apocalypse to come between the two of you if he showed the faintest of needs. So you know the fierce love behind the statement when you hear it:

"...I will never leave you nor forsake you." — Joshua 1:5

It's all over the Bible. This love-soaked promise is *dripping* off of the pages of his Word to us. According to John Ortberg in his book, *God is Closer Than You Think*, *"The most frequent promise in the Bible is 'I will be with you.'"* You can scarcely turn a page without being reminded that this is true.

God's original decision was to create people who could have relationship with him, as seen with Adam and Eve. God's ongoing interactions with Israel center around Him being with them, calling them "his people." David's intimate relationship with God led him to beg for it to continue in light of his missteps. We even get a picture of God's plan coming to completion in Revelation 21:3

when God will dwell with His people in the fullest and truest sense." -- Jack Archer

In the prophecies spoken about Jesus by the prophet Isaiah, he was referenced as **"Immanuel," which means "God with us."** In fact, being with us was so important, that Jesus was sent to bear the burden of our choice to disregard God's direction, to sin. In his perfection, in his deep love for God, Jesus felt the heart-stopping pain of not being "with" his Father. He knows the agony of the absence of God's presence. In his final moments his cry was this: *"My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me?"*

Jesus was temporally forsaken so that we might have the option to enjoy being with God for all of forever.

*"And be sure of this: **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age."* — Matthew 28:20

I think the phrasing is intriguing here. God is not just *observing* you. He is *with* you. **His presence in your life is participatory rather than observational.** This truth means huge things to people in a wide variety of contexts. His presence overcomes obstacles, strengthens our resolve, dissolves fears, offers hope, wins our battles, unveils eternity. But whatever the context, the truth remains; *He is with us*. God is not a distant God. And **the fact that he is not a distant God will resonate with us as directed by whatever we believe about who he is.**

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged..." — Deuteronomy 31:8

Because God is with us, we are not simply relieved from loneliness — we are relieved from the incapacitation of fear and discouragement. That is HUGE. When the purest and strongest and most overcoming of all loves is found in the person of God — who is *with you* always; well, it changes things. It impacts our response. **And because things do not always go the way we expect, and because of who he is, this promise matters.**

When our otherwise normal life is interrupted by an inconvenient diagnosis, this matters.

When all things familiar become foreign; either by distance or disaster; this matters.

When 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians are beheaded by a evil enemy; this matters.

When our sweet littles cry out over an intrusion of their peace; we are swift to swaddle them in our arms, whisper the promise of our presence, and usher in peace. And God in his goodness does the same.