

the **Encourager**



evangelise equip educate



Magazine of the Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust



A selfless life reaps an

A devotion by Muriel Larson

... BUT THE MUSIC GOES ON

It must have been one of the saddest days (musically) of my life! One afternoon eleven or twelve years ago I picked up my deserted violin case, opened it up, took out my precious instrument, hopefully put resin on the bow, and tentatively put bow to string. Alas! The notes were wobbly and weak. My right hand could wield the bow well enough, but my left shoulder was no longer holding my violin up sufficiently firmly.

Some childhood history: an old violin had been gathering dust on top of a cupboard in my parents' bedroom in Gisborne for years before I really noticed it and started to ask questions. Dad in his direct way rang up one of the music teachers and arranged a series of lessons for me. So Mum took me to meet Miss Hendrickson. That old violin saw me through beginner levels. But then Miss Hendrickson graciously offered me one of her instruments – it came to life with me, she said! So her violin, complete with case, became my violin. With a really musical music teacher our school orchestra went on from strength to strength. When I went to India as a missionary in 1960 the violin travelled with me. After our marriage it also found a companion in Ron's piano-accordion and went to and from India, as well as travelling long distances within India as well. It had nearly as many adventures as we did, bumping along bad roads in country buses, clinging to the top

of piled luggage on our motor cycle, enriching the worship of missionary expats on holiday in the southern hills. Once the bow slipped from its holder; the nut-end got lodged in the sound-hole and caused substantial damage, but to my tremendous relief it proved repairable. On another occasion it got left on the tarmac of the drop-off area outside Sydney Airport. We didn't notice its absence until our onward flight to New Zealand was being called. What panic! – but one of the group with us said it could have been left just where we exited the car we had travelled in. "I go check." The intercom had called our flight, but our friend reached us and handed the intact violin back to me!! Whew!! I no longer "own" my violin -- it has been handed over to grandchildren. Who will pick it up and say, "Can I try this?"

The stroke, plus wear and tear of post-polio syndrome, means I can no longer play my violin. I can't even sing loudly. BUT the songs of charismatic praise which I used to play and sing are still very much with me. Worship along with me.....



*Victory I have in Jesus Christ
Forgiveness for He was crucified
Wholeness in every part of me
Deliverance for He has set me free
I'm reigning with Him upon the throne
And conquering o'er Satan's power below
Living a life with Christ as Lord and King*

*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever
I will sing I will sing
I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever
I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.
With my mouth will I make known
Thy faithfulness, Thy faithfulness
With my mouth will I make known
Thy faithfulness to all generations.....*

To say nothing of this Scripture-in-Song from Isaiah:

*Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,
And let him return to the Lord and to our God.
For He will have compassion upon him, He will abundantly pardon him.
Return to the Lord.*

Many churches have long ago thrown out their copies of "Songs of Praise" and "Songs of Worship" (after all, they were published thirty years ago). Yet the message of these choruses is as vibrantly true and glorious, for me and for everyone, as when the Holy Spirit touched this and that person in power, and praise spilled out all over the world. So even if my violin is now silent, and my voice dries up after the first few bars, within my heart the music goes on. God is still the Lord, and He is worthy to be praised. So I praise Him!

**DO FIND SOME OLD COPIES, AND PRAISE AND WORSHIP THE LORD.
LET YOUR HEART REJOICE, LET YOUR VOICE BE GLAD.....**

NATIONAL CAMP

ALL welcome – do get your registration in NOW! That will help us so much with all our planning.

Post in your form, or better, download and send it in on-line from our website

We need people who have been before, particularly helpers and nurses, OTs and physios, young and old – you all have a place.

It'll be an amazing weekend. You will be blessed spiritually and have lots of fun. The speaker is: Ps Geoff Wiklund along with testimonies.

Labour Weekend 19 – 22 October 2012
At Totara Springs, Matamata
Friday 6pm to 2-3pm Monday

THEME "It's spring" -A new day a new season

COSTS: **\$150 Adults**
\$100: 11-14 yrs
\$70: 5-10 yrs
Free under 5

Registrar: Richard Goh

118 B Sunset Rd
Unsworth Heights
Auckland 0632

Tel: (09)-444-3062

Email: cmwdtcamp@gmail.com



SPONSORSHIP

We so appreciate past camps where people have sponsored individuals fees and helped towards other areas such as transport etc. We again ask for sponsorship this year as we usually need \$12,000 extra on top of the camp fees.

FIRST OF SEPTEMBER - OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NEW BUILDING AND REBRANDING OF THE NEW LOGO.

In the morning, with limited space, we have to restrict the official opening to "by invitation only"; but in the afternoon everyone is very welcome from 2 to 5. Do come and look over the new building, and see all the improvements on the present one. We'd be very pleased to show you around and give you afternoon tea.

~ See page 5



A SEMINAR ON HOW TO HELP PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



An ideal preparation for National Camp and useful for all to experience:

WHEN Saturday 6th October
WHERE 'The Centre', 173 Mt Smart Rd, Onehunga, Auckland
TIME 9:30am - 3pm
COST \$10 (bring your own lunch)
Coffee and tea will be provided

CONTENT It covers different types of disabilities, testimonies, skits, practical demonstrations and a time for questions. This seminar will introduce you to the world of disability and will show you how you can help and encourage those with disabilities to reach their full potential.

CONTACT The Centre 09 636 4763



Courage is not the absence of

PASTOR TIMOTHY LEE'S TESTIMONY

Life is tough but God is still good. Life changed dramatically in May 2010 when I fell off my mountain bike in the Redwood Forest near our home in Rotorua. I felt God's peace lying on the bush floor though aware I couldn't move. They operated at Rotorua Hospital, concerned for my life. I was not a pretty sight; nose broken, socket beneath one eye sunken into the sinus cavity, jaw dislocated, head scalped, brain fluid leaking out my nose, a few vertebrae cracked, and my spinal cord impaired. If I did survive they told my family, I could be on a ventilator for the rest of my life.

Two days later they flew me to Middlemore Hospital for further treatment. Whilst in a coma doctors were concerned I might have significant brain damage. I have survived with no neurological deficiencies! Our local church family and Christian community around the world prayed. I believe their faith has kept me alive. FB. Meyer says the greatest tragedy in life is not unanswered prayer but unoffered prayer!

I spent 42 days in ICU enduring different medical procedures and operations. At times I felt nervous, vulnerable and even fearful. God reminded me that I was not forgotten by sending a real angel in the form of a cleaning lady. She spoke the most precious things as though from God's lips. God's presence continued with me during the next 3 1/2 months at the Otago spinal unit. Many people visited me and supported me as I commenced rehab. I began grieving the losses of normal life but found solace in encouraging others.

Often we blame God and doubt His goodness. The Bible says that faith, hope and love will endure 1 Cor 13:13. He is for us, not against us. Suffering is part of our faith Rom 8: 17, but we still cry out to God in pain. I'm encouraged by Jesus who cried out to God on the cross feeling abandoned. I am secure in my faith but still feel distant from God at times. Viktor Frankl, who survived the Holocaust, said: "A weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes, but a strong faith is strengthened by them."

If we are having a bad day God doesn't expect us to give up faith. We will always have trouble, says Paul, but we won't let troubles break us. We get perplexed but don't give up; we get hunted down but God never abandons us; we get knocked down but we get up and keep going-2 Cor 4: 8. In fact God comforts us so that we may help others to endure their troubles- 2 Cor 1: 5-7.

I have a wonderful family who help me to endure each day. My wife Jenny is a tower of strength, running our home in organised fashion. Our eldest son Hamish, shown here when our youth pastor and I baptized him, helps to care for me whilst training to be a builder. Our younger son Callum, is still at school, and has autistic spectrum disorder. Both boys have been impacted by my accident, not able to do the same practical things with me; yet in special ways we connect by



walking, talking, watching movies and going out to dinner together. We still go on family holidays despite the logistical challenges!

I'm privileged to remain the senior pastor at Rotorua Baptist Church, working half-time mostly! ACC has put in ramps and a lift, plus I use voice recognition software and other gadgets to aid my work. I'm part of a great staff team and local community. I have exercise equipment, and our house has been modified. You have to fight bureaucracy for everything, but I am blessed to live in a country where support systems like ACC exist.

I'm frustrated and annoyed by the intrusions on life and family plus the slowness of achieving anything. I trained as a diesel



engineer and grew up on a farm, learning to be efficient and practical. So there is much to adapt in what I consider to be a messy life at times. However, there is hope and a great deal to live for when I consider how messy life was for Jesus; even right from birth. If we trust Him by faith He hops into our mess and gives us the courage to face the struggles and traumas of life! I find solace in that Jesus was called a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief Is 53:3. Maybe He can help you too...

AFRICA IN A WHEELCHAIR

John King, an itinerant Bible teacher, writes, 'A few years ago I had a really wild idea. Actually, it was well out of the box. I think it came in a period of sheer insanity. I asked my daughter-in-law to accompany me to Africa. And even though she is in a wheelchair, she quickly responded "Yes!" This is what she has written after the experience.'



As a person with a disability, I have faced, and overcome, many challenges but my decision to travel to Africa is probably one of the biggest challenges I would ever "willingly" subject myself to, with no manual or guide book. I went with my husband, Vaughan, and my father-in-law, to share my life testimony. Ultimately, all the preparation and planning did not prepare me for the challenges or culture shock! This experience impacted me in a life changing way. Being in Africa was a crazy reality for me. I didn't see it as a possibility from a wheelchair. My first days were rough, and I honestly thought I wouldn't make it. I knew this adventure would affect me not only emotionally but also physically. My first attempt at a shower was an experience like no other. Three days into the trip, and I had not built up the nerve to go to

the bathroom for anything other than an urgent visit. Each time I tried, there were more and more bugs and flies circling. One night when I finally said, "I have to be strong and do this," the electricity went out for the whole night.

You never really know the impact you make in someone's life. The more I came to know the people and their culture, I began to see that I had something to offer. Not because of my disability, but because of the strength God has given me through it. I can live life to the fullest, in spite of adversity. Many people feel that having a disability means you are not valuable. In fact, you may have done something to bring this ailment upon yourself. You are a victim, so what is there to be happy about? Being in Africa was physically demanding but my physical challenges seemed small in comparison to their struggles.

God used me, in sharing my story, to be an example of true happiness through circumstances. Had it not been for my life experiences, I would not have had the power to encourage and connect the way I did with the people. Everyone expressed thankfulness to have me there, and couldn't wait to hear my story. I didn't understand why I was worthy of such "recognition," because I thought there are far more inspirational people than me. I will never view things the same again.

As difficult as the journey was, I was constantly reassured that this was where I was supposed to be.

A NEW NAME AND A NEW LOGO

"Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust" was such a mouthful. The initials CMWDT didn't run together like the double "F" in CFFD. "Elevate" is short and easy to say, and most important of all it is such a great challenge for the whole ministry and each of us individually to reach out to a new level. Firstly, to elevate our relationship with the Lord, to get to know Him better, and when we do to deepen our relationship with Him and His Word, and to raise up the awareness of and provide opportunities for our folk with disabilities. Let us all in body, mind and spirit move on into the future.

Change is always difficult, so do bear with us, pray, and do your part in elevating the ministry. Remember, the names of the ministries— CFFD, Joy Ministries etc - have not changed. Our new logo came from the contributions of many people. We are so grateful for all who submitted designs. We finally decided on the idea of an eagle that Neville Logan (now in

heaven) had put forward earlier, and then Jonathan Ong and Jenny Horst played a part in modifying it to its final form.

Can you help?

Rebranding comes at a cost with our beautiful banner posters, information leaflets signs, stationery etc all needing to be changed, so it would be great if some felt it laid on their heart to provide finance for this upgrade in moving the ministry into the future.



NEW LOGO:





If you want a positive life, you

Edith Morris writes: from Hamilton

WHAT IS OUR GIFT TO GOD?

I was only 6 month old when I got polio in a large epidemic. I believe God had His hand on my life and a destiny prepared for me even then. I lived, when so many others died of this devastating illness.

Because polio had paralysed my legs extensively I was admitted to the Wilson Home in Takapuna for three years to recover and learn to walk. I was only a baby and a long way from home. I was distressed emotionally and in much pain, I was told later. A nurse was assigned to take care of me and settle me down. Miss Pauline Poll was her name, and God was in that decision too. She became like a substitute mother, and the many other small disabled children became like brothers and sisters. That I would have a useful life looked very doubtful in those early days at the Wilson Home, and without the many interventions of God that's how it might have been.

A life-time later I attended the 70th Jubilee year of the Wilson Home in April this year. At their Chapel service along with Rev Barry Reed, I shared my testimony of getting saved at the Billy Graham Crusade in Carlaw Park when I was a teenager, going to Faith Bible College in my mid-twenties, and going to Japan with my husband Noel and daughter Lynda as missionaries for 25 years.

One of the arguments I had with God when I was first called to Japan was to remind Him of my disability, as if He didn't know about it! I would say something like "Don't you know I can't walk properly, can't speak Japanese, I can't do this and that, and so on"

He replied "When you see Me face to face at the end of your life, are you still going to be using those excuses? If I call you to Japan, what is the problem? I will be with you in Japan or anywhere else?"

And so it was settled. Our little family set off for Japan, and sure enough God proved to be faithful and enabled me with His strength in many challenging situations. Initiating and developing the Japanese Women's Aglow was a great joy. In an email I received just a few days ago, a Japanese lady wrote "the fire you put in my heart is still aglowing!"

Now we live back in Hamilton and the Lord's destiny and purpose continues to be revealed. The words in Proverbs 31: 8-9 opened up a whole different focus of service to people with disabilities. Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice. How exciting the last 10 years have been as I speak for those who hesitate or who are reluctant.



I was part of a team of disabled citizens who spoke with the Hamilton City Council about the lack of access in the city. Over a 5 year period many changes were made to the footpaths, ramps, building access, and in the attitude of the council staff toward those with disabilities.

"Talking Up Disability" was the name of my radio show on Community Radio Hamilton for several years. I feel we should not hide away and be ashamed of our disability, but use the gifts God has given each one of us to the best of our ability. One of my gifts is talking, so talking is what I do to glorify God.

I prayed as I wheeled around the gardens of the Wilson Home, and thought, "Hey God, I've come full circle. I started off here seemingly paralysed and useless to those looking at me, but Your plan for my life is continually unfolding."

God's gift to us is life. Our gift back to Him is what we do with this life.



HUGE IMPROVEMENTS AT THE CENTRE



The huge expanse of the entrance way is now covered with concrete



Dividers, about to be formed, will give two extra rooms when required in this large room in the new building



2 wheelchair loos in the new building



This walkway connecting the two buildings is about to be covered from the rain



A reception window on the left as you enter now greets visitors



Looking through the server shows the two large kitchen work areas with a third, (not shown), round to the right



The server through to the dining room is a great plus, and shutters to seal this off are about to be installed



Heat pumps have been installed in three rooms



A family altar can

Taken with permission from In Touch magazine October 2011

SOLITARY REFINEMENT, A LIFE OF OVERCOMING

When he was born, doctors declared Christopher Coleman dead and placed him on a steel table at the back of the delivery room, in order to tend to the birth of his twin sister. But when she was delivered 15 minutes later, the doctors heard two babies crying: Coleman was very much alive, and he wanted everyone to know it. The traumatic birth left him with cerebral palsy – a fact that has led to a deep sense of alienation from the surrounding world. Learning to embrace the solitary life has been the key to his emotional and spiritual survival. But it hasn't always been easy.

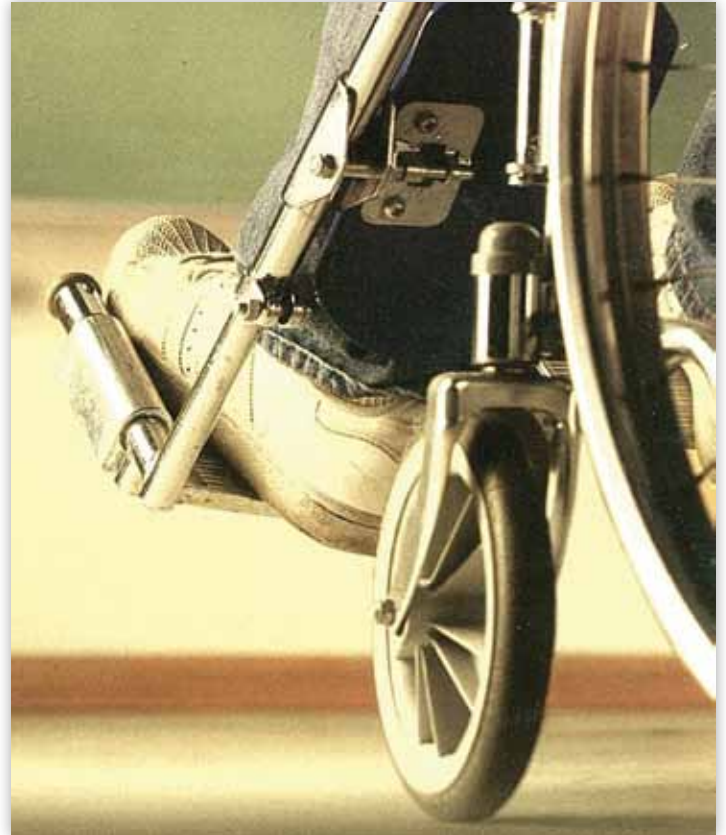
Visit Coleman at home today and you'll have to look down to greet him: when he's not seated in a wheelchair, he moves around the house on his hands and knees, positioned in a constant posture of humility. As a child, the injustice of his condition was too much for him. Only a dog moves around on all fours, he told himself. And when his siblings' friends looked at him strangely, he barked at them as a way of dealing with the embarrassment. But the now 38-year-old sees his experience differently: "Most people stand, but when I get up in the morning, God brings me to my knees," he said. "He reminds me there's nothing I can do without Him."

Classified as mentally disabled at birth, Coleman attended a special school, but his teachers did not instruct him there. Instead, they parked his wheelchair in a corner and ignored him all day, every day. When he was thirsty, he dehydrated. When he had to use the restroom, he soiled himself. If he had questions about life or school, he answered them himself.

During those lonely hours, he began hearing the voice of God. He knows the connection was real, because when his conversations with the Lord began, he was far too young and spiritually unaware to construct the thoughts that came into his mind. He still remembers the voice that resonated in his head and heart, moving him, even then, toward where he is now: "You're going to be okay. I have a plan for your life."

As time went on, he talked to God more and more. "I shared with Him the feelings I had when I saw everyone around me – they were mobile and able to communicate, but I wasn't." He recalled, "I didn't understand what made me different. But He kept telling me, 'It's okay. It's not always going to be like this. Things will change.' Gradually, his prayers shifted from asking God, "How will You get me out of my body?" to "How can I serve You with my body?"

For Coleman, the purpose of his suffering came into focus bit



by bit with each passing year, marked by surprising victories. Hidden away behind the barrier of his disability, he watched how his siblings lived, and when they were asleep he crawled into their bedrooms, took their books, and taught himself to read. During the day, as he sat for hours in the corner of the classroom, he would visualize in his mind the words he'd read the night before. This ritual continued for nine years before anyone discovered his aptitude. "They gave me an IQ test and found out I was reading and writing at a ninth-grade level. I was 15 years old and had never been taught by anyone in my life," he said. Coleman graduated from high school with a 4.1 GPA and went on to college, where he earned a degree in communication.

Today, he's an author and professional speaker, and his message to others is one of kinship with God that defies circumstantial limitations. It's a process he calls "solitary refinement," and it begins with knowing that it's okay to ask God "Why?" Since our Father in heaven can easily create us all to be healthy and prosperous people, it's acceptable to question why He chooses to let some people suffer instead.

"If we're afraid to ask God why He allows things to happen in our lives, we risk missing His purpose for us," Coleman said. "Even though we cannot see what lies ahead, we can receive spiritual vision from God by spending time with Him and understanding the objective He has for our life. When we understand the 'why' we get the vision."

"I shared with Him the feelings I had when I saw everyone around me – they were mobile and able to communicate, but I wasn't."

Spending a lifetime in intimate conversation with the Lord has given Coleman wisdom and strength to overcome daunting challenges. "I think my time alone with God has resulted in clarity," he said. "I recognize His voice more now than I ever have before." He can't say precisely how his experience in prayer is different from someone else's, but he'll tell you that it's grounded in an uncomplicated relationship with Christ. "When I talk, I pray God will help me pronounce words that leave my mouth. When I eat, I pray He will help my hands move food to my mouth. When I brush my teeth and get dressed, I pray. Most people come to God and say, 'I need You for big things.' But God says, 'You need Me for everything.'"

To pursue intimacy with Christ, Coleman advised that we start by reading Scripture and asking the Lord to give us insight. From there, we can begin asking questions. Ultimately, this leads to a relationship. He said that loneliness, more than anything else, has fostered his bond with God. "Loneliness is a very real feeling that we cannot ignore. God did not ignore it when He created Eve for Adam – He made us with a need for companionship. It's okay for me to look for significant relationships, but no matter what happens God is sufficient. That loneliness I feel inside can be filled by Him."

According to Coleman, his relationship with the Lord is based on one fact: He knows that Jesus knows him. There's no room for pretence or conjecture. When God initially told him to share his story with others, he asked his Creator frankly, "Can't You see my hands? My feet? Look at me. I can't even talk properly!" And God answered, "I don't have to look at you. I made you."



With God, Coleman can always be himself. "My time alone with Him has allowed me to separate other people's opinions and my own emotions from truth, to confirm what I'm hearing from the Holy Spirit," he said. "Today, I can say that nothing can take the place of His voice in my life."

A REPORT FROM THE GOD, HUMANNESS AND DISABILITY CONFERENCE

Friday July 6 may well become a special day in the history of how the New Zealand Church includes people with disabilities as equals who can participate in ministry rather than be seen as people to minister to (which of course is still important!) Laidlaw College and cbm partnered together to host the God, Disability & Humanness conference with a range of guest speakers all with a personal story of disability and how it has affected their church lives. From the good to the bad we heard how the Church has been both a beacon of hope and a reinforcement of all that is negative in society in their attitude to disability.

Throughout the keynote presentations and the workshops a consistent theme came through of how we are all made in the image of God and are made to serve Him and bring Him glory. We all have disabilities and God can use us all to further His purposes. The workshops covered a range of issues that were specific to the facilitator and covered the realities of participation in church for people with disabilities.

John Goldingay, the Alan Hubbard Old Testament Scholar at Fuller Seminary, shared openly and honestly on his life as the spouse of a person with a degenerative condition. Perhaps most touching was his comments on how his wife Anne ministered to the students through a ministry of silence in her final stages of Multiple Sclerosis, and how God used this to deeply touch the lives of so many. It really spoke to how we can all be witnesses and effective ministers if we are truly open – and how we can all receive blessings from the most unexpected places.

A great conference, spurring people to inclusion in the church – looking forward to the next one – July 2013



If God sends us strong paths,

**‘God was not
whispering into
my heart.....
HE was
SHOUTING
as loud as He could!’**



A young artist with a degenerative disease who was totally blind for several years came back to faith in God through contact with a Torch Fellowship Group .

Carol Beckwith (31) has Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS), an inherited connective tissue disorder which involves daily joint dislocations, chronic pain, chronic fatigue and problems with internal organs, bones and muscle. She’s been a wheelchair user for several years.

Treatment following a wrong diagnosis caused Carrie’s sight – already poor – to go completely. “I was born blind in one eye and had nystagmus,” she says. “However, I didn’t really see myself as visually impaired!”

Carrie works on digital art, painting, pottery and sculpture, winning an award in 2009 for paintings exploring disability. Becoming blind was a tremendous shock. “As an artist, sight is the most precious thing. Even though I adapted practically and appeared to be coping very well, emotionally I was distraught. “I was trained how to use a white cane and learn Braille. I developed other problems because of the treatment including cognitive and memory problems.”

Following an invitation, Carrie began to attend the Hartlepool Torch Fellowship Group, having not been to church for 10 years. – and she began to pray. “I knew I needed to seek God again. The group helped me ‘access’ God. I was given a talking Bible and...I could worship... without being aware of my visual impairment. I can’t recommend joining a group enough! Feeling separated from other people and the world around you due to sight loss makes a very lonely life at times. Being able to worship God without accessibility issues was a lifeline to me.

“God brought healing. I not only regained the sight I lost, but I also gained some vision in my blind right eye. Doctors couldn’t explain how I not only regained the sight lost but also gained sight I’d never had. I gave my life to Christ, as I could no longer deny how powerfully He was working in my life. God was not whispering into my heart, He was shouting as loud as He could.

“My life is so full of joy because every day I have to depend on God to get me through.”

Taken with permission from “Torch” in the UK. In NZ there is a “Torch Outreach” group meeting in Auckland.

A SERMON WALKING

One afternoon in 1953, reporters and officials gathered at a Chicago railroad station to await the arrival of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize winner. He stepped off the train – a giant of a man, six-foot-four, with bushy hair and a large moustache. As cameras flashed, city officials approached with hands outstretched and began telling him how honoured they were to meet him. He thanked them politely and then, looking over their heads, asked if he could be excused for a moment. He walked through the crowd with quick strides until he reached the side of an elderly black woman who was struggling as she tried to carry two large suitcases. He picked up the bags in his big hands and, smiling, escorted the woman to a bus. As he helped her aboard, he wished her a safe journey. Meanwhile, the crowd tagged along behind him. He turned to them and said, “Sorry to have kept you waiting.”

The man was Dr Albert Schweitzer, the famous missionary doctor, who had spent his life helping the poorest of the poor in Africa. A member of the reception committee said to one of the reporters: “That is the first time I ever saw a sermon walking!”

What a beautiful world would be ours if each one of us cared for the needs of others and showed our concern for them as we would show to a very close and dear friend! And imagine how fantastic it would be if we did this to those who do not like us, to those whom we consider as our enemies, to those who have hurt us! Let us not ever consider this as impossible! Let us try it just once, and see and feel the difference!

He provides strong shoes - Corrie ten Boom



Magazine of the Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust

Learning the discipline of gratitude. By Leanne Benfield Martin

GIVING THANKS IN HARD TIMES

The day Donna Lott was told to hand over her car keys for good changed her life forever. Proclaimed legally blind, she could no longer drive to the grocery store, her sons' school, or the homes of friends. Unless her husband or someone else gave her a ride, she was stranded at home. She was 35 years old.

An active wife and mother, my friend Donna had been gradually losing her eyesight to the disease called Retinitis Pigmentosa. Even while she struggled to accept what her diagnosis would mean, she began having difficulty cooking and cleaning, fixing her hair and makeup, and eventually, identifying her sons' faces.

Today the lighting in many environments, whether at a restaurant, a store, or church, proves challenging. Special computer equipment helps her read and write, study, and e-mail, but her eyes fatigue quickly.

The surprising result of her experience is that as Donna's vision became weaker and more distorted, her spiritual acuity sharpened. Her private times with the Lord grew more meaningful as she cried out to Him, and she began to perceive His love for her more clearly, sensing His purpose in allowing her to suffer in this way. Even on the days she couldn't imagine what that purpose could be – which was most of them – she gave thanks anyway.

YOU MEAN NOW?

Scripture commands us to give thanks. "Bless the Lord at all times," the psalmist wrote (34:1). And the apostle Paul echoed that sentiment in his letter to the Thessalonians when he said, "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ" (5:18). As hard as this may be to swallow, "in everything" means in both good and bad times – even when we don't feel like it. Gratefulness comes easy with a solid marriage, good kids, and money in the bank. But what about when the marriage implodes, kids rebel, or account balances dwindle.

When hard times come, we can choose to turn away from God. But hardening our heart toward Him in anger or denial hampers our ability to deal with suffering in a healthy way – making it difficult to hear His voice and receive comfort or strength. Gratitude is the gate through which we must pass to become increasingly aware of the Father's goodness in the midst of our trying circumstances.

We need to practice the discipline of giving thanks even more during the hard times, because through it, God not only transforms our suffering, but He also transforms us.

PRACTICING GRATITUDE

Sometimes when we're suffering, we can have difficulty thinking of anything to be grateful for. The more we practice the discipline of gratitude, the easier it will become, whether times are good or bad. Here are a few ideas to prime the pump:

START SMALL. Donna gave thanks for a hug or smile from her sons.

MAKE A LIST. Five years ago on Thanksgiving Day, my friend Tom began an annual tradition: a gratitude list. That first list consisted of 100 things. This year, it will exceed 500. Anytime he gets caught up in fear, frustration, or pain, he makes a list, and it reminds him of the love of God.

GO TO SCRIPTURE FOR PROMPTS. Use psalm 107:8-9 as a guide. Or use any passage that's special to you; just thank God for what it reveals about Him.

**This was condensed from an article in Charles Stanley's magazine "In Touch" and included here with permission*

Quotes taken from: "A Lifetime of Wisdom" by Joni Eareckson-Tada

Just knowing He's with me gives me peace, hope and comfort.

My enforced stillness has led me into a deeper first hand knowledge of God through prayer.
He has loved you and kept you throughout all your days

As we wrap our hands around a problem and in faith press on, strive and stand firm, divine energy surges through US.

God hasn't promised me happy endings to every situation, but He has assured me of greater faith.

*It isn't thinking about a **Place** that will lift your heart and make your sorrow easier. It's a **Person**. It's **Jesus**, Heaven will be heaven because **He** is there.*

His compassions never fail. They are new every morning.



To build a Godly life, let His Word the blue print

A story about Jordan Turner by Susan Walker

“I HAVE NO MORE TO GIVE, LORD, I HAVE NO MORE TO PRAY!”

Jordan was born with his twin brother to his parents Kerry Anne and Martin Turner on Dec 13, 1999. It was a normal birth though one month premature. Little did Kerry Anne and Martin know that Jordan had been born with Asplena Syndrome which means he did not have a Spleen (which provides auto-immune protection) and he had ‘mirrored organs’ which meant he had two right lungs, no working spleen and a systolic heart murmur. Jordan (12) and his twin Caleb (12) are the youngest of 5 children, Tora (27), Jasmin (17) Rhys (16).

At three months he had his Hepatitis B injection, and (probably due to having no spleen) he had an allergic reaction. He stopped breathing multiple times, and it was most likely the cause of brain damage. When he was one year old Kerry Anne noticed eye problems and other developmental delays, the doctor confirming he was almost blind, and over two years later the hearing people finally agreed with her that he was deaf. An operation followed and now he is only deaf in one ear.

Kerry Anne continues; “On the 31st December 2000 God moved, his twin was very unsettled and alerted us to the fact that something was very wrong with Jordan. They took Jordan to Masterton Hospital and with Meningitis suspected they were flown to Starship Hospital for specialist treatment. He was very sick and doctors could not tell Kerry Anne whether Jordan would live or die. We now know it was not meningitis but probably a streptococcus infection, but it was not picked up until a few months later that he did not have a working spleen, which means he did not have the auto-immune ability to fight it, making it life threatening.

“On the third day, still not knowing whether Jordan would live or die, every day that he hung on was a sign that God was not taking Jordan yet. I was losing my mind in grief and exhaustion, my family was split into different locations, as not only did we have Jordan to contend with but Caleb, his twin, was having an operation on his bowel for suspected cancer, older brother Rhys had broken his arm just prior to Christmas and needed to have a couple of operations as well.

“I can remember laying my head on Jordan’s bed and crying



Evelyn, Jordan and Susan Walker

I saw a spiritual wave heading from the South Island, coming all the way up the North Island, and another wave coming from America towards us.

to God, ‘No more, I have no more to give Lord, I have no more to pray, please let someone else take over.’ I saw a spiritual wave heading from the South Island, coming all the way up the North Island, and another wave coming from America towards us. I just received it and thanked God, not really understanding the fullness of what I was seeing. A couple of hours later I was talking to a security guard who had noticed that I was on my own.

He came over and said, ‘My home-group prayed for your son last night and we felt that you needed to know that you are not alone.’ At this point I can remember just lifting my arms up in praise to our Father knowing that He had answered my prayer. When Jordan and I arrived home four days afterwards, I heard that churches all over the country and several in America were praying for us as our dear friends and family had spread the word. Faithful people answered God’s call to pray for a family that they did not know.”

After ten years of Hospital visits Jordan’s disabilities include Cerebral Palsy, partially deafness, short sighted, epilepsy (caused by infections and high temperatures), and lots of other health issues because of the absence of his spleen and mirrored organs. Jordan’s Hospital Specialists visits also keep Kerry Anne very busy, she is under Paediatrics, Cardiology, Orthopaedics, Kidney Specialists, Hearing and Eye Specialists.

The family moved to Featherston where they now live on a

life-style block with a swimming pool and paddocks. They enjoy the rural living, and Jordan attends school part time, and is at home a lot to minimize his exposure to germs. Kerry Anne is funded as his teacher aide, and he also has a special needs teacher who visits. She has noticed that the roughest toughest little boys (the trouble makers) are the ones who love Jordan the most, He touches their hearts (at school in the play ground, at the train station, and on the streets). People you would normally stay away from are drawn to Jordan as he witnesses God's love to them.

Kerry Anne has been blessed with good home help, and Evelyn Wright, a wonderful support walker, has taken Jordan to the CFFD Wellington Regional Camp the past two years for the weekend to give Kerry Anne and Martin their first break from Jordan. Evelyn works three days a week in the home (Ministry of Health funded).

Jordan's achievements are many. He has survived many times after being near death. He can crawl and use a walker, he can communicate with signs and communication devices, and he is continuing to learn despite his intellectual disability. Jordan has a pureness about him. His Mum says he is the nearest thing to the perfect person because of his innocence. He can paint with his feet! God is using Jordan in the lives of his family, his Christian community, and the entire community. People love Jordan.

MY PERFECT CHILD

As my children were born,
I wanted them to be perfect.

When they were babies,
I wanted them to smile
and to be content playing with their toys.
I wanted them to be happy
and to laugh continually
Instead of crying and being demanding.
I wanted them to see the beautiful side of life.

As they grew older
I wanted them to be giving
Instead of selfish.
I wanted them to skip the terrible twos.
I wanted them to stay innocent forever.

As they became teenagers
I wanted them to be obedient
and not rebellious and mouthy,
I wanted them to be full of love,
gentle and kind-hearted.

"Oh, God give me a child like this.

One day He did.
Some call him handicapped.

I call him Perfect!

GOD SAID, "I AM"

While praying one day, a woman asked,
"Who are you, Lord?"
He answered, "I Am."

"But who is **I Am**?" she asked.

And He replied,

I Am Love,

I Am Peace,

I Am Grace,

I Am Joy,

I Am the Way, the Truth,
and the Light,

I Am the Comforter,

I Am Strength,

I Am Safety,

I Am Shelter,

I Am Power,

I Am the Creator,

I Am the Beginning and the End,

I Am the Most High."

The lady with tears in her eyes
looked toward Heaven and said,
"Now I understand. But Lord, who am I?"

Then God tenderly wiped the tears from her eyes and
whispered,

"You are Mine."

—Author unknown.

A contribution from Heydon Bailey.

CHANGES ON THE TRUST BOARD

Two trustees have resigned:

Debbie Mudgway who has been a trustee from Hawkes Bay for 13 years and has brought a wealth of experience and knowledge and we will miss her greatly

David Green who has just completed his second spell on the Governance Board. We have greatly appreciated his wisdom.



If God is prompting you has a need, don't hesitate

PCFFD REPORT

Briccio writes;

I acquired polio when I was 3 months old baby and this caused the deformity of my left leg. I joined Hebron Children's Home in Mindoro Island at the age 13 years old and I have been involved in the organization since then. Mrs Jean Morley visited in 1992. I told her I felt I had come to the end of an era and didn't know what was next. She said it was obvious. You have a disability. You need to go to New Zealand for training and be exposed to the ministry. That was in March-April 1993 and I felt a burden to reach out to others like me with a disability in the Philippines. Most of the Encourager readers will know how I started a branch of Christian fellowship for Disabled here at Hebron and how it has grown to the huge outreach it now has.

Not everyone will know I also started to form a group called "Association of Persons with Disabilities" in San Rafael, Bulacan. I affiliated this group to the National Federation of PWD's in the Philippines. As a KAMPI member in 1995 I was elected as a Trustee representing Region 3 which includes our province. I wanted to gather a group of disabled in our region, so I approached the different agencies in the government. That year, through their help we held the first regional council for the welfare of disabled persons.

In 1996 we held the first provincial council/assembly. During this time I encouraged the PWDs to form a group in their own towns. We came up with the name KASAMAKA SA which means "Group of People with disabilities". I and my friends visited most towns in Bulacan helping the locals to start. Praise God the 3 cities and 21 towns are well organized now through the help of the Local Government, and DSWD.

Last week our local SM Mall was the venue this year for celebration of National Disability Week for all towns in Bulacan. When I looked at the crowd about 500, I was heartened to see that most of the disabled were representatives from each Kasama Ka group from the 24 towns in Bulacan! They each had their own coloured T shirts and performed their own item onstage. We greeted each other on the parade around the mall like we were old friends! What a change from the past, when there was nothing! The speaker was the Governor for the province! He is trying to pass a law to create an office in the provincial capital, for PWDs! All this, when in the past, we had no representation at all! The government has been assuring each pwd group in different municipalities that they will be given attention and support to be established as a group of people who can contribute to the economic development of our nation. The government wants to see them developed in the areas of education, arts and talents, technological skills, business and even in the government world.

Thank you Lord!



Briccio

SPONSORS NEEDED

If you want to be a part of our sponsorship program here are three who urgently need support. For \$60 a month you can provide full sponsorship, or share with another person for \$30. Contact Ruth Beale, 39 Durham Cres, Epuni, Lower Hutt, 5011.

Maria Luz Naval is a 15 year old girl with undeveloped legs. Our local municipality encouraged her to attend meetings for people with disabilities. She can dance gracefully and likes to do so. She is a second year high school now studying in a nearby public school. She belongs to a poor family but really wants to finish her schooling. We desire to be part of the big plan God has for her life so have given her our case study interview.

A joyful dance by a pwd group



*"The Prayer"
Hebron Deaf Dance
interpretation*

Ma. Kathleen Sapilo is an 8 year old girl with mild cerebral palsy. She is a diabetic and can walk with a helping device. Her mother was recommended by a public school to send her to Hebron Sped School because she has problems with writing and comprehension. She comes from a poor family and needs sponsorship.

Annalyn Aggabao - is a new hearing teacher for our high school deaf. She has a heart for deaf students. She was a regular teacher but has taken up this challenge to be a teacher of deaf students. She learned sign language daily. Praise God for her commitment to be a part of the SPED program.



Maria, Kathleen with her mother, and Annalyn

DO YOU KNOW GOD?

If you can't see any evidence of spiritual growth in your life, perhaps you need a spiritual birth. Jesus said, "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). This new birth occurs when you believe that Christ died for your sins and accept by faith His offer of forgiveness and new life. Today is your opportunity to begin living and growing in Christ. If you want to experience this, then pray the following prayer, or you can use your own words:

Lord Jesus. I believe You are truly the Son of God. I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word and deed. Please forgive all my wrongdoing, and let me live in relationship with You from now on. I receive You as my personal Saviour, accepting the work You accomplished on my behalf once and for all on the cross. Thank You for saving me. Help me to live a life that is pleasing to You. Amen.

Let us know if you prayed this prayer

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Taupo - Wendy Emsley 07-378-1413

Masterton - Elizabeth Churchill 06-378-7584

Blenheim - Johanna Warren 03-579-1164

Joni Eareckson Tada writes:

FROM THE HEART

I love travelling with Wheels for the World, but when I can't, I'm still mindful that God is using my story to inspire people who come to receive help, hope, and the gift of a wheelchair. Take 7-year old Lisa in the Dominican Republic

Lisa is only able to "walk" on her knees, and she can't use her arms or hands. Quiet and shy, she was brought to our Wheels distribution by a worker at the orphanage where she lives. This timid little girl took her place in line and waited patiently. When we began showing the Joni movie in Spanish, Lisa moved close and sat riveted, fascinated by the scenes that showed me drawing with pencils between my teeth. After she was finally fitted to her new paediatric wheelchair, she lit up. Up until then, Lisa had hardly made a sound; now with her new wheels, she was all smiles.

When Lisa spotted some coloured pencils on a table, she leaned forward, grasped one between her teeth, and began to draw – it was the first time she'd ever drawn! Our physical therapists were curious as to where she got the idea to draw with her mouth. Then they put two-and-two- together: "Lisa got inspired watching Joni's movie!"

Hope and courage are very contagious! When we show bravery in the face of severe limitation, God uses it to inspire others to do the same. It's why I'm so grateful to God that Wheels for the World not only gives wheelchairs, and precious Bibles, but Joni books in different languages (we show the Joni movie in other languages, too ... it really ministers to families waiting for their wheelchairs)!



By: Joseph J. Mazzella

WORTHLESS OR PRICELESS

I was driving my son to the sheltered workshop for the handicapped where he works a few days each week. My seventeen year old car was cruising along while the Spring sun shined down. The trees were budding and flowers were popping up along the side of the road. I looked over at my son who was humming along to a song on the radio. He turned his head, smiled and said, " I love you Daddy." I smiled back and said, "I love you too son."

The green light ahead turned yellow and I slowed to a stop. Suddenly, a gold Mercedes Benz screeched to a halt next to me. The owner was yelling into a cell phone and slammed his hand on the steering wheel as he glared at the now red light. After a minute the light changed and he sped away with a scowl as big as his face. I drove on shaking my head and said a little prayer that the owner of that expensive car would one day realize the true treasures in life.

That miserable man in the Mercedes reminded me again of the worthlessness of wealth and the pricelessness of love in the eyes of eternity. All of his money hadn't put a smile on his face. All of his things hadn't given him peace. All of his wealth hadn't filled his heart with happiness or brought meaning to his life. He seemed lost, separated from love, and separated from God. He was trapped in a golden cage and didn't even know it.

Please don't spend your life in the pursuit of the worthless "fool's gold" that our society holds dear. Don't try to gain the whole world and in the process lose your soul. Instead spend your days here building "the Treasures of Heaven" in your heart. If you do then your days will be blessed with sunshine, smiles, and sweet laughter. If you do then you will not only fill your soul with love but you will also scatter joy to the world around you. If you do then you will be able to give God the most priceless gift of all: your life lived with love.

Instead spend your days here building "the Treasures of Heaven" in your heart.