



## My Story of the Wilderness

*by Julie White*

It all started on a Thursday in August. I woke up during the night in severe pain. Even the smallest movement caused shooting pain through my core. The pain was so bad I almost cried.

For almost three weeks, I struggled to feel better, wondering if pruning trees for a few hours had caused such a problem. I sat most of the time because I experienced excruciating pain in my ribs when I moved. To exacerbate my misery, I caught a bug that added chills, fever, and nausea to the mix. I kept hoping I could kick whatever caused my symptoms.

When my breathing became labored, my husband urged me to go to the ER. Tests revealed fluid in my lungs and shadows of fluid in my heart. I've had pneumonia before, but not with such deep pain that rippled through my entire body every time I moved. I felt weak and disoriented.

The medical staff started IV medication which brought up fears within me because many nurses have had trouble inserting IV's into my veins. I also had a couple of A-fib incidents—I've never had heart issues in my life, and this of course caused more fear as a cardiologist joined my medical team. In the whirlwind of circumstances, I felt like my body was out of control. I was scared.

**But do you want to know the hardest part?** Waking in the night, hearing machines pumping medication into my body, feeling very alone in the dark, and wondering, **"Where is God?"**

I started to cry and then just sobbed.

As my sobbing subsided and I lay alone in the little room, I felt depleted and empty. Then a phrase from Psalm 139 entered my mind like a clock ticking with familiar chimes: **"Where can I go from your Spirit?"**

**My heart quieted.**

I felt the presence of God begin to seep into my soul. Feeling unable to do anything, no journaling, no planning, no writing notes or working, no reading, no specific praying—I **just sat in the presence of God and felt his love envelop me.**

When I was feeling better a few weeks later, I had time to ponder what happened and wrote in my journal:

"Lord, my plans sure went awry! I had very different plans for the end of summertime. I was surprised—you weren't! I feel like you looked ahead and cried—knowing I was moving into a time of great pain,

confusion, and fear. But also inviting me to experience more deeply your presence and love.”

**Through this experience, I know deep within my soul that God doesn't abandon me when I'm distracted, overwhelmed by feelings, unable to think clearly, or even reach out to him.** The Lord showed me that even when I can't call out to him, he is there.

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me

and the light become night around me,"

even the darkness will not be dark to you;

the night will shine like the day,

for darkness is as light to you (Psalm 139:7-12).

**God used Scripture hidden in my heart to remind me of the truth and release me from fear:** God has me. God helps me. God loves me. It's all about grace.

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Julie is the Executive Director of *The Unfolding Soul*; a ministry serving those who yearn for a more life-giving connection with God. TUS offers spiritual direction, leadership coaching, speaking, and an eLetter that helps people discover God's treasure in all aspects of daily life.

Julie is an ordained minister, with an M.A. in Ministry & Leadership and a Spiritual Direction & Formation certificate. She enjoys time with family, reading, outdoor activity...and a good cup of tea.

Early on in ministry she connected with NEWIM, which exposed her to a deeper understanding of walking with Jesus and leadership skills, which continue to influence her life and ministry today.

**[Listen to her testimony.](#)**

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