

THE ENCOURAGER

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The magazine of Elevate Christian Disability Trust



Torch



Kids Connect
"Under the Sea"



Auckland CFFD
"Where to from here?"



Emmanuel
"Finding Joy"

Camps around the Country





This photo and the others, at the top of the following pages, were all taken at Wellington Camp

*I've never failed at anything
another opportunity to grow*

Feeling loved, accepted & valued

A Devotional by Evan Clulee

Evan has lived experience of disability, and holds a degree in Applied Theology (from Carey Baptist College). Evan was formerly Associate Ministries Director of Elevate CDT



Many times as a disabled person, I haven't felt valued or accepted. This isn't a great feeling. And there are many reasons for this - largely about society's attitudes to people with a disability. All we want as human-beings is to know we are loved, and to know we have value to somebody.

How did Jesus show He loved and accepted disabled people? There's a key story in Mark 10:46-52

He was visually impaired, and therefore unable to work in this

society. Bartimaeus was both rejected by society and placed on the margins... he lived on the outside of the town because his town did not accept him. Bartimaeus was forced into asking people passing by to give him money so he could buy food, and live... He had heard of Jesus, so when Jesus came by Bartimaeus called out to Him, took the initiative to make contact with Jesus - but would Jesus respond or would He simply walk by, like other people?

Jesus stopped... Jesus then spoke "Tell him to come here." An invitation to come and speak with Him...

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked. We could look at this as a silly question.... Jesus, knowing this man is blind, asks what he wants. Why did Jesus ask him this? Because Jesus accepted Bartimaeus as a valued and loved person. Jesus asked for Bartimaeus' own opinion. By doing this Jesus is giving the power and control to Bartimaeus - it is up to Bartimaeus what happens next. It's his decision...

We know the rest of the story. Jesus restored Bartimaeus sight. But the key is what sight meant for Bartimaeus in the time he was living... To see meant he was now able to work, earn money and gain a living. It meant being accepted back into his town, accepted back to his church

(temple). So by healing him Jesus restored Bartimaeus to his family, restored him to his community, restored him to work, and restored him to the temple. Ultimately Bartimaeus' dignity and value increased greatly as a result of him reaching out to Jesus.

I've long said "healing is great, but acceptance is better" for some of us disabled people, full healing may not come in our life-time. But what I believe we are ultimately looking for is wholeness in Christ! To know we are loved, valued, and accepted.

We would do well to follow Jesus example in valuing all people as He does. As we've seen in Mark 10, it is about....

- **Noticing** - Jesus saw and noticed Bartimaeus.
- **Stopping** - Jesus stopped. He didn't have to - He had a choice to keep walking.
- **Speaking** - Jesus spoke to Bartimaeus directly. A basic ingredient in valuing a person. We speak to people we value.
- **Asking** - Jesus asked Bartimaeus direct questions. "What do YOU want?" He didn't ask anyone else...
- **Inviting** - Jesus invited Bartimaeus to come and speak with Him.

The end result was Jesus restored Bartimaeus. We can do the same here and now, by accepting people as they are, and seeing that disabled people gain more power and control over their own lives. Also ensuring people are well connected to their Christian communities and enabled to grow in their faith, and connected to their larger community.

Action - Who is there that you know, that you need to go and have a conversation with, so they know they are valued? Or perhaps you could support a disabled person in gaining more power and control over their own lives. Who do you know that is on the fringes, and not well connected in your community or church? - A person that would do well by being invited in, so they know they are accepted, and be in a place where they're growing in their faith...

ing in my life. I was simply given
get it right - Winston Churchill

ELEVATE NATIONAL CAMP 2019
25TH - 28TH OCTOBER

IGNITE

NEVER LET THE FIRE IN YOUR HEART GO OUT.
KEEP IT ALIVE. SERVE THE LORD.

Theme & Verse / Romans 12:11-12 *"Never let the fire in your heart go out. Keep it alive. Serve the Lord. When you hope, be joyful. When you suffer, be patient. When you pray, be faithful."* Keep the fire in your heart stirred up! Stimulate it, provoke it. It's time to stoke the fire again not only in our own hearts but in others. Join us in praying that people's hearts will be ignited this year at camp.

Let's be a spark to others!

Registration is now OPEN

Register online or contact your local branch. Please register early to ensure you don't miss out.

Fees

Adult Early Bird	\$190
(pay in full before 20th August)	
Adult	\$210
11-14 Year Olds	\$130
5-10 Year Olds	\$90
0-4 year Olds	Free

Saturday Night Costumes

This year our Saturday evening will be **Let your Light Shine!** Use your imagination and get creative, we love seeing all the costumes people come up with.

Volunteers

We rely on volunteer helpers like you to make this camp happen! Our biggest need is for volunteers to 'buddy' a camper for the weekend, supporting them to be at camp. There are also other volunteer roles we need filled. If you haven't been before, National Camp is a life-changing experience for both campers and volunteers. We would love you to join us!

Sponsorship

Would you consider sponsoring someone to come to camp? There are many who need assistance to make it. The cost particularly for people needing to bring their own caregiver is significant.

Enquiries & Further Details

09 636 4763
PO Box 13-322,
Onehunga, Auckland 1643
nationalcamp@elevatecdt.org.nz
www.elevatecdt.org.nz



**DISABILITY
AWARENESS
SUNDAY**
**COMING UP
ON 16 JUNE**

ASK
your pastor or small group leader

ARRANGE
someone to share, do a Bible reading,
show one our videos

To **AID** you,
get ideas from the Disability
Sunday Awareness booklet

Contact the Centre 09-636-4763
or visit our website for inspiring ideas
www.elevatecdt.org.nz



*Though no one can go back and make a
and make a brand new*



HER NAME

WAS

Hannah

*Margie Willers,
co-founder of
Elevate, who has
cerebral palsy, writes,*

**Hannah is one of
my favourite Bible
heroines. To me,
her life stands out
as a spiritual role
model.**

However, child neglect is rightly regarded as abhorrent, and news accounts of this inevitably bring shocked reactions across the community. Giving away a child isn't the sort of thing we would usually affirm as being worthy of God's honour. Yet the Bible records Hannah did this.

Her son Samuel, the one she gave away, was God's award of honour to Hannah. Samuel was to be the first of a long line of prophets whom God raised up over the centuries. The Lord Himself honoured Samuel by ranking him with Moses as one who could move 'His Heart'.

WHY DID GOD HONOUR HANNAH?

God honoured Hannah because Hannah honoured God. God declared, "Those who honour Me, I will honour".

Hannah's life reveals four characteristics of a person who honours God and is therefore honoured by Him.

1. SHE HAD A PROBLEM

A person God honours has a problem. I guarantee you didn't anticipate that?

However, to honour God and to be honoured by Him, we often need a 'problem' in our lives. Hannah had no children.

Now, was that really a problem? Well, in Hannah's day it was. Children were viewed as a blessing from the Lord, and a woman felt cursed if she didn't have children. No children – No blessing!

Hannah's husband was Elkanah, and he also had another wife, Peninnah who had several children. She taunted Hannah continually, deliberately seeking to provoke her on the grounds of her barrenness. Can you visualize Peninnah with children gathered around her casting at Hannah a look that conveyed, "Too bad God doesn't bless you as He blesses me?" Hannah was barren.

It wasn't an accident of nature: the writer of 1 SAMUEL Chapter 1 said The Lord had closed her womb. God was directly involved. Neither was there any indication that her problem was due to some sin in her life. On the contrary, Hannah was a godly woman. So why did God close her womb?

I wonder, is it a possibility God closed her womb so that she would have a child born out of her own helplessness and her dependence upon God. That's often how God works. He closes us up with problems we cannot solve. Finally, we reach the end of ourselves, and we realise there are no human solutions.

I figure that's precisely where God desires us. At that point we have a choice. We can shrug our shoulders and decide to live with the problem, or we can recognize the problem as an opportunity for God to prove Himself strong on our behalf – He desires a greater purpose and plan for our life.

Hudson Taylor, the well-known missionary to Inland China, declared: "When God decided to open that door, He looked for a man who was weak enough". If you've got a problem, allow me to suggest, there's room in your life to honour God, and for Him to honour you. However, for that to happen, we must learn to deal with our 'problems' correctly.

*a brand new start, anyone can start now
or ending. - Carl Bard*

2. SHE MOVED INTO PRAYER

The person God honours is a person of prayer. Hannah's problem led her into intense prayer. Prayer was an automatic response for her. All day long, from dawn until dusk, she heard the sounds of Peninnah's children. Added to that she heard the sounds of their mother's gloating. She had every reason to become bitter in spirit – to turn into a grouch and wage continual battle with Peninnah. But she didn't. Instead she prayed. She turned her daily source of emotional pain and heartache into an opportunity to earnestly seek the Lord.

What do we do with our problem? Do we complain? Throw a pity-party? Turn into a whining – moaning grouch who'll eventually suffer a chronic illness. I call 'NEGATIVE-ITIS'! Be forewarned. This 'Itis -problem' can become a deadly disease. It has the potential to spread like a malignant cancer! Let's not allow that to result. Let's resort to bowing heads and hearts in earnest prayer?

If God didn't allow us to work through struggles, trials, and heartaches, would we take time out to pray, time to seek the Lord's higher Kingdom Purposes and purposes He desires to bring to fruition through our lives. **I'm certain if life is one endless, fun-filled roller coaster ride, we'd become extremely self-centred and self-sufficient people.**

A lady once enquired of Campbell Morgan, the well-known Bible teacher, "Do you think we ought to pray about the little things in life"? Morgan replied, "Madam, can you think of anything in life that God regards as big?" God honours a person who prays about everything! However, let's be open and honest, I'm aware, prayer can be selfish. It is possible for prayer times to become a ritual - we religiously perform to manipulate God - and that He answers and comes through the way we anticipate...? And, when He doesn't, we pout and sulk. Enough said: Consequently, a third characteristic is needed...

3. HANNAH SOUGHT

GOD'S PURPOSES

The person God honours is perceptive to God's higher purposes. God's purpose is not to solve all your

problems so that you can live a happy, hassle-free life. Hannah understood this. Her prayer-life was prompted by her concern for her own need for a son. But it also went beyond her own need to God's purpose. Furthermore, Hannah vowed she didn't desire a son merely for herself, but in order he serve the Lord. Hannah understood that God wanted to anoint a king over the people, and through her prayer Samuel was born - the prophet who anointed David the king from whom descended JESUS CHRIST - the Messiah. God required a man who'd speak His word. So whilst Hannah wrestled and agonized in prayer for a son, she also pursued God's greater purpose – and in the process yielded up her own precious son for that purpose. Now, that surely is a woman of 'unique' spiritual calibre! If you and I so hanker for God to honour 'us', then allow me to suggest we certainly must focus beyond praying, "O God, please solve my problem - and move me out from this unpleasant, embarrassing situation. I can't take anymore"

The person who honours God is a person of joy-filled praise. When God honoured Hannah's prayer, she kept her part of the deal. She dedicated him to the Lord, and carefully ascribed all honour, praise and glory to God. Hannah's psalm is a psalm of praise – exalting God's awesome greatness in contrast to human weakness.

4. GOD WORKS THROUGH

THE WEAK - NOT THE STRONG

God graciously blesses the weak person who trusts Him. Do you have a problem? Is your problem insurmountable? Then, take heart - BE EXPECTANT! You are a 'prime candidate' to be honoured by God. Pray positively. Pray for God's greater purposes to be brought to fruition. Be faith-filled. Joy-filled. Believe He can turn your dreads into delirious delight, your setbacks into significant come backs, your battles into breath-taking breakthroughs.

He is the God who performs miracles.

Honour God - He'll certainly honour you!



*You will never cross the sea
to lose sight*

Hannah Shelling writes

My whole family have been IMPACTED by Elevate camps

My name is Hannah and I'm the oldest of 12 kids, and to be perfectly honest, I was so scared the first time I went to Elevate's Auckland CFFD camp at Carey Park. I was 16 and terrified. I didn't know what to expect. My brother had come for his first time the year before as a kitchen hand. I had come this time with some family friends, and had huge support from them during my first camp experience. Guess what? I found out that this camp was filled with the most beautiful hearts and stunning smiles that I had ever seen. It was the most amazing weekend! My first buddy was Amanda Barclay, and she taught me how to be the best buddy I could be. She broke me in to the ways of camp, and I haven't missed a national or Auckland regional since!

The following year I dragged more siblings along with me to Auckland camp. They, like me, were scared too. But, they, like me, also found the same precious hearts and smiles that had kept me coming. My sister Esther (18), the next one in the line up, agrees, "I love going to the camps. They're hard work physically, spiritually, and emotionally, but oh, so worth it. The amount God has taught me each time I go, and the joy I come away with from just watching and being with the people there are amazing. I think that they probably bless me more than I could ever bless them. Several younger siblings have helped in various ways at camp. Rebekah (12), and Joseph (14), both said they liked helping in the kitchen and talking with the people there. They loved making new friends. David (15) loves camp because he says it teaches him new skills, helps him make new friends, and learn more about God.



My dad has been to two regionals now, and has been so impacted by the people he spent time with. He says, "I love going to the Elevate camps. I feel free to be myself as there are no expectations of me other than to be available. I also go with no expectations of receiving anything, but somehow, every single time I am immensely encouraged, edified and strengthened in my spirit. Helping my buddies draws the love of Christ out of me, and I can see the power of God move."

Our parents were both so surprised at how much we kids love to go and help out. "I was nervous when the children first started helping," Mum says, "thinking they might find it hard, or awkward, or not know what to do or how to act. But we have been so encouraged each time they come home to hear how they have been blessed and had their faith strengthened, sometimes their attitudes slightly adjusted (gratitude-wise) and had a whole lot of fun to boot! Thank you CFFD for giving our family the opportunity to step out of our comfort zones, and think of others as more important than ourselves.

Since our first couple of years at Elevate, a few of us have also attended and helped out at Kids Connect and Emmanuel Family camp, and have been equally impacted by them.

As our family continues to grow older, and as the dynamics of family life constantly change, CFFD and all their camps will definitely be seeing more of the Shelling clan. ■

until you have the courage
of the shore.

Works that Follow

*Every man's work shall be made manifest
... of what sort it is.*

- 1 Corinthians 3:13

Walking along the seashore early one morning, I was lost in meditation. Suddenly I became aware of a boat chugging its way out to the ocean. As the sound of the engines faded I continued to plod along the beach, and was again blessed by that feeling of aloneness with God.

A few minutes later, however, I was startled to hear the splashing of water behind me, and I swung around quickly, expecting to see someone following me. To my surprise the sound was only that of the boat's wake gushing upon the beach as it reached the shoreline. As I gazed upon the horizon and saw the vessel rapidly disappearing from view, and heard its backwash breaking at my feet, the thought came that we are all like ships at sea, and our "works do follow" us. Everything we do puts something into motion. We leave behind ripples of influence which follow long after we ourselves are gone. The words we speak, the deeds we perform, the kindnesses we show to others

– as well as our unloving, inconsiderate, and selfish acts – will all have far-reaching consequences for good or bad. The "wake" of our lives may come rolling in years after our departure for the Heavenly Shore.

John the apostle writes in Revelation 14 concerning those who die in the Lord that they "rest from their labours" and "their works do follow them. And Paul reminds us that "every man's work shall be made manifest." May we all so live that when, like a ship at sea, we have passed out of sight, those who remain behind and see the works that "do follow" may "thank God upon every remembrance" of us.

*Which will you leave behind –
stepping stones or stumbling blocks?*

*"Taken from the book, OUR DAILY BREAD
FAVOURITES by Richard W. DeHaan and H G. Bosch,
Copyright c. 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971 by Radio
Bible Class. Used by permission of Zondervan
Publishing House."*

We NEED to raise the return airfare to bring Leslie from the Philippines

Leslie de la Ganar, our leader in the Philippines CFFD is coming to New Zealand to be at National Camp, the Centre, and other branches so as to learn and meet the sponsors and Elevate folk around the country.

Can you help?

PLEASE CONTACT US OR SEND YOUR DONATIONS

09 636 4763 • info@elevatedt.org.nz

PO Box 13-322, Onehunga, Auckland, 1643



BEQUESTS

We have produced a new information leaflet on "Bequests" that will be available soon.

If you are planning your Will and you felt you might include Elevate in it, do contact us to get a copy of this helpful publication.



Kind words are short but



Michael Smith shares on

“What Elevate has meant for me”

Three years ago when I was 18, although I was not a Christian, I went to Laidlaw College, where over the next two months God revealed Himself to me. I got down on my knees, crying, and asked God to forgive me and come into my life.

Four weeks later my friend Gemma invited me to come to National Camp. While travelling down there I was very nervous, thinking I might do or say something to offend somebody with a disability. In fact I was terrified. On the Sunday morning session, the worship band was playing “At the cross” by Chris Tomlin when the Holy Spirit hit me out of nowhere, and I wanted to get baptized and not be afraid to show and tell people that I am a Christian.

My prayer was that my dad would come to camp the next year, and he did. He got baptized in 2016, but sadly passed away suddenly a few months later. It was a difficult time for me, but through having Elevate, Laidlaw, church, and my dad’s recovery group to support me, I got through it, and held a memorial service for him with songs. My pastor from my

previous church preached the gospel, I shared stories about my father, and was able to share my true self.

I have now been to four national camps, as well as three Auckland CFFD camps, and through these God has changed my perspective on people with disabilities. I visited the Drop In Centre occasionally, and now I am an intern there. I was originally doing a course on teaching at Laidlaw, and then switched to one on ministry after dad died. This is my second internship and I am loving it.

I am a youth group leader at Henderson Baptist Church, and have taken four of my youth boys along to the camps, and seeing them serve melts my heart. I now get more joy out of seeing God move in the way He did with me with my youth boys. Now, I hope to get the girls along as well this year. In June I am sharing at my church for Disability Awareness Sunday, and sharing a presentation about Elevate at college to show people what Elevate has meant for me and how it can change their life.

God has now called me to work with people with disabilities. I used to be all over the show with life, and wanted to do everything, but that was becoming a problem. In my first internship paper my lecturer suggested I sit down, pray, and ask God to reveal to me my calling. Not much happened for a little while, but one day as I was sorting through some of my dad’s stuff I saw many pictures of him with people with disabilities, and I thought to myself, “well... I want to be the best man that God has made me to be”, and then I remembered the saying ‘Like father like son.’ God is my heavenly Father, and my dad was my earthly father. All of a sudden I had a lightning flash - My dad did this kind of stuff when he was my age, and now God is calling me to do the same thing!

The scripture that always comes to mind when I think about this is John 9 where Jesus heals the blind man. As John Newton said, “I was blind, but now I see.” Amazing Grace was my dad’s baptism song too - another reason why my journey with Elevate is so special. God has helped me to see the heart of the people, just as God doesn’t see the outward appearance but looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). Praise the Lord! ■

their echoes are endless

YOU CAN OVERCOME

Some of the world's greatest people have faced the world's greatest challenges, but have overcome them.

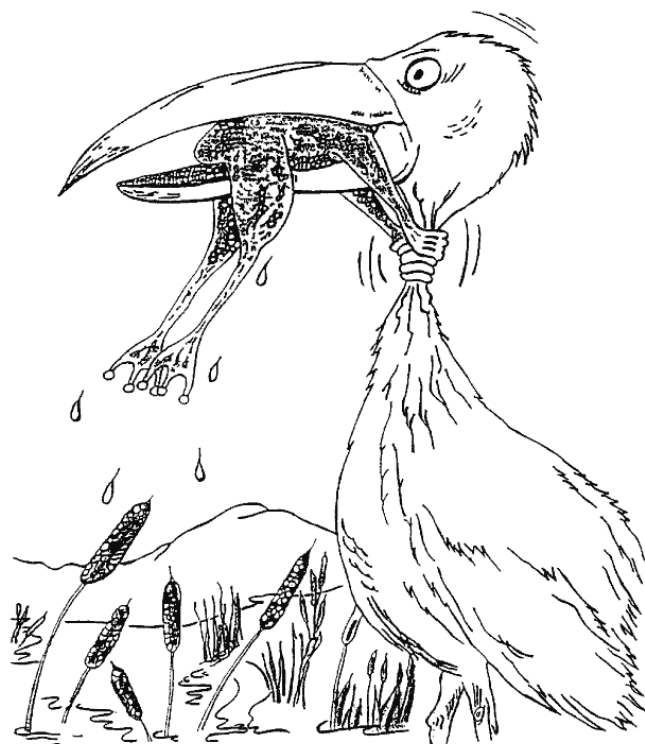
Disable a man, and you have Sir Walter Scott. Lock a man in prison, and you have John Bunyan. Raise a man in abject poverty, and you have Abraham Lincoln. Subject a man to bitter religious prejudice, and you have Benjamin Disraeli. Strike a man down with paralysis, and you have Franklin Roosevelt, have someone born black in a society filled with racial discrimination, and you have Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, Marian Anderson and George Washington Carver.

Make a man the first child to survive in an impoverished Italian family of 18, and you have Enrico Caruso. Have a man born to parents who survived a Nazi concentration camp, paralyse him from the waist down when he's four years old, and you have the incomparable violinist Itzhak Perlman. Call a man a slow learner and mentally challenged, write him off as beyond education, and you have Albert Einstein. Helen Keller was born blind and deaf, yet she graduated from college with highest honours and impacted the world. Margaret Thatcher, England's first woman Prime Minister, lived upstairs over her father's grocery store. For a while her childhood home had no running water and no indoor plumbing. Golda Meir, Israel's first and only woman Prime Minister, was a divorced grandmother from Milwaukee.

**What do these people teach us?
That success doesn't depend on our
circumstances, but on overcoming our
circumstances.**

Taken from "Work Place Ponderings"
by Garth Hewetson

NEVER EVER GIVE UP!



Imagine
You & Jesus
together in the same photo!

Graham Braddock, the outstanding NZ artist, has come up with an amazing FREE offer.

His website www.grahambraddock.co.nz enables you to upload a photo that you have taken, and merge it with his art. Your photo could be of yourself or a favourite scene.

Some of Graham's best paintings including portraits of Jesus, can be merged with your picture and downloaded to your computer to go on your screen or social media page.

Wow!

If you need help, email Ian Sinclair
igsinclair@gmail.com



Until God opens the next a

Philippines CFFD

Leslie de la Ganar writes from the Philippines.

PCFFD CAMP NEWS

Great thanks to GOD! The PCFFD Camp was so successful with the theme "Be strong and Courageous", taken from Joshua 1:9 -which goes on, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged," This theme is very timely as many persons with disabilities are experiencing difficulties and challenges in life that linger with them. Sometimes they become weak and weary and would like to give up. Others just do not understand the feeling and agony of a disabled person. That's why they need to be encouraged through God's Word and His promises. We believe that God sent people to the camp to be nourished spiritually, (there were 94 campers and camp staff who participated and worked for this annual summer event.) 40 percent of campers were new attendees. We prayed so hard for the success of this camp, and truly, God is so amazing in bringing these people with disabilities together in this event to meet Him through the speakers, group leaders and staff. Many souls were saved by God's grace and mercy. The faith of the believers were strengthened, and they became stronger and full of joy.

Before and during the camp most of the camp staff were facing different challenges, and we believed that the Lord allowed this to happen because He knew that we could pass through those trials having already prepared us through our Camp Staff Retreat before camp. The campers hearts were eager and hungry to hear the Word of God, They said they would want to attend the next camp, and they would like to invite their disabled friends to attend also. GLORY TO GOD! It was our great joy to see them learning God's Word and having a personal relationship to our dear Lord. Here are some of their testimonies and experiences...

Glen (little person) - It was my first time to attend the PCFFD Camp. This Camp is so friendly to persons with disability, and the place is accessible to the little people like us. The people here are all kind, they treated us nicely and equally, even the abled people showed respect to persons with disability. The things that I have learned from the messages of this camp are to be courageous all the time, and even though we are small in stature, God has created us fairly. Don't mind others who bully and say negative words to us, and I realized

the importance of getting to know God as God and Saviour, and I have learned to forgive others who have wronged me.

Jonalyn (cerebral palsy) - The things that I really enjoyed in the camp were the unity, helping one another and the cooperation of everybody. I did not know that there was a group like this gathering persons with disabilities to seminars and encouraging us to learn more about the Lord. The pastors and the speaker gave their messages about how to be strong and courageous in spite of our condition and to feed us about the Word of God. Also, I have learned that disability is not a hindrance to becoming successful, but we can fulfill our dreams with the help of our Mighty God. Thank you to the PCFFD Camp staff. I had an amazing and joyful experience in this camp. I hope I will be able to be at camp again.

Wilbert - It was 2014 when I first received Jesus in my heart. Before, I was an abled person with a good job, but one day I had a vehicular accident, became disabled and could not to go back again to my former work. I became hopeless, jobless and a stay at home, and mixed with people with lots of vices like drinking and smoking. Now I just want to stay away from these people. Having realized that the Lord loves me, I have become a new person, and have the will to make myself productive again. Through this camp I was taught again to be always strong and courageous in every situation that happens in my life.

Orlando (hunch back) - He received Jesus as his Lord and Saviour during the camp devotion with his group leader Pastor Dionisio. As he explained about salvation Orlando was teary eyed, he was so touched by God's Word, and he has a conviction to share the Word of God to his daughter so she will also be saved like him.

We would like to express our big thanks to all the wonderful people who supported the camp financially, like the Elevate National Camp collection and prayed. Thank you so much for being a channel of blessings of the Lord to PCFFD Camp.



Faith Mabilog (born with skeletal dysplasia), one of our speakers sharing God's word with her life testimony. She is presently studying in the Bible School and teaching kids in Sunday School. She said she has been speaker many times in different events. She prayed that she would be able to speak to a group of people with disability, so it was an answer to her prayer. Likewise, she is an answer to our prayer to have a female inspirational speaker. She says "We will be able to accept ourselves and situation if we will learn to appreciate God and to be thankful to Him with the things that we have."



Group devotion and sharing



Raymond



The little people, once shy but now confident to mingle with others.



Prayer time



The Bible never once says, "Figure it out". It says, "Trust God". He's already got it covered.

Annette Viviani's Testimony

Hi, my name is Annette Viviani and I live in Hamilton with my husband Dean. I have two adult children, Elizabeth and Jonathan, who also live in Hamilton. We moved to Auckland in 1996 when my husband left the Air Force. I joined my children's kindergarten committee and school PTFA groups, was a teacher-aide, and I was ready to lend a hand to everyone and anyone that needed me.

Then in 2001 my life changed. I had a severe stroke. Our world was turned upside down in May of that year. I was 34yrs old, I had a very supportive husband, and after six weeks of tests it was found that I had a rare condition called moyamoya syndrome. This causes strokes because of the narrowing of the blood vessels in the back of one's neck. After surgery in Auckland hospital I had a seizure and was sent to Waikato hospital. During my time there I received regular communion by Sister Carmel of the Waikato Hospital Chaplaincy. She provided me with a link to my past which I held on to tightly.

I then began at the Stewart Centre which was a rehabilitation centre for brain injury patients. I was there for quite a few years, and during this time my first challenge was attending the Outward-Bound disabled person program in the Marlborough Sounds. My next challenge was to regain my driver's licence, which took a long time, a few assessments, driving lessons, lots of tears and encouragement, and I finally gained my licence in 2010.

While all this was going on I was renewing my relationship with God after being very angry with Him for putting me in this position. I began attending my local Catholic church with my children, and I found it very uplifting, it reminded me of my childhood, and I enjoyed the prayers and singing. A lot of my friends had also found the Lord, and were very encouraging and supportive of me and my challenges. I met Heather Major who is now a pastor at All Saints



Community Church in St Andrew's, Hamilton. She is a wonderfully vibrant and enthusiastic woman who brings sunshine everywhere she goes, and leads our small group at the Waikato CFFD. I love attending the small Catholic mass at our local Parish (St Peter Chanel) on Friday mornings before going to Bible Study with my friends at the Waikato CFFD, where we enjoy singing and readings from the Bible, in a couple of hours of Christian Fellowship.

I am now quite involved with the Waikato CFFD as a committee member, and I organize our fundraiser BBQ's at the Te Rapa Bunnings Warehouse. I also coordinate the Waikato CFFD attendance at the Elevate National Camp held every Labour Weekend. I have recently begun volunteering with the champions program promoting Bibles in schools, with my good friend Cathy Harbour.

So, I have a very busy life with my family and friends who have supported and helped me throughout my illness. My husband brought our children up, as well as taking care of me and working full time. I missed many of their milestones through their school years, but I am so very thankful for all that my husband has done over the years. My son has just graduated from Waikato University, and my daughter is a successful retail manager here in Hamilton. I have a very close group of friends who have provided listening ears, shoulders to cry on, and most importantly time out of their busy lives to support me and my family. What a lucky person I am! ■

*it out", but over and over it says,
I've got it all figured out!.*

The perils of a
blind man

Why David Senior, who is blind, should be locked up!

David writes;

"Having a good sense of humour makes life so much fun. I love taking the mickey out of people, in a nice way of course, and when attending a seminar, asked if they could move the white board closer as I couldn't see it! They did!

When I had my first guide dog, Tasha, I arrived at work one morning and announced that it was so foggy that I had had to turn on Tasha's head-lights, but that her tail-light didn't work because the bulb had blown! This was for the benefit of a new staff member whom I was yet to meet. She looked at me for a few minutes without speaking, and then asked with a serious expression, 'Where do you attach them?'

"Perhaps the real culprits are my children who for years back have liked taking the mickey out of me every April Fools Day. They would put a balloon in the toilet, which was most disconcerting when one felt something bobbing up against one's posterior!" ■

10 modern day commandments

1. Prayer is not a "spare wheel" that you pull out when in trouble, but it is a "steering wheel" that directs the right path throughout.
2. So why is a Car's WINDSHIELD so large & the Rear view Mirror so small? Because our PAST is not as important as our FUTURE. So, Look Ahead and Move on.
3. Friendship is like a BOOK. It takes only a few seconds to burn, but takes years to write.
4. All things in life are temporary. If going well enjoy it, they will not last forever. If going wrong do not worry, they can't last long either.
5. Old Friends are Gold! New Friends are Diamond! IF you get Diamond, don't forget the Gold! Because to hold a Diamond you always need a Base of Gold!
6. Often when we lose hope and think this is the end, GOD smiles from above and says, "Relax, sweetheart, it's just a bend, not the end!"
7. When GOD solves your problems, you have faith in HIS abilities; when GOD doesn't solve your problems HE has faith in your abilities.
8. A blind person asked St. Anthony: "Can there be anything worse than losing eye sight?" He replied: "Yes, losing your vision!"
9. When you pray for others, God listens to you and blesses them, and sometimes, when you are safe and happy, remember that someone had prayed for you.
10. WORRYING does not take away tomorrow's TROUBLES, it takes away today's PEACE



Even in your darkest day



The testimony of Sina-Ruth Tanoi who is involved with the Torch Ministry group, where she helps with meetings and administration for Camp.

Amazing Grace,

How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found,

Was blind, but now I see.

I was born into a large family of eleven, in Samatau, Samoa in 1990. I don't remember anything about my first two years there, but my family tell me stories of what life was like.

In 1991 - 1992, I came to New Zealand to live with my birth Dad's older brother and his family. For most of my childhood they raised me, and I knew my Uncle and Aunt as Mum and Dad. I am legally blind, with my left eye severely under-developed. It's rather tiny, and I wear a prosthetic over the top of it to make me look normal. I can't see out of this eye. My right eye is a bit funny in shape and my cornea is opaque. For a normal healthy eye, this part of the eye is supposed to be clear. Mine looks rather cloudy.

Growing up, we always went to church, so I knew of God and had a kind of respect for Him in a way, but didn't have **saving faith in Him**. To me, church was somewhere we went on Sundays, and God was who we talked about for hours during family devotions in the evenings during the week. He was my vending machine. I put my coin of prayer in when I wanted something, and then expected Him to give me what I wanted in return.

One of my friends came to a music camp I was on at the time, and all she talked about was being born again. At the time being born again seemed like something spiritual to try out, so when she told me about it, I repeated a prayer after her and thought, "that's it. I'm in." But I still didn't understand anything

about God. It was all stuff that made me feel good instead of making me understand **I was a sinner in need of saving**. To believers, the life I was living was not proof of my faith, but proof that I was not bearing fruit, not walking with the Lord, which meant I wasn't actually His. I still treated God the same as I'd always done, the Bible that was given to me got lost someplace, and I continued on with life as usual.

It wasn't until April of 2011 that I finally repented and put my trust in the Lord Jesus. After a devastating season of my life that almost led me to commit suicide, a lady who I respect ever so much took me to her church. My attitude had been, "Lord, I'll follow You, but I don't want to change the way I'm living." It wasn't any surprise then, that the verse the Lord used on that Sunday morning was Luke 9:62 **"No one, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."**

In that moment, I understood two things. I'd made a mess of my life, I couldn't run it on my own anymore and that if I was really going to give my life over to God, it had better be for real. I was not going to put my hand to the plough and look back to the world.

That's what got me in the mess I was in to begin with. In the months that followed, first that lady and then my friends encouraged and disciplined me in my walk with the Lord. While we still face hard times, we know we have a sure foundation in the Lord. To Him be glory forever!

God has been faithful to me over the years. He has taught me many things in His word. I wouldn't be where I am today without Him. Today, I work as a Team support Administrator at one of our local hospitals, and as a guide/waitress for a restaurant called "Dining in the Dark". I have Delta, a yellow Labrador whose tail wags in circles when excited. She is my wonderful guide dog who brings me a lot of laughs and interesting experiences. This is my story of God's amazing grace. **I once was lost, but now I'm found.**

If you don't know Him, it's my prayer that you will get to know Him. He is such an amazing God. Even through the rough seasons of our lives, He is able to be our perfect peace. Please, trust in Him today. If this speaks to you, do contact Elevate (see back page).



Attention - all those who have changed their email addresses PLEASE tell us your new ones

I hope and trust that this small story of God's amazing grace will also be an encouragement to believers. Don't give up witnessing to your friends or relatives. God will use it all for His glory in the end. Trust Him with them. You never know what He's doing in their hearts.

Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen. ■



Did you know that we can email you when the latest Encourager magazine is up on our website? To sign up, scan this QR code, phone us or update your contact details on our website.

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Other ministries around the country		
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Kumbayah - St David's Presbyterian Church - Palmerston North Ann Bennett		06 355 2818
Bible Friends - Wanganui Louise Rostron	rostrons@extra.co.nz	06 344 5955
THRIVE - Greerton Bible Church, Tauranga Ron Raikes	thrive@gbc.org.nz	021 032 9660

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Lots of fun was had at Wellington Camp



These were made
by people with disabilities
for those with disabilities overseas



WHAT IS ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST ALL ABOUT?

We are an interdenominational parachurch organisation.
We run meetings and camps throughout NZ.
We have four groups:

- **CFFD** (Christian Fellowship for Disabled) mainly for folk with physical disabilities.
- **Joy Ministries** mainly for those with intellectual disabilities.
- **Emmanuel** for families with children with disabilities.
- **Torch** for those who are blind and visually impaired.

We have a Centre in Auckland which is our main office and where we also run a **Drop In Centre** three days a week. We welcome people with disabilities, volunteers and family members.

"We
welcome
your
enquiry"

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