



In our house, quarantine has quickly become the dreaded word of 2021. It has ascended to top the charts above phrases such as “clean your room”, “no more electronics”, and “eat your vegetables”. The very word “quarantine” denotes isolation, restricted movement, and separation. In our house it has also been accompanied by other words such as anxiety, fear, and discouragement. Fear of being called over the intercom. Fear of being sent home. Fear of missing out on all the scheduled events. For my second grader, this is the third year that has been interrupted due to Covid-19.

God convicted me this week that the key is not the interruption, yet the attitude with which the interruption is met. I said to The Lord, “It is chaotic and I just want it to be back to normal.” He said, “Julie, WHAT is within your control?” He directed me to 1 Thessalonians 3 where Paul sends Timothy with the task to strengthen, encourage, and sustain.

1 Thessalonians 3:3, *“and to keep you from being shaken by the troubles you were going through....”*

Being shaken equates to the start of this school year for so many. God impressed upon my heart to “be a Timothy” even when the ground is shaking.

1 Thessalonians 3:12, *“And may The Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows.”*

- May our love overflow more and more for the school nurse tirelessly working to chart all the things, EVEN with the already busy schedule.
- May our love overflow more and more for the single mom or dad juggling work and kids at home.
- May our love overflow more and more for the school principal with decision after decision to make as they contract trace day in and day out.

- May our love overflow more and more for the teacher who is teaching in-person, virtual, grading papers, answering emails, and trying his/her best to do it all well.
- May our love overflow for the ones who are so desperately grieving the loss of their parents, grandparents, and family members.

One day The Lord will complete His "contact tracing" on each of us. May He find that our steps were traced back by imprints of grace, peace, joy, hope, respect, and prayer. May they have increased the rate at which His Great Name was spread. May our fruit be known by dispensing salt and increasing light in the community where He has placed us. May our steps be ordered by encouragement and faithfulness, EVEN in the midst of heartache and fear.

2 Cor 4:17," For our present troubles are small and won't last very long, YET they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever. So we don't look at the troubles we see now, rather we fix our eyes on the things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever."

So when the dreaded quarantine comes, again, and then maybe again and again this year, may we be found living in compelling love instead of complaining about our constrained chaos. God said, "*Julie- focus on leaving tracks that forge an eternal impact—ones that can be traced back to MY goodness and for MY glory. It's not about you at all.*" Ouch- the truth hurts at times. As I was wallowing in my self-pity, God reminded me (not so gently) that this is not my home. One day we will walk those streets of gold. I told my Connect Group class Sunday that if they were looking for me in Heaven --they would most definitely find me by the buffet where the calories just simply do not count! 😊