

# The encourager

THE MAGAZINE OF ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST

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Activities around  
the country!





*Remove the word 'problem' from your vocabulary  
Life will suddenly become a lot easier*

# Clear Sight

*A devotional by Jacqui Gardner*

## **Luke 11:34,36. (Amplified.)**

V34. The eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is clear, (spiritually perceptive, focussed on God), your whole body is also full of light, (benefitting from God's precepts). But when it is bad, (spiritually blind), your body is full of darkness, (devoid of God's word). V36. So if your whole body is illuminated, with no dark part, it will be entirely bright with light, as when the lamp gives you light with its bright rays.

I remember when I was a child we had a prism, a piece of multifaceted clear glass. When you looked through it toward the window, it would divide the light into its different colours, and make things look very beautiful. I could see clearly then. That was before I was blinded by a brain tumour.

Five decades later: wife, mother, busking to fundraise for sending Northlanders to the Elevate Christian Disability Trust National camp, someone once asked me if I wrote all the songs I sing, and the wheels of my mind began to turn. A year ago I began writing my own songs.

To start with I would think about the Daily Scripture which came from the Bible App, and make it into a song so I could meditate on it throughout the day. As we think on God's Word, which is living and active, (Hebrews 4:12) it saturates our thinking, giving us direction and guidance.

Recently I penned a song along these lines. It helps me remain patient with myself as I walk with my Saviour and endeavour to live by His word. I call it "Clear Sight".



## **Clear Sight**

*Like the man who built his house upon the rock,  
God gives stability and strength to face the fiercest storm,  
We choose to build our lives on Jesus Christ our Lord,  
And establish life's foundations on the power of His word.*

*Step by step, Moment by moment,  
Walking with my Saviour, Living by His Word  
Precept by precept, Instruction by instruction,  
Embracing God's correction leads to clarity of sight.*

*For the Bible will illuminate our way,  
So we have no hesitation to listen and obey,  
Gaze on the Author and Perfector of our Faith  
As we run our race with courage, and complete the walk He gave.*

*Step by step, Moment by moment,  
Walking with my Saviour, Living by His Word,  
Precept by precept, Instruction by instruction,  
Embracing God's correction leads to clarity of sight.*

**CAMPS  
2017**

*Please take note and put in your diaries*

Wellington CFFD	<b>24-26 March</b>	El Rancho, Waikanae
Emmanuel Family Camp	<b>31 March-2 April</b>	Totara Springs, Matamata
Auckland CFFD	<b>7-9 April</b>	Carey Prk, Henderson Akd
Christchurch Day Camp	<b>8 April</b>	YMCA
Torch (Blind and VIP)	<b>20-23 April</b>	Capenwray, Bible Coll Cambridge
PCFFD Philippines Camp	<b>25-27 April</b>	
National Labour Weekend	<b>20-23 October</b>	Totara Springs, Matamata

## **On the front cover**

Image 1: Acting out the Scripture I Sam 16:7 at Ngatea Water Gardens  
Image 2: A message from the Auckland CFFD Chairman

Image 3: National Camp  
Image 4: Returning to the Centre from the prayer walk

cabulary and replace it with 'challenge'.  
more interesting and enjoyable



# Joyful Ministries

*The name says it all!*

*Hunter Calder, Local Focus Waikato, NZ Herald, with permission*

It's often said church is a place of solitude, reflection and silence. But that's not the case at Joyful Ministries - a monthly church service and social group with activities for people with intellectual disabilities in Hamilton. The churchgoers there are encouraged to express themselves by singing and being as loud as they please.

Bonnie Kingi is a regular and says "It's something the church has been doing for a long time where the volunteers help, and teach us how to do good things during the time of devotion." Organiser Jeni Hawker says the service is about connecting like-minded people through fun, sensory activities and spirituality. "It's a real failure free environment where they can come and go, and they use their own talents and gifts, and they go home with something they've created." It's a fellowship where people have freedom to express themselves.

Karen Knight is a volunteer too, she brings a van load of people and loves the fact that everyone is given the opportunity to find God in their own way. "It's about freedom, it's about no one telling them to sit down and shut up, they can walk around, they can just be who they are, and I just think that's fabulous."

operates on a small budget and has grown through word of mouth from ten attendees to more than 40. Mrs Pluck says there are not enough words to describe how much she's enjoyed watching people develop and start "singing louder, talking more, sitting next to each other" and "just expressing themselves more in their own faiths and their own friendships." ■



## WHAT WE ARE

Two disabled people entered a church one day,  
Disabled – but each in a different way.

One had a body strong and whole,  
But it sheltered a warped and twisted soul.

The other walked with a halting gait,  
But his soul was "tall and fair and straight."

They shared a pew. They shared a book,  
But on each face was a different look.

One was alight with hope and joy,  
And faith that nothing could destroy.

The other joined not in prayer or hymn,  
No smile relaxed his features grim.  
His neighbour had wronged him, his heart was sore,  
He thought of himself and nothing more.

The words that were read from the Holy Book  
Struck deafened ears and a forlorn look.

To one came comfort – his soul was fed.

The other gained nothing from what was said.

Two disabled left the church that day,  
Disabled, but each in a different way.

A twisted foot did one body mar,  
But the twisted soul was sadder far.

*Author unknown*



Co-organiser Gaylene Pluck agrees. "Anything goes if someone wants to make a noise they can. It's their space." Joyful Ministries has been running for five years with the support of the Hamilton City Baptist Church and volunteers who chip in. Mrs Pluck says it



Jirah

*Never be afraid to trust an u  
- Corrie*

## Philippines C.F.F.D

**W**e have been praying fervently to God for the renovation of the sewing room to become a function room. Praise God for His provision for the beautification of the function room through the generous giving of Ruth Beale. On February 22, we held the dedication of that room for the ministry of the Lord.. And because we greatly appreciate what Ruth has been doing for PCFFD we made a plaque for her, that we put it on the wall of the room. The speaker was Hank Van Der Steen who has been the CBM contact person in Australia for 35 years.



Leslie speaking



**R**uth is shown receiving the plaque that paid tribute to her devotion to the huge part she has played in helping develop the Philippines ministry.

**F**or years Ruth felt a strong call to the Philippines ministry. In 1995 she spent just on a year there before, through ill health, coming back to New Zealand. Here she started the sponsorship scheme for children with disabilities as well as staff members. Under her enthusiastic guidance and huge time commitment in the following 22 years, this has grown and grown right through to the present day.



Plaque shown here on wall of Function Room



A lesson from

## Christopher Reeve

by Joni Eareckson Tada

*"Man's days are determined; You have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed." Job 14:5*

A few years back when I watched Christopher Reeve on television (the actor who was severely paralyzed in a riding accident), I was deeply moved. Although he sat stiff and rigid in his wheelchair, he smiled courageously as he puffed-and-sipped his mouth controls to steer his chair. The day after the program aired, I kept running into people who said, "Did you see Christopher on TV last night? Isn't he an inspiration?"

I smiled and nodded "yes," but thought, Just last week everyone was talking about assisted suicide for people like him. It is schizophrenic. One day letters to the editor applaud the courage of the severely disabled; the next, the editorial column can be filled with letters cheering on the new legislation legalizing assisted suicide. One day Christopher Reeve was positioned as "a helpless victim." The next, a picture of courage.

It tells me that society keeps a double standard. Society thinks it is appropriate to prevent able-bodied people from committing suicide, but considers it rational for a terminally ill or severely incapacitated person to end his life. More importantly, it shows that

we lack confidence in God's ability to sustain those who suffer.



God gives common grace to non-believers who suffer and God gives special grace to believers who suffer. Is someone close to you terminally ill or severely incapacitated? Pray that God will give them grace today. Show a skeptical society the truth of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "You are not your own... Therefore honor God with your body." At all times, no matter how physically or mentally limited we are, it is the Lord of life who gives breath. Be the Lord's hands to help a suffering friend today. Through prayer and encouragement, help this hurting friend understand that life is worth living.

Help me to shatter the schizophrenia as I share with others that You are the Lord of life. Help me to support the hurting and encourage the dying. Praise You for helping people like Christopher Reeve... using people like me.

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## Making inclusion work

by Lauraine Snelling

A courageous young couple had adopted Tommy, a badly battered child. He was five, but could say only two words, "car" and "bye bye". Easter Sunday dawned with all the Sunday School gathered for the annual pageant. Every child would have a line to say.

The young couple sat stiffly, aching for Tommy to have a part, but only too aware of the impossibility. Maybe they should have stayed home? They'd already discussed that idea, but Tommy was so excited about coming to Sunday School.

The five year olds meandered to the front of the church. Tommy's teacher knelt in front of her squirming pupils and began to describe the Palm Sunday triumphal procession.

"All the people lined the streets," she said. "They waved palm branches in the air and shouted..." "Hosanna! Hosanna!" responded the children. Their enthusiasm more than matched that of bygone eras. Then gently looking at little Tommy, she continued, "And Jesus rode through the gate on a white donkey because he had no..." "Car!" shouted Tommy. With a grin that dimmed the Easter sunrise. His class marched off at the end of the story and Tommy joined in the waving and shouting, "Bye bye!"



Ross

*Instead of focusing on what's missing,*

# What actually is Worship?

*Worship magnifies God, but what actually is it?*

**K**ing Jehoshaphat was in a predicament! The nation was threatened with destruction by the invasion of three large armies. Jehoshaphat realised he could not save his people. He knew they had no hope – unless God intervened! As all Judah gathered before the Lord the king confessed: "Oh, our God, we are powerless. We've absolutely no resources to face this vast army that's attacking us'. We are afraid. We don't know what to do. But, our eyes are totally focused upon YOU". . . In that electric moment of despair a prophet declares a word from God: "Do not panic! Don't be distressed. Don't be overcome with fear, for the battle isn't yours, but GOD'S! You'll not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions, stand firm - visualize the awesome deliverance the Lord Jehovah will perform for you."

How did the king react? Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord." The Bible records that whenever men of God such as Isaiah and Jeremiah experienced an encounter with God through a spiritual visitation, they bowed with their faces to the ground in worship – they prostrated

themselves. In fact, they fell as if dead!!

From my own personal observation, the Church today has a superficial understanding concerning worship. Worship is NOT a 'Happy-Tappy' jig. True worship is the gateway into a deeper relationship with God - a walk of holiness.

There's another worship experience that transpires from quite different circumstances. Let's reflect upon a man named Job whose life is full of promising expectations. Suddenly with shattering devastation his whole world falls apart. Within minutes several catastrophes come crushing upon him, wiping out all his material possessions and killing all his children. What did Job do? " At that, Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell to the ground in worship ... ." In spite of his material devastation and his emotional suffering, Job knew that GOD WAS IN CONTROL. He recognized that God had both appointed and approved the whole situation. Job's acceptance and attitude reveals his spiritual maturity. Both Jehoshaphat and Job fell with their faces to the ground and worshipped the Lord. Worship should be just as fitting and just as automatic when God destroys your dreams as it is when He fulfils them.

Allow me to share from my personal faith-journey. I was born with Cerebral Palsy . This life-time

disability affects every part of my body including my speech, but not my mental capacity. I was educated to university level. At the age of 25 the ongoing daily grind of overcoming physical challenges began to take an enormous toll on me, the struggle to achieve a productive role in society proved beyond my physical capabilities. I'd reached the end of my tether. A sense of hopelessness and worthlessness prevailed. That's when I began searching – reaching out for the supernatural –for a physical miracle. In my search God miraculously opened the opportunity to travel to America to attend 'miracle services' conducted by the late Kathryn Kuhlman. The venue : The Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles – in the USA.

I witnessed unforgettable miracles and healings [including an 11 year old Cerebral Palsy boy and a man aged 28. Cerebral Palsy miracles were a rarity - nevertheless, they happened!! NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD! Why they received their 'miracle-healing' and I remained seated in my wheelchair - no improvement with body co-ordination, clarity of speech - ABSOLUTELY NOTHING – remains a total mystery. I'd stretched every 'faith- muscle', pulled all the correct prayer levers, claimed and memorized all appropriate Bible promises, confessed sins – known and unknown. I agonized. Surely, I was an acceptable candidate for a



## *some thoughts from Margie Willers*

physical miracle. Why in the world would God deny me? How could He be so unfair?

I returned from the States broken. Devastated. Deeply disappointed. Disillusioned. God had NOT lived up to my expectations. Not being chosen for a 'miracle' most certainly did take some working through. My inward-self grew hostile. Embittered and feisty – OH, SO FEISTY! I desperately needed help. The months rolled from 1975 into 1976. February that year, I'd been accepted as a student at Faith Bible College in Tauranga. This particular morning as the tutor commenced his lecture suddenly something uniquely special swept the room. A white mist descended as the presence of the Holy Spirit filled the building. Softly, ever so softly, voices joined in singing, "Something good is going to happen today – happen today, this very hour . . . Jesus of Nazareth is passing your way ... "

I couldn't sing. I couldn't do anything except cry. Through my muffled sobs I could dimly hear the tutor's voice: "He's here, here in this room, for you. You don't need me. Reach out and touch Him." That morning Jesus of Nazareth walked through the aisles and between the desks, touching students. To one He gave a vision of the cross, to another a vision of His glory. We were on Holy Ground. One hardly dared to breathe. All heads were bowed. Some students dropped

to the floor. Some wept. Others just sat or stood stunned. I sobbed. Suddenly, I sensed someone close to me. I looked up. My eyes riveted upon a majestic white horse. On the horse sat a 'Rider' dressed in a flowing purple cloak with elaborate gold braiding. His hair was jet black, tangled - matted with blood. His cheeks were black 'n blue. Fingernails had clawed through the flesh. My heart was in my mouth, thumping so loudly. I gazed transfixed by His disfigurement. I required no explanation. There was no mistaking 'The Rider' and his disfigurement, the result of my lashing out - venting my frustrations, my anger, my hot-headedness over not receiving a miraculously healing.

His eyes drew me like a magnet. They were so soft, so full of tenderness and love, free from condemnation. His gaze entered the very depth of my being – transmitting love and compassion. soothing the turmoil that raged within the depths of my soul. The 'Rider' reached down and touched my shoulder sending a surge of power through my entire body. I was unable to remain upright and slumped across my desk. Time ticked by. How much time, I don't remember. Eventually, the sense of power subsided. I glanced down and discovered 'The Rider' kneeling in front of my chair, pulling an ugly, heavy, black garment down my body and off my feet - the garment of



hostility and bitterness. As He rose and stood to His feet, He seemed to draw me upward. I felt wrapped in an amazing, invisible robe – like a shaft of laser-light that penetrated, cleansing and healing throughout my being.

My eyes transfixed upon 'The Rider' a second time. To my amazement He'd changed. He wore a dazzling white robe. His hair was golden and flowing, His face, unblemished. His eyes communicated : 'I understand. You've experienced huge disappointment. But, it's time you became the woman I created you to be, to receive your 'God- assignments.' it's imperative you move into spiritual maturity ... 'Whether I've lived up to your expectations or NOT - YOU will bow your knee, your head and your heart, and declare, "I AM KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. With those words 'The Rider' vanished.

What does a person do when suddenly confronted with a God too big? You may weep, you may say nothing. Many of us have known life-experiences - times when God is too big to argue with. Worship is not so much words as it is an



Alison

## Where the road bends abruptly.

automatic response out of our own utter smallness to a God too big. Too big to wrap our minds around - too big to fathom – or figure out.

Job, crushed by a broken heart in his shattered world, was confronted by a sovereign God too mysterious to comprehend or figure out. Falling to the ground he declares, "God, You are allowed to do anything." Now, isn't that MATURITY? That's FAITH. I'm not convinced even today that I possess that type of spiritual ingredient to even consider praying such a prayer. ANYTHING! Yet, Job believed ... 'God, You are in absolute control, and I am nothing - and have nothing except YOU!' Now, THAT IS PURE WORSHIP!

The Bible declares: "It's far better to enter the Kingdom of Heaven maimed, blind or lame, than to have two feet and walk into Hell." GOD IS SOVEREIGN. And, He's a God of variety.

Sometimes seemingly mature Christians have said to me, "The day I see you rise up out from your chair, I'll really worship God." Such comments pierce my spirit. God doesn't have to prove Himself with the spectacular, yet we only worship Him when He lives up to our expectations. We become disappointed and discouraged when He does not seem to answer our prayers. We figure. We plan. We pray - and pray MORE fervently!!! We even lay the ground-work for God. We try organising and manipulating Him. And, we cannot understand why He doesn't co-operate? What is wrong? Can He not see our solutions? Sometimes we've made up our minds and we are not open to God's higher plan. God's perspective is very different in comparison to ours.

Isaiah Chapter 55 vs 8 & 9: "My thoughts are NOT your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways,

declares the LORD...For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways – and My thoughts higher than your thoughts." Today, you may be a Jehoshaphat- excited- vibrant- your mind boggling at a great God of wonders ... Or you may be a Job, crushed with overwhelming grief, knowing the wasted exhaustion of being completely 'shut-in' with no doors or windows open. Life seems a senseless, meaningless, God-forsaken pit.

I've journeyed such 'seasons'. Nevertheless, I've also proven that when we are willing to be willing to allow the Lord into our pain-filled crises, He can turn 'dark-daunting dilemmas' into doors – the most effectual doors we ever dreamed possible! I encourage you. Don't quit. Remain stout-hearted. Keep soldiering onward: FAITH IS... KNOWING GOD'S STILL IN CONTROL, AND HIS BEST IS YET TO COME! ■

## THREE TELL HOW THEIR LIVES WERE CHANGED THROUGH COMING TO HELP AT THE CENTRE



**CHRISTOPHE:** I would like to express my warmest and most deep thanks. I did not know what to expect when I came from the Volunteer Centre and decided to be involved in the Ministry. What an unexpected, but very pleasant feeling, to arrive at Elevate every morning, to be thanked, awaited and warmly welcomed by those

with disabilities and the staff! I have to admit that I did not expect that joy every day. But it happened

and it empowered myself: well done! After six months at Elevate I learned so many things about the nature of the human being, its power, its faith and, the most important, its strengths.

I also admit that you guys amazed me and demonstrated to me every day that your abilities are much stronger than your disability. At some point, you taught me how to enjoy life whatever our abilities. I would like to thank you for frequently thanking me. I know that it sounds strange, but to be warmly and honestly thanked is so rare nowadays that it brings you a kind of satisfaction and awareness.





**TOFIG:** This amazing young man also came to us from Volunteer NZ. We are so thankful to that organisation, especially as he was an IT specialist and he scanned a lot of our past magazines onto computer – a very mundane job. When it was suggested he needed to go into the Drop In for morning and afternoon tea he said, “Oh no,

not with those people!” He had never had anything to do with people with disabilities before, so slowly he was persuaded to be at the back and talk to one person.

BUT an amazing transformation took place. He so totally changed that in the end we couldn’t get him OUT of the Drop In. He did everything, saw a need and did it! – personal cares etc etc! He came to camps, helped at the 40th celebration! What a blessing.

## HI. I’M ANNIE.

I come from China. In China we have been educated to believe God is not real. Thus I was somewhat confused since there are so many things that happen that cannot be explained only by science. What’s more, my father became a Catholic when I was about 10 years old. Later he told me stories about Jesus, but my heart refused to learn more about Jesus at that time. I told myself not to be subjective and emotional. However, things changed after I was sent to the Elevate Centre by the Volunteer Centre. I found Elevate to be a warm place filled with love. Here I felt loved and special, so I decided to stay and come in to serve every week.

After one year I had been changed a lot. I used to be on the alert and struggled with words, but people



began to describe me as “open-hearted and easy to communicate with”. At Elevate I witnessed the power of God when I saw the physically challenged who have been suffering for decades still holding a strong belief in Jesus, and people loving each other regardless of their ethics or their respective ages. I was moved, and willing to learn more of Jesus then.

I met Janna on campus. She asked me my feelings about God and invited me to her church. And then I met her friend Chloe at church. She knows the Bible very well and promised me that I would totally turn to Christ after I spent time studying the Bible with her. I agreed and waited to see what would happen to me in three months. After that my mindset was totally changed. I found the Gospel to be logical, and to make sense in real life. Bible study has so changed me in many ways. I get less angry at others because I realise I’m also imperfect, and no one is perfect compared to God. And I also find life just becomes easier, and I so appreciate God’s grace to me. At church I decided to become a Christian. I so wanted to be a disciple, and was baptised soon after.

Being baptised was an amazing experience that I will never forget. I was put down into the water slowly, and water overwhelmed me gradually. I held my breath but couldn’t hear anything. It was like a drowning scene in a movie. I couldn’t help asking myself, “Am I alive?” That’s when I forgot to hold my breath, started to choke and was whisked out of the water, but in those ten seconds of silence I knew I was reborn, and I will always appreciate those fantastic moments.

Now I smile more, I worry less. I have learnt how to trust, how to love, and how to care. In the future I hope my faith in God and my behaviour as a Christian will persuade people around me to know Jesus, and come to study the Gospel.

*Psalm 27 v1-3* are very special to me. “*God is my light and God is my guard*” I’m no longer afraid and struggling as I’m fulfilled with Jesus’ Grace. ■

## ONE...

*One tree can start a forest  
One smile can begin a friendship  
One hand can lift a soul  
One hand can frame the goal  
One candle wipes all the darkness*

*One laugh can conquer gloom  
One hope can raise our spirits  
One touch can show you care  
One life can make a difference  
be that ONE today.*





Onne

## NOW I AM TRULY HOOKED WITH THE DAY TO DAY LIVES OF THESE AMAZING PEOPLE

Having been a Christian all my life I thought I had a one way ticket to heaven. How wrong I was. Looking back my faith was genuine but luke-warm.

The last seven years of my working life I showered elderly and disabled people in their own homes, and I found this to be a real blessing. It wasn't just a job. It was serving our Lord Jesus Christ, and I prayed for each of them every day before I went to work.

It was then that I met Jacqui Gardner who is visually impaired, and for eight years took her grocery shopping. A few years ago I became involved in Northland Christian Fellowship For Disabled, and now I am truly hooked with the day to day lives of these amazing people

I also have noticed how my own life is changing, my love for others, and my faith is growing deeper and richer as time goes by. Two years ago I was baptized

by full immersion, received the Holy Spirit, and am growing from strength to strength.

Through being involved with people with disabilities, I now want to encourage others to speak to people in wheelchairs, or who are blind, realizing that they are not the only ones with a disability. We all have a disability of one sort or another, but we also have Jesus Christ who loves us. I want to encourage people who have an obvious disability to understand and accept that they are valued by God, and needed to serve Him. When I look back on these times I see Jesus feet being washed by His disciples. This is truly serving God.

So let us praise God for every gift that we have. Thank God that you are who you are! Try to see the Love in others. Remember that a smile can light up someone's day.

*Jeanette Kawiti.*

## *Dear Lord, please give me a new bicycle tyre ...a cardigan...a pair of sunglasses*

Janet Stafford, Torch International Leader in the UK, writes of a visit Torch made to Malawi:

When the committees of 17 fellowship groups in Sothorn Malawi met for a day of fellowship, they were in for a few surprises! This gathering of 127 leaders, many with sight losses, represented a total of 875 blind and partially sighted people. Each group described their monthly meetings and how they reach out to visit each blind person in their own home every month, and give other practical support such as latrines, food or reading the Scriptures.

To do all this they travel many kilometres, particularly in the more remote areas, so bicycles are essential. But at the time we came, many of the bicycles had worn tyres or punctures.

Praise God ! We were able to provide two new tyres



and inner tubes for every one who had bicycles, and we gave packages of assorted items to everyone else.

In conversations later, a partially sighted man told me that he had been longing for a pair of sunglasses, and found them in his package. A blind woman had been asking God for a cardigan, and there it was in her parcel. Another blind man had prayed for a sweatshirt and, again, found it in his parcel. We had only one of each of these items and distributed the parcels randomly, but everyone had exactly what they needed and had prayed for! What a time of celebration that was!



## THE “**INSTEADS**” THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO US IN CHRIST

Instead of putting others in their place... **put yourself in their place.**

Instead of focusing on what's missing... **learn to appreciate what's already there.**

Instead of self-centredness... **practice generosity to others.**

Instead of anger... **kindness.**

Instead of self pity... **awesome gratitude.**

Instead of our fears... **confidence in the yes and amen and the promises of God.**

## You too can know Him

The Encouragers are full of testimonies of people who know and love the Lord. If you aren't a Christian, have you thought about bringing Him into your life and coming to know Him just as they do? Christianity is a relationship with Jesus. The basic message of the Bible is that Jesus is the Son of God, and He came to die on the cross for our sins. We can ask for His forgiveness, and He will give it to us as well as eternal life, and furthermore He promises to be with us always.

## ASK, WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

The topic under discussion was the little boy with Downs Syndrome.

"He's a danger to the others," they said. "He's aggressive." "He should be removed from the group." "He has rages." This did not tie in with the experience of the boy. "What causes the aggressive behaviour?" I asked. They seemed to feel the explanation was patently obvious. "He's Downs Syndrome," they said. To me this was a far from satisfactory explanation, and I began to observe the three-year-old boy whenever possible.

Firstly, there it was - a definite rage with blocks flying in all directions. Fortunately I'd seen what led up to it. He was trying to build with the blocks. The first one was carefully placed on the floor, the second on top of it. The third one went on, then the fourth. This was when the trouble started because the blocks were very smooth and he just didn't have the dexterity to get those third and fourth blocks to stay in place. They slipped and fell every time. His rage was his frustration with the blocks, and with himself.

Inspiration came – in the box of off-cuts at the woodwork bench were several pieces which had smooth rounded sides, but were rough on the top and bottom. I collected a pile and took them to him. He started to build: one, two, three, four, five! The traction of the rough ends held the construction safe and steady. Never before had he built so high! The excitement of his achievement transformed him and the frustrated rages gradually became a thing of the past.

It is very easy to judge and condemn situations or behaviour we don't approve of. A much more constructive reaction involves two questions. The first one is: "Why? Why is this happening? What's causing it?" And the second one is even more important. It goes like this: "What can I do about it?"

Claire Thompson





*Jealousy is when you count someone*

# My Story

by Kylee Black

*My name is Kylee, I'm 30 years old and I live in Hamilton.*

I have an incredible community of friends in Hamilton, where I have lived for five years, but it has not always been this way. I have been in a wheelchair for nearly nine years now, but before that I was running, hiking, biking, swimming, kickboxing, dancing, going on road trips and just doing basically anything that any other young person would do.

At 22 years old I had a kickboxing accident that partially tore my hamstring and groin muscles in my left leg. It stretched the sciatic nerve and it triggered a severe neurological pain disorder called Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS). I went from working, living and loving life, to being bed-bound within three months. My foot changed colour and became extremely painful, and I lost the use of my left-hand side. I couldn't wear clothes, couldn't have a breeze touch me, and couldn't have someone's hand on my skin, as it felt like a scolding iron. My mum would have to come in and move my arms and legs for me. I would just scream, it was constant torture. It was 3.5 years of being home-bound, relearning how to use my left-hand side, walk on my leg, and stand again.

We didn't really understand what was going on at that point in time. We didn't know that being born with an underlying connective tissue condition was what had caused such a severe presentation of the CRPS. And only since 2015 have we begun to realise the full impact the connective tissue disease, called Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS), has truly had on my life. It was the answer to the many health struggles I had fought in my life. Connective tissue is literally the glue that holds your body together. It's what your tendons, bones, joints, ligaments, skin, blood vessels and all your internal organs are made of. Today, I use many different forms of bracing to help stop my joints dislocating and help hold them in place. People always ask me if I have

been in a car crash, but I haven't – it's just the result of having the EDS.

When I was 13 my Dad had a brain tumour diagnosed in the left frontal lobe of his brain. He went from running an international business to not even being able to dial a telephone or walk through a checkout line. It was a huge change for him, and a huge change for our family. However, the way my parents worked through it openly and honestly, shaped who I was as I grew up. I saw people come to them and be encouraged by them because they knew they understood. They weren't ashamed and they stood by me and supported me. They said they were proud of me, and loved me anyway.

I have always had faith and loved going to church. As a child, I would go with my next door neighbour to the worship practices. I'd just sit there and listen. I just loved being with people and in community. However, I was a really broken kid. I had a body that didn't work right and I didn't know why. I looked fine, but behind the scenes I struggled with pain and dislocations that I really didn't know how to verbalise. There was nothing in my world that I had any control over at all, including my body, and I ended up with an eating disorder and suffered severe Anorexia as a teen.

My battle with Anorexia led me to stay in a live-in facility in Australia for 13 months. It was the first time I was given the ability to build my own true relationship with God and understand who God is. It was there that I really learnt what it meant to love myself, to accept myself as He sees me. I didn't think I deserved to be loved, to be cared for, and be valued. But God loves us, He is love, and we can love and accept ourselves. I learnt to speak some key truths out of my mouth every day and what I let my ears hear began to feed my soul – nourished on God's truths, not the lies I believed before.





I don't know if I would be where I am today in my journey if I didn't have my faith in God. He's been my anchor. When I've cried out to God, 'this doesn't make sense, I don't understand what's going on, I don't understand why', God has been big enough to carry that. Which seems silly to say seeing it is God we are talking about – but I think it's important to say, even the prophets cried out to God in times of anguish – but they always finished with, "Yet I trust you". I have learnt to do the same.

When I was bed-bound I set up an organisation called Spirit Spark Plugs that supports children and young adults battling chronic illness. There is a lot of support for well-known illnesses, but not much for rare ones, so we would do whatever we could to support and encourage our people, such as personalised packages and cards to kids. It showed the kids that there are people outside of their own worlds that were thinking, caring and praying about them. A lot of these kids are bed-bound or hospital bound, and we have no idea how many people in the communities around us are home-bound. I took it upon myself to raise the profile of these people and create an awareness. Even smiling at people on the street, we don't need money to do that. When we bless others I think that we get twice as blessed back. The reason I am so driven to be encouraging is because of the difference that encouragement has had on my life.

Fast forward to now – I never would have thought that life today could look as incredible and beautiful and fruitful as it does, even with a disability. I have such an incredible group of friends and supporters who value me and cheer me along the way. I feel so richly blessed. I don't think God causes bad things to happen, but I do think He can use those things in our lives that have happened.

I haven't experienced healing in the form people typically think healing should come. I do think that as we have prayed over the years He has given me a sense of inner healing and peace though. I can live without being full of bitterness. I can live without feeling the brokenness of my situation constantly, and I can hear other's journeys and minister to them out of my journey. I also had key people in my world who at different points in my journey saw who I could be and spoke it into being. They really shaped who I was,



turning my life in a different direction. I really encourage you to encourage others when you see they are struggling. I didn't believe what they spoke into my life at those points, but they planted seeds that over the years have grown. I want to be for other people what they were for me, to speak into and shape their lives.

If you try and chase happiness, you'll never find it. But if you walk hand in hand with gratitude, happiness will come to you more naturally. Everyone thinks 'I deserve this, I deserve that', 'this is my right, that's my right'. The reality is that nothing in life is 'our right' or 'our deserving'. Everything in life is a blessing; the ability to stand, to walk, to eat and pee. If we lose those things and we get them back, they are a blessing. This means that these things were actually a blessing before we ever lost them - we just don't think about it that way. But we should. Our perspective is a conscious choice we can choose to make daily. Not looking at what others have that we don't, but to start counting the things we are grateful for, being able to see the sky, the sun, the lake; for internet, for breath, for life. These are some of the things that have helped me.

We don't need life threatening conditions or chronic illnesses to leave an impression on those around us. The reality is that we ALL have an impact on the world around us, whether we want to or not. We all have



# *Faith is not knowing what the*

the power to choose how we impact the world. How we are going to choose to live. Even smiling at people walking past us on the street, shows them you see them and you care - we don't need money to do that. The encouragement of others changed my life. Ask yourself..

*Whose life can I change?*

*What's in my hands and what can I do?*

## **Around the Bridges:**

I was training for a half Marathon when I had my injury. Participating in the 6km Round the Bridges in 2015, in my wheelchair, surrounded by friends was my way of achieving this goal. At the end, my friends stood me onto my feet and helped me walk across the finish line. These are precious memories I will NEVER forget. My joints would not be strong enough to do it anymore.



## *To everyone who cares for special needs children or adults.*

My husband and I have adopted a number of children with disabilities. We collected our son from a very special foster parent. He had multiple health issues. Our daughter came to us two years later under similar circumstances. Her health issues couldn't be more different. A few years ago we added a son-in-law with brain damage to our family.

As you know, we could all write a book on endless trips to doctors, hospitals and therapists, exhausting days and nights. But as you go along your journey, the rewards are great when you see them achieve small things that are usually taken for granted. They have a determination to be admired - a blind young man playing the keyboard and ten pin bowling, a boy struggling out of his wheelchair to try to hit a cricket ball, a girl giving up first place in a race to help a friend.

We had the privilege of going to a special wedding of one of these people where our daughter was bridesmaid. The bride's dress had not arrived, but she wasn't fazed. She said, "That's okay, you have flowers for me." She was married in what she had on. It was just magic.

There are so many stories I could tell you. A whole new world opens up when you become involved, and we have

so much to learn from them. My family cannot read the Bible, but have a deep faith, and often talk about seeing their friends in heaven.

I would like to share a life-changing moment with you. When our son was five years old we took him to hospital for his pre-op heart operation. After the final tests were done, the surgeon came to us and said,

"Everything had healed!" We went home in shock, and strapped our boy into his chair for something to eat. He turned around, looked out the ranch slider and said, "See Jesus" three times. Next he said, "He's gone now." I rang my friend, not sure what had happened. She attends a different church and told me their prayer group had been praying for him, and had had a vision of him in Jesus' arms - healed. She said to me, "You know that it's true, as he can't speak anything anyone can understand."



Looking back over the years, I realise I have been privileged to see glimpses of heaven through these children. To all those parents or caregivers, you are truly blessed to have been chosen by God to care for them. Although the disabilities are all different, they all have a special gift.

*Anonymous*



**Belinda** I have CEREBRAL PALSY and I can't leave my wheelchair. But that doesn't mean that I feel handicapped – only that I need your understanding. You see, I'm not sick. And I definitely don't think I'm suffering. In fact, I'm glad I'm me and not someone else!

Oh, yes, sometimes I wish I could run and jump and dance. But it's not the end of the world if I don't. Besides, there are too many things I CAN do to worry about the few things I can't.

Unless you know me well, my speech is hard to understand, my tongue and mouth won't make the sounds that you know. And typing out my thoughts on paper takes concentration, effort and time - just to raise my arms and aim my finger at the keyboard.

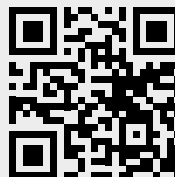
Yet for me, communication is more than that. It's you seeing me the way I know myself to be inside.

I am MYSELF, a total ME! And when the secret's shared, it's twice as joyful!

I've grown up in a world that finds me a puzzle. But it's not my disability that makes me feel handicapped – it's the people out there who don't understand. I can deal with a wheelchair that breaks down, and I can laugh at myself when the spoonful of coffee misses the cup. But I can't always hold back my tears when people let me down.

That's my disability. That's when life hurts me most.

*Author unknown (taken from Grapevine Issue 4, 2016)*



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# Interbranch activities on the increase

Wellington, Hawkes Bay and Palmerston North branches have for some years been meeting out of their own areas to carry out activities with other branches. Last year Auckland CFFD initiated meeting up with other branches for fellowship. It has been a tremendous success. At the first, Auckland and Northland connected in Matakohē. Along with time for worship and testimonies, the large group got to visit the local Kauri museum.



## The visit to the Ngatea water gardens

Recently Auckland had a trip to the Ngatea Water Gardens to fellowship with Waikato and Bay of Plenty CFFDs.

A bus, two wheelchair vans and a car went on this very special outing. Debbie Dorofaeff and the Bay of Plenty folk brought a ventriloquist who, as he was talking about the Bible, held up a very large one, and suddenly a character came out the middle and talked. It was very cleverly done. There were times of worship, and Debbie then gave a testimony about her life. Fiona Thomas and Viv Riddell did a great skit putting on make up and exotic paint, and then brought out the Scripture "*Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.*" 1 Samuel 16:7 (see photo front page). So true, and it was again well done. Then Viv gave a testimony herself. All very uplifting.

In the afternoon people went round the grounds that included beautiful lakes, waterfalls and bridges

