

48 Hours

You come into senior year with a different mindset than years prior, as you realize your time is running short at this place, with these people. You attend as many campus events as possible, hangout with your roommates every chance you get, deepen the relationships you have formed with classmates, and start soaking in the richness of the community God placed you in back in 2016. Classes are harder, but you know how to handle it as you have three years of learning what it's like to be a good student. Application deadlines are here and you do every possible, last minute thing you can think of to enhance your resume. Suddenly, your life is going 100 miles per hour, and there seems to be no more time to pause and reflect on your time at TU. You fill your time with practicum hours, research experience, studying, softball practice (or any sport's practice), and anything else you can fit into your already busy schedule. Who needs time to reflect when you will have plenty time after graduation?

You get accepted to the grad school you've been working so hard to get into, you win awards for a research presentation, your practicum hours become your passion, and you start to feel on top of the world. Finally, everything you have gone through in your collegiate career, every tear shed in the library as you hear the words "The library is closing in 15 minutes," (even though you STILL don't feel confident about the upcoming exam), every hour spent in professors' offices trying to understand material, every 17-credit-hour semester you've taken to stay on track...suddenly all of your hard work is paying off. You start to see the finish line, but you don't want to cross it...not yet. Who knew you would start to be dragged across not even 48 hours later?

It started with softball. Your season was postponed. Not the worst news, but not ideal. You can continue forward with optimism. Season won't get canceled, this will be over soon. As soon as you say these words, season's canceled and classes are dismissed until mid-April. It hurts, but you are thankful for the time you had on TUSB and you are DEFINITELY thankful that we are coming back in April. Yeah, life will look different on campus, but at least you'll be together. You start scheduling lunches, coffee dates, and team hangouts JUST IN CASE you won't be coming back, but you're hopeful. You squeeze as many memories as you can over the weekend, trying to make the most out of it.

You leave campus with uncertainty, saying goodbye to everyone not knowing if this is the final goodbye or a "see you later" goodbye. You hug your roommates that you have been living with for three years. Shaking, not able to say anything. You cling to your best friends for as long as possible, not sure if you have the strength to leave them for maybe the last time. But we'll be back in April, right? You pack up your car with all the things you thought were essential in August but realize you probably didn't need this many clothes. Your hands shake as you close your door and turn the ignition. You look in the rearview mirror as you pull away, looking at the place that has turned into your home. The place you belong. Suddenly your vision is blurry, as your eyes begin to swell up with tears. You pray to God, "God please don't let this be the end. I'm not ready."

You arrive home, but it doesn't feel like home. The last time you were here was Christmas break, and you never thought you'd be moving back. Your glimpse of entering the real world, starting your new life seems faded as you unpack all your belongings in your childhood bedroom that still has your high school trophies on the shelves. Those trophies don't

mean much anymore. Your younger brother, a senior in high school, is facing the same thing. Only he's ready to be gone. High school was great for him, but it wasn't a home. TU is your home. How do you grieve your community? The people who have become family? Your parents say, "welcome home," as you finish unpacking, but they don't know how much that statement stings. This isn't home. You yearn for Upland.

The first few days, you neglect your professor's advice. You don't take the time to reflect on the things that you lost, the things you need to grieve. Why would you? You're going back in April. Pretty soon, you start to feel overwhelmed; overwhelmed with sadness and frustrations. You start to lose hope, but you don't want to admit it. You HAVE to be back in April. It wouldn't be fair otherwise. An email comes. Campus is closed for the rest of semester. Ouch. You cry for a few seconds, then you pull it together. It doesn't feel real, this is just spring break. You neglect starting homework that's due next week, because you have all the time in the world these days. The longer you put it off, the longer it doesn't feel real.

It's the weekend before classes begin. You open your laptop to start homework only to shut it again. For some reason, the idea of doing homework makes your eyes start to water. Then you realize you haven't let yourself face reality, as this is your new reality. You have to do homework, attend class sessions, take exams, reach out to professors all from your childhood bedroom. You finally start to reflect on what this change has done to you. You weep.

You then decide that you have to keep moving forward, despite the world around you, despite what you feel inside. In fact, you don't really know what you feel inside, you just know that you hurt. You do your homework, prepare for online classes, and thank God for technology. Each time you start an assignment, you feel the urge to cry. Actually, everything you do makes you feel the urge to cry. Everything reminds you of something from TU. Drinking coffee reminds you of the Bean, a turkey sandwich reminds you of the D.C., the stethoscope on your wall reminds you of your patients that you probably won't see again. You fake a smile in front of your family, but they can see the hurt in your eyes. They know this isn't your home. They weren't ready for you to be back either. They've wanted nothing but happiness for you, and it seems like everything that made you happy is gone. Wait...that isn't right. God isn't gone. At least that's what people are telling you, right? Right. He isn't gone. In fact, He's been right beside you through this whole process. You feel His nearness, and you sit in His presence.

You weep again as you press into your relationship with God. The only thing that has remained constant, the only thing that you can rely on in these uncertain times is the presence of your Father. You give Him your brokenness, your loneliness, your confusion, your anger, and everything else. You feel yourself surrendering to the one Who has been calling you from the very beginning. You feel comfort, but you notice you're still hurting. You acknowledge your feelings, you understand that they're valid, and you know God is good. When all is stripped away, God remains...and that's the hope you cling to every second moving forward as you grieve the abrupt ending of your senior year.