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EVANGELISE EQUIP EDUCATE

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...FEATURING NATIONAL CAMP 2009

THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A DISABILITY

by Leslie de La Ganar



*My grace is sufficient for you,
for My power is made perfect in weakness.*
2 Corinthians 12:9a

Having a disability is not easy, whether you have a visual or hearing impairment or a physical disability. No one would really want to have a disability. But God opened my eyes that there are advantages to having disability.

First, it can bring us to be totally dependent on God's help. When a person feels hopeless or is in a difficult situation, the tendency is for him or her to seek God's help, and because of that to draw closer to God.

Second, disability is God's opportunity to us for Him to show His love, grace and mercy. I believe that everyone has their own weaknesses or disability, it might not be physical, but could be emotional, social or spiritual. We need God in our lives.

Third, God will be glorified through our weaknesses or disability. We are able to endure our disability because His grace is sufficient to us. We just have to ask Him for His grace, and believe that He can and will do immeasurable things in our lives.

I experienced God's sufficient grace when a plan was put forward to bring me to New Zealand. God provided me with a companion - one of my co staff workers. It was my first time to go abroad. Then, God provided the money for the air fare. He used many generous people to do this. The last big hurdle was the visa. It only came through on the very day I was to board the plane! How I thank God that He allowed me to attend the National camp for those with disabilities. I have learned so much from this experience.

And I also saw God's sufficient grace through many people, staff and volunteers alike, who made themselves available to come for the event to help people with disabilities.

After the camp God used people who made themselves available that I might see some of this most beautiful land and its amazing forest covering. Truly His grace is sufficient!

TOTALLY EXHAUSTED BUT TOTALLY EXHILARATED

I have no idea how many CMWDT Labour weekend camps I have been to. I have lost track of that. After the first one I was totally exhausted, yet totally exhilarated at the same time, but I have been back every year since. Wild horses cannot keep me away! There have been things in my life I have had to work through before coming to camp. I am thankful that God hasn't given up on me. I am a "work in progress", so that Jesus can shine more and more through me.

It is amazing that during the cabin time on Saturday morning, so much was shared by all, covering all that was shared at the introduction on Friday night to the theme of the weekend: "Battle for the Heart"; Victory for the Soul". Several had arrived at camp too late for that, yet the Holy Spirit had gone before, teaching us the very same things, moulding and shaping us where we live. I suppose that is what the priesthood of all believers is all about, us ministering to God and to one another.

Malcolm Dixon

I WAS OVERWHELMED WITH LOVE

I have been truly blessed to have worked at camp this year. My buddy was Nigel Norrell, a lovely 67 year old gentleman with a big heart for Christ. It has been so amazing seeing all the wonderful people here! Saturday night I was doing a small study with all the guys in the cabin, then we prayed for each other, and I was reduced to tears when my buddies prayed for me. I was overwhelmed with love, and I am truly content. Seeing how my buddies live, and being a part of their lifestyle for a weekend, it has made me forget all issues in my life and made me thankful for the small things such as sight, hearing and movement. Also, I have discovered that serving people with disabilities and aiding them however I can, is one of my passions in life. It has been an amazing time of refreshment for me and I will definitely come back and help at camp in the future.

Carlos Peunte

HOW'S THIS FOR KEENNESS TO COME TO NATIONAL CAMP!

It was getting close to National Camp and Emily Swan in Wellington was keen to attend. It was too late to join in with the Wellington contingent for all their transport was fully taken. She tried all avenues to find someone who was travelling up to Auckland without success. What compounded the problem was that she did not finish work in Wellington until 5.30 pm. on the Friday. Still, she went on trying and eventually did find someone who could help her part of the way. By Sunday morning she had reached Whakatane. Amazingly she reached camp later that afternoon, talked with people, enjoyed the evening program, in her own words "worshipping God with such fantastic people was worth the trip in gold", found a lift going back that night and was able to start work again on Tuesday.

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM



The worship dance was made up of the Hendry family and our folk



Cabin Time for this group was enriched by Michael Stoneham's guitar playing

NATIONAL CAMP 2009



The Missions elective “Special Ops”



On the right Chess whiz Alastair Nicol, who only lost one game all weekend, looks on

A DIVINE CHAIN OF EVENTS

Lyn Spencer writes:

Who would have thought that as a teenager in the 1960s, renting a paddock for my horse on a lonely road, would have caused me to meet five children – and later their lovely mother Betty who was housebound for many years with multiple sclerosis.

Because of Betty, her love for Jesus and desperate need for fellowship, I found a walker frame and later a wheelchair for her, and we escaped regularly to church and women's Bible studies.

Because of Betty, hunting for spiritual comfort and encouragement for her, I came across a little magazine from Auckland written by a certain couple called Hugh and Di Willis! (Issue No. 4 from the 1970s is the first of my many volumes!)

Because of that humble little newsletter I met a certain one-legged character called John Robertson, who enthusiastically talked me into helping him start up a chapter of CFFD in the Manawatu (then promptly left town, leaving me holding the baby group!)

Because of those monthly meetings held in Palmerston North Hospital Chapel, I met two more initially reluctant helpers, Merv and Joan Piaggi, who had heroically nursed their two beloved sons Anthony and Grant through their muscular dystrophy years to their early teenage deaths.

Because of the Piaggi's huge enthusiasm for the annual camp at Matamata, interest eventually rubbed off on me, and after attending my first camp, I was hooked! (as were all our Manawatu CFFD members who trustingly climbed into my old Toyota van to head north every Labour weekend. Because of children at camp needing buddies, the family also got roped into helping as well, with some interesting results.

Our children being exposed to hands of love and compassion at camp have all been affected long term. Ruth has since gone on to train as a sign language interpreter and spent three and a half years in ministry to the deaf in Fiji. Fiona went on training as a nurse in Australia, her interest in nursing being fuelled by the wonderful, compassionate Christian nurses she had met at camp.

How wonderful are the ways of the Lord!



FROM AN AUSTRALIAN FAN!

Lindsey Gale works for CBM – a leading international disability and development organisation. Her job is to equip the Australian church to welcome and include people with a disability. She was at National Camp along with two other people she works with there. She writes:

Last year I came to National Camp for the first time. Like all first-timers, I loved it and took home to Australia many great insights and ideas. Over 2009 I have developed “LUKE 14” – Disability Inclusive Christian Communities, which is a resource and training initiative for the church. It consists of four steps for any church to take in developing disability ministry. These four steps are what I have first taken myself, and so now back at National Camp again, I thought I’d share with you the impact your ministry has had on me and Luke 14.



Step One – Awareness Raising. The stories I heard at Camp last year have shaped my understanding. It has been such an honour to sit with people and interview them about life and faith and the impact of disability on both. I went home last year committed to filming people’s stories, so I could use them to raise awareness in Australian churches. The result of this has been ‘Table Talk’ – a short promotional DVD that is beginning to circulate around churches in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. The goal for this DVD is to encourage churches who haven’t thought at all, to respond to Jesus’ call in Luke 14 to reach out to the poor and people with a disability with the good news of God’s love.

Step Two – Education. CMWDT resources have educated me as to what churches can do to engage their members and minister to people. I took some of these home last year, and used and adapted them to fit the Australian church context. CBM has now produced an educational pack for churches. This includes a multi-media Bible study series – Church Bar None – which addresses key areas of church disability ministry; also a guide for churches in running a Disability Awareness Sunday event, and an Accessible Church manual that includes the Building Access Requirements for churches in Australia.

Step Three – Community Partnering. As I try and think ‘one step ahead’ of church congregations, in order to offer ideas and guidance in connecting with disability service providers, I’ve drawn inspiration from CMWDT in their desire to reach out and find people. The Luke 14 mandate is that we should offer compelling reasons as to why people with a disability should become members of God’s family. The love and deep, mutual care that characterises National Camp is certainly compelling testimony

to the beauty of Christian community, that surely no-one would want to turn down.

Step Four – **Networking and Celebration**. CMWDT helps churches work together on a common agenda. This has been a model for me of what we can also achieve across the various Australian states and regions in terms of networked disability ministries.

All up I owe a great debt to CMWDT for what I have managed to do so far. And as more progress is slowly made, that will just be more reason to say “thanks” to you.

MEMORIES REVIVED

Ruth Beale writes:

Coming back to camp brought back many memories particularly that first one in 1986, and then seeing Amy here brought into vivid detail my time in the Philippines thirteen years ago when I lay virtually at death’s door, desperately sick in a foreign hospital.

For it was Amy who was one of that amazing group of people from Hebron who took turns in making a four hour return bus trip to sit with me, pray for me and with me, give me meals, and keep my spirits up.

But Amy did far more than that for she donated her blood for me.

In New Zealand we have a system which brings in most of what we need, but in the Philippines donated blood is in very short supply, as is nurse care, and meals must be provided by someone outside the hospital.

Then with Lesley, here again the memories come flowing back, for she was one of the first recipients of the sponsorship programme. She had no wheelchair and walked on her hands and bottom. She was a real testimony to God’s grace as her attitude was extremely positive and she was already involved in a local church teaching Sunday school. Briccio and Ruth went back to Hebron to discuss the best ways they could help Lesley. It was decided that she definitely needed a wheelchair. Then there was some talk about sponsorship, but this was not put into effect till much later. Ruth was able to find sponsors for Lesley who sponsored her through high school and college (Polytechnic) and now Lesley is a full-time staff worker for PCFFD (Philippines Christian Fellowship for Disabled). So we see Lesley as being our success story, our poster girl of PCFFD.

If you would like to see the huge transformation that takes place in a young person’s life (just like Leslie) when Hebron is able to bring them in, then you can make it

happen by joining the Sponsorship programme that Ruth has been running for many years. It costs \$25 or \$50 a month. Write to her at 39 Durham Cres, Epuni, Lower Hutt, 5011, or ring 04 934 6785.

We thank all those who contributed towards bringing Leslie out to New Zealand, and in particular the Northland & Wellington Branches who took up collections that resulted in over \$1400 being donated.

Before and after camp Leslie spent a number of days at the Centre acquainting herself with the booklets and other literature put out by the Trust, and along with Amy shared her testimony and showed the excellent power point presentation she had prepared before leaving the Philippines. They also took part at the Auckland Joy Ministries and visited an art exhibition done by people with disabilities.



Ken Miller hosted the 2 Filipinos and showed them around Rotorua and they took part in meetings of the Bay of Plenty CFFD and Whakatane Joy Ministries Branch. A highlight of their time in “The Bay” was a call on Margie Willers, co-founder of the whole ministry.

At all these places and at camp they performed the Filipino fan dance shown below and met many sponsors. The final photo shows them with Ken and the items he donated towards an auction at camp for the Philippines, and as a result well over \$2,000 is being sent to the Philippines to enable a camp to be held there next year.



IMMEASURABLY MORE

This article is condensed from one written by Carol Stevens in Interserve NZ's GO magazine (see www.interserve.org.nz) and is included with her permission. She and her husband David have been serving in Nepal for almost 18 years. David is currently Executive Director of INF/Worldwide. Carol's ministry focus is on people with disabilities and involvement in their local Nepali church. Thanks to INF for their permission to include their 3 photos with this article.

When Sita was fifteen years old she fell from a tree while collecting firewood, and suffered a spinal cord injury which left her completely paralysed from the waist down. For almost two years she was treated for complications in four different hospitals in Kathmandu, Nepal, and her life often hung in the balance. In one of these she experienced God's love through caring Christian staff; in particular Sita remembers one woman who used to visit the children's ward to share toys and Christian literature, and, when Sita was critically ill, even donated her blood to Sita.



I met Sita while working as a physiotherapist at the Ryder Cheshire Home where Sita was training to become a tailor. Sita attended a women's meeting with me at a local church, where her heart was touched, and our friendship continued to grow. After completing her training, Sita and three others set up a tailoring shop in Kathmandu, with the hope of becoming financially self-supporting.. But their dreams were dashed by thieves, who stole their sewing machines and all the fabric and saris their customers had entrusted to them. After that, Sita had no choice but to return home to her village, to live with her father and stepmother.

She lived there for about three years, but found it increasingly frustrating. Life was a struggle, physically and financially. She felt very confined, as the rocky roads made it difficult to get around by wheelchair, and even the simplest action such as toileting was a problem, since Nepali homes have squat toilets which paraplegics cannot use. She disliked being so dependent on others, and feeling she was a burden to them.

While living in the village, Sita would join in with the Hindu festivals to please her family, but was secretly praying and reading her Bible. Then in 2000, after being admitted to INF's Green Pastures Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for physio treatment and further training, Sita made a commitment to follow Christ. Surprisingly her family did not oppose her decision, as her father had always maintained that it was the prayers of Christians that saved her life in the early months after her injury.

It was during her 15 months there that Sita caught a vision for encouraging and coming alongside others with disabilities. By then I was back in Canada, but we kept in touch, and her letters to me were full of joy: she was so thankful to God for what He was doing in her life. She moved to Pokhara and became active in a local church,

and was even baptised in a tank that had been specially designed for her. Her heart's desire was to become a Christian counsellor, so that she could be an encouragement to others with long-term disabilities. But it seemed an impossible goal: not only was she confined to a wheelchair, but she only had a Year 8 education.

In 2007, when my husband and I returned to Nepal, I brought Sita's last letter with me, having lost contact with her three years prior. I was hoping to find her again, somehow, then amazingly I received an email update from the Medical Superintendent at Green Pastures Hospital, announcing the appointment of a new peer counsellor: it was Sita! It was with great delight that we were reunited later that week, and we all gave thanks to the God who is able "to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20). Neither of us had ever imagined that one day we'd be working together in the same Christian organisation.

Sita then shared amazing stories of how God had provided for her in recent years, and how He'd taken her from being a patient at Green Pastures to working full-time for INF. It had begun with informal opportunities to counsel others while she was still a patient, then continued for the two years she was employed by a spinal cord injury association where she helped with tailoring training. After that Green Pastures invited her to be a volunteer counsellor one day a week.

God had also provided a secure, suitable living arrangement for her. Disabled people in Nepal often struggle to find appropriate wheelchair-accessible housing with toilet and shower facilities, but Sita, along with one or two other disabled adults, lived in a house provided by an elderly Japanese friend. Wheelchair-accessible, and with a Western-style toilet (as opposed to the squat style), this home has been a haven for Sita and her friends, and is a source of blessing to many who visit there. In addition, this Japanese friend enabled Sita to attend a six-week peer counsellor training in Japan, and, after three years of volunteer counselling at Green Pastures, Sita applied for the full-time paid position as peer counsellor.

It has been a privilege for me to watch Sita interacting with patients on the wards and the rehab department at Green Pastures Hospital. As she wheels alongside a hospital bed, her head is just about level with the patient's head on the pillow. When a patient shares their sorrow with her, she is able to say, "I understand," in a way that able-bodied staff cannot. Honest



sharing of her own struggles brings hope and comfort to patients and their families as they observe that it is possible to live a rich and full life from a wheelchair.

Last year Sita proved that she had plenty of surprises left up her sleeve, when a photo of her made it on to the front page of one of the large Nepali newspapers, boldly captioned with “Paraplegic takes to Paragliding”. And sure enough, there was a photo of Sita landing at the lake shore in Pokhara, having just become the first Nepali person with a disability to go paragliding.



Once again she had demonstrated her desire to live life to the full and to encourage others to do the same. “When I saw others paragliding, I wished I could try,” she said. “The paragliding company said it would be too dangerous, but one of the pilots was willing to take me. I was nervous at first, but I thought ‘If I don’t try, others won’t try’, and then I discovered it was easy and very enjoyable. It gave me a wonderful sense of freedom floating through the air. And I thought that if I am successful, it will mean success for other people with disabilities.” And indeed, it was a huge encouragement to many disabled people, and was widely covered in the media.

Does Sita feel she has a rich and full life? Yes, very much so. She says, “Sometimes I wonder if I am living a real life or only dreaming. I am so thankful to God for the opportunities He has given me to fulfil my vision of encouraging others with disabilities. He has opened so many doors for me. This is not of my own doing. I have a deep love for people with disabilities and I’m able to understand their problems. I experience God’s grace in every moment of my life. I know my soul is safe, and He gives me physical health as well.” Sita continues to marvel at all that God has done in her life, and waits expectantly to see what ‘immeasurably more’ plans He has for her future.

ALEXANDRA CAN NOW READ

When Alexandra had been at school six months we realized she was having difficulty reading. This surprised us as she was a very bright child, had been speaking in sentences since she was 14 months old, had learnt her colours early on, and did jigsaws at a very early age. We started private remedial lessons, but got nowhere.

Then when she was eight she started getting terrible migraine headaches, and often within an hour of school starting I would get a phone call to come and bring her home. Her face would be grey, and she looked like an old lady. Often she would sit down, bang her head on the table and say, "Help me Mummy – do something, do something." The doctor put her on valium, but it didn't do any good. He asked Alexandra to write some letters for him, and they looked rather strange. He didn't think it looked like dyslexia, but he asked the psyche service to check on her. They put her through several tests, asked me about her early childhood, and amongst other things I told them she had had three accidents between the ages of 3 and 5 - falling off a swing, a ladder and a horse, all of which needed hospitalisation for shock and concussion. They reported that the part of her brain that recognized symbols had been damaged, and to ask her to read was like throwing the pieces of a jigsaw on the table and saying, "What is it a picture of?" She couldn't do it, and we would have to accept that she would never be able to read!

I had only recently become a Christian, and I asked the Lord what I should do. He told me to take her to church to be prayed for. When I phoned the church they said they wouldn't pray for a child unless both parents were in agreement. I asked my husband (a non-believer) if he would go with me, but he said, "No". Again I asked the Lord what should I do now, and He said, "Ask him again." I did, and this time he said, "Yes." I made an appointment, and the three of us went to the church office. We were greeted by the pastor who asked my husband lots of questions about his beliefs and his background. He then laid hands on Alexandra and prayed for the healing of the brain cells in Jesus name. When we got home she picked up my Bible, opened it and recited the story of the lost coin. I said, "Did you remember it?" and she assured me she had just read it. Six months later she won a reading and recitation prize at a "Girls Rally." She did well at school, went to University and got a Bachelor of Arts degree. She would read late into the night, and my husband would say, "Tell her to put the light out, and get some sleep." After all that had happened I had to reply, "I'll never tell her to stop reading!"

I think the Lord has a great sense of humour. Last year Alexandra was notified that because she was one of the top 500 borrowers of books from the Auckland libraries she was invited to an evening at the Academy theatre with drinks and nibbles and free parking, to see the premier of the movie, "The Life of Bees", which she greatly enjoyed. To me it was like the cherry being put on the cake. What a wonderful thing the Lord has done! And you've guessed it – my husband is no longer a non-believer!

Val Dolden

THE GARDENER

Wendy Dowsing is one of the wonderful people who come to help out at our Centre. She loves being with everybody there, and on one of these occasions she shared the following from her book.

I was given for Christmas one of those small iron garden signs with the delightful words “I love my garden” emblazoned on it. I decided to “plant” it in the small patch of garden by my front door in a prominent position. As I stepped back to admire the effect my eyes swept over the bed. Oh dear! Far from looking loved it looked decidedly neglected. What with all the rain the weeds had had a field day and were flourishing. The oxalis looked particularly healthy and was entangled with the flowers. Even the white alyssum had gone crazy. It’s a pretty flower in moderation but it obviously didn’t know the meaning of the word and was smothering the entire patch. It was evident that I must do something quickly or my little plaque would make me out to be a liar!



Early next morning, being the only time when I can get to grips with that part of the garden, the mid-day sun being too bright and strong for my freckled English skin, and the evening being the time when the mozzies come out to party and I provide the feast, I set about tidying up the bed. As I was working it occurred to me that I actually enjoyed pulling out the weeds and tidying up more than planting. Digging out the oxalis with their nice plump bulbs with several little ones hanging on was giving me great satisfaction, although I knew that I was probably leaving twice as many behind, but never mind they were out of sight!

Thinking about my attitude to gardening with my usual habit of spiritualising the mundane it occurred to me that my gardening antics revealed a lot about my character. I was taught as a child at home and at school the importance of keeping God’s standards. I am grateful for the guidelines I was given. They have been a bedrock foundation in my life, but unfortunately I never knew how I could actually achieve living up to them.

Like my gardening, when things got out of hand I’d make great efforts to improve, but no matter how hard I tried I never felt I was good enough. I knew in my heart that self-

effort was not getting to the root of the problem and many sins lay hidden beneath the surface waiting to re-emerge, for it is one thing to try to pull out the weeds in one's life but quite another to take the time to fill the gaps with the right plants, plants that will last and not wilt at the first difficulty.

In my later teens I decided the whole thing was too much effort and stopped even trying. For a time my life became a wilderness. I stopped going to church. I longed to have a good time but often felt dissatisfied. I wanted God's approval but was not prepared to commit myself to Him.

With my marriage and the arrival of our children I drifted back to church. Even then it was more for social reasons than any deep return to my faith.

It wasn't until long after we'd settled in New Zealand that I went to a meeting at which the English evangelist David Watson was the speaker. He said something that shook up my whole life. He said, "If you have only pencilled in your commitment to Christ, now is the time to ink it over". I suddenly realised that I had never made a conscious decision to give my life to Christ. I saw in David and the young team accompanying him an enthusiasm and joy that was infectious, something that was missing from my life. I realised I needed to ask Christ into my heart so that His Spirit would be there to challenge me, help and encourage me, and to restore me.

Soon after this I felt the need to get to know God better through the study of the Bible, a book I had hardly read since I'd left school. I found an excellent Bible study and discovered the truth that it is God's living Word which changes people, and this was a turning point in my life. It was such a relief when I discovered that I didn't have to prove anything to God because He loves me as I am, but also enough not to leave me that way! It was so exciting when the Holy Spirit gave me a new understanding of and love for God's Word, and I am continuing to learn new truths all the time.

In John's gospel in chapter 15 there is that wonderful passage which starts, "I am the true vine, my Father is the Gardener." My little plaque declares that I love my garden. How much more wonderful it is to know that when we are grafted onto Jesus Christ, the vine, our heavenly Gardener loves each one of us unconditionally. For unlike my gardening efforts that come in fits and starts, He is always there for us, and under His tender loving care we can blossom and bear fruit for Him.

*Kindness is the oil
that takes the friction out of life*

CAMPS IN 2010

***Wellington CFFD** 5 – 7 March

at El Rancho, Waikanae

***Kidz Camp** (in conjunction with CBM) 26 – 28 March

at Motu Moana, Blockhouse Bay

A pilot camp for physically disabled children aged 9 – 14

***Auckland CFFD** 30 April – 2 May

at Carey Park, Henderson

***National Joy Ministries** 14 – 16 May

at Totara Springs Matamata

CMWDT Leadership Camp 2 – 4 July

At Totara Springs, Matamata

National CMWDT Camp Labour Weekend 22 – 25 October

At Totara Springs, Matamata

EVAN CLULEE LEAVES THE TRUST

A long association with the Trust ended last month with Evan leaving CMWDT to follow a strong calling he and May have had for some time to make preparations towards going to China in a few years. They have a strong call towards missions, and Evan has made several trips to the Philippines to take part in the Philippines CFFD ministry. Evan graduated from Carey Bible College earlier this year and was the recipient of the prize for Missions.

Evan first came as a student on section from Faith Bible College, then as a volunteer at the Centre, before taking on the role of Associate Ministries Director.

He has been involved with the Centre, Camps regional, National and Joy Ministry, and was on the organising committee of Labour Weekend camps. He also went to Auckland CFFD meetings. He has taken part in many Disability Awareness services and done a lot of admin including revitalising several leaflets, also visiting etc.

May has been involved too and she has also greatly contributed. They will be missed, but we will still see them!

MOBILITY CHAIR (SCOOTER)

We have been told of one that is free to a good home. It has only been used for 6 months. It's a 'Go chair' with steering on the arm and no basket. If you are interested, ring Joy Oliver, Room 33 Julia Wallace Rest Home, Clearview Park, Palmerston North.
Ring 06-358-0113, preferably between 6pm and 7pm.

Introducing...

THE REGENCY PEDIATRIC WHEELCHAIR

On July 28, 2009, the very first *Regency Pediatric Wheelchair* rolled off the assembly line at the *Wheels for the World* restoration shop at Taft Correctional Facility in California, USA. Shouts of joy and praise came from Joni and Friends ministry leaders and inmates alike.



Beautifully designed, sturdy, and state-of-the-art, the *Regency Pediatric Wheelchair* is engineered to meet the needs of a growing child for five years, with its adjustable seat, back, footrests and headrests.

With the help of donations, fifty *Regency Pediatric Wheelchairs* will be manufactured each month, enabling *Wheels for the World* to provide wheelchairs to three times more children with disabilities.

Taken from the Joni And Friends Newsletter

HOW DOES ONE GET RIGHT WITH GOD?

How does one get right with God? If this is your question, these are some steps you could follow. Firstly, you must **ADMIT** the truth of the Bible where it says you are a sinner. Realizing your need for God's forgiveness and pardon, **ASK** Jesus Christ to be your Saviour. **REPENT** of all wrong doing in your life. Be willing to have a radical change in your lifestyle, turning from old ambitions, attitudes and actions. Make a conscious deliberate decision to allow God to direct your life and **THANK** Him for what He has done. This is a momentous step of faith, but God will give such faith. It is like that moment when you ask the question, "Will you marry me?" Your sweetheart has to decide between keeping his or her independence by remaining single, or sharing life with you. As you say "Yes," to the Lord Jesus, you will discover that He gives peace—peace with God, peace of mind, a purpose for living, hope for the future and access into His eternal family. I have every confidence in recommending my Saviour to you. God is my Rock and my Salvation.

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

“My healing didn’t happen overnight -- my father prayed for me for 23 years,” says Joan Parker who was born with severe disabilities. She tells her story to Marie Anticich.

I was born in 1946 with cerebral palsy and a triple club foot, much to my parents’ dismay. When I emerged from the womb Dad sensed the Lord telling him that I would be healed “at an appointed time,” as in Habakkuk 2:3.

At three I learned to walk with a built-up boot and at five I went to school. But when I was eight I had two major operations and my education went down the tube. Doctors tried to fix my foot by splitting the back tendons, but it later reverted. They also turned my left arm around to make it more useful. Encased in plaster, I developed a fear of doctors and hospitals. At nine I started having major epileptic seizures which shut my brain down. I regressed and became intellectually disabled, needing help to get washed and dressed. After a night of “bad turns” I’d sleep all day and took 20mg of valium daily.

The doctor said I’d be dead by fifteen, and well-meaning people told my parents to put me in a home. But I survived, and at fifteen Dad employed me to wash dishes part-time in his confectionary bake-house in Takapau, Central Hawkes Bay.

As a teenager I was angry and frustrated. I’d swear and throw tantrums, wanting everyone else to pay for my disability. It was hard on my parents and two younger siblings, but Dad never gave up. When I was 22 he took me to an Order of St Luke’s healing service in Wellington. At the altar rail I suffered a particularly bad seizure, and while the minister was praying God gave him a word of knowledge about me.

“This is the last turn she’ll ever take,” he told my father.

That was in 1966 and I’ve never had a seizure since!

Two years later Dad had a massive heart attack and died at the age of 52. leaving me lonely and confused. One weekend I flew to Auckland and stayed in a hotel to get away from everything and everyone. I heard singing coming from St Paul’s Church in Symonds Street and went to investigate. It was a Life in the Spirit seminar and I sat in the back pew, listening to the music. A guy came up to me.

“Jesus loves you. Do you know that?” he asked me.



At that moment I surrendered to God.

I was excited to have my own faith, and not just my father's. When I got home, however, everyone thought I'd gone stupid. So it was a lonely time. I went to an interdenominational Life in the Spirit seminar at a Catholic church, and a Catholic priest began praying for someone to teach me to read. I belonged to the Hastings Light Opera Society and sang in the church choir. One day a school teacher called Edward, who sang tenor behind me, noticed I wasn't reading the words. He leaned over my shoulder.

"Joan Parker," he said, "I believe you cannot read a word!"



"You're right," I answered, "but you're not going to tell anyone, are you?"

That was the start of a friendship.

The next week the Lord woke another school teacher called Pam at 3am and told her to go to the Catholic group. She did.

"I know why you're here," the priest told her. "Can you befriend Joan and teach her to read and write?"

Together Edward and Pam taught me to read, starting with the simplest words.

Because they were kind I learned quickly. At school the teachers had hit my bad hand with a ruler for not remembering things.

My concentration improved. I began to write letters and read The Way Bible which has easy words. The priest made me read a verse every Friday night, but it took eight years of hard work to open my mind properly.

People began to notice a change in me as I became less angry and bitter. When I was water-baptised in a Presbyterian church they had to lift me into the pool as I couldn't get in without my boots on.

Teenagers took a shine to me at the Anglican church I attended, and at 30 I learned to have fun with the young people. Many of them are now ministers.

Amazingly, since I wasn't considered employable, I got a job as a caregiver in a rest home in 1970. I worked there for five years and learned to mix with people from all walks of life. I learned to drive, and bought an automatic car with a device to help turn the wheel. In 1974 I bought my own unit, where I've lived ever since.

For 23 years I worked as a packer and examiner in the Soma President textile factory in Hastings, which made Haynes underwear.

I'd often say to Jesus, "If my leg and arm were healed I could serve You better," but He would remind me, "My grace is sufficient for you."

Reluctantly I joined Christian Fellowship With Disabled. I actually didn't want to mix with other disabled people, but now I'm the leader of the Hawkes Bay branch! My father used to say, "If you don't like or understand something in the church, just put it aside and get on with what you do like and understand." His advice has enabled me to get alongside Christians from all denominations, and those with disabilities. I became aware that others had suffered more rejection than me, and so I did a course with the Aids Foundation and visited people in hospital with HIV/Aids.

Deterioration in my club foot and ankle was causing me much pain. I prayed about it and in 1997 went to a charismatic Catholic camp, expecting to hear from God. A little nun prayed for my fear to be removed. This annoyed me because I wanted prayer for the pain. But while I was praying the Lord seemed to say, "What about getting something done about your foot?"

That was my cue. A month later I mentioned the pain to my doctor and he offered to write to a surgeon and invite him to have a look at it. I agreed.

"What have I done?" I said to the Lord when I was at home in my chair. But I was so excited.

The specialist, Mr Lawson, took a scan and agreed with other surgeons that my leg wasn't worth keeping. He said removing my leg from below the knee and getting a prosthesis would give me back twenty years of life.

I went into surgery in September 1998, singing in my spirit I will Ride, from Revelation 19. Even as Mr Lawson was cutting the leg, my blood began clotting and I didn't need a blood transfusion. Two hours later I was laughing and talking to my brother and mother on the phone.

After six weeks in hospital I was fitted with a prosthetic leg. Because I have only one arm they designed a special harness so I could put my leg on, and within three weeks I was up and going.

Getting rid of the leg was a good decision. I knew it was of God and that He'd promised my healing. Today I feel good about myself and have even been tramping in Milford.

A key to life is having a positive attitude. Look beyond your circumstances. Pray and believe for your family and friends because they often can't do it for themselves. God's promises are true and He will never let you down.

(taken with permission from Daystar Magazine)

*Some people succeed
because they are destined to,
but most people succeed
because they are determined to.*

A LOVE LETTER TO YOU

You were made in my image
...**Genesis 1:27**
In me you live and move and have your being
...**Acts 17:28**
For you are my offspring
...**Acts 17:28**
I knew you even before you were conceived
...**Jeremiah 1:4-5**
I chose you when I planned creation
...**Ephesians 1:11-12**
You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book
...**Psalms 139:15-16**
I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live
...**Acts 17:26**
You are fearfully and wonderfully made
...**Psalms 139:14**
I knit you together in your mother's womb
...**Psalms 139:13**
And brought you forth on the day you were born
...**Psalms 71:6**
I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me
...**John 8:41-44**
I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love
...**1 John 4:16**
And it is my desire to lavish my love on you
...**1 John 3:1**
Simply because you are my child and I am your Father
...**1 John 3:1**
I offer you more than your earthly father ever could
...**Matthew 7:11**
For I am the perfect father
...**Matthew 5:48**
Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand
...**James 1:17**
For I am your provider and I meet all your needs
...**Matthew 6:31-33**
My plan for your future has always been filled with hope
...**Jeremiah 29:11**
Because I love you with an everlasting love
...**Jeremiah 31:3**

With Love,

Your Dad, Almighty God

Most of you will not remember these telephones, but that shouldn't stop you enjoying this story

THE OLD PHONE ON THE WALL ...HELLO

When I was a young boy, my father had one of the first telephones in our neighbourhood. I remember the polished, old case fastened to the wall. The shiny receiver hung on the side of the box. I was too little to reach the telephone, but used to listen with fascination when my mother talked to it.

Then I discovered that somewhere inside the wonderful device lived an amazing person. Her name was "Information Please" and there was nothing she did not know. Information Please could supply anyone's number and the correct time.

My personal experience with the genie-in-a-bottle came one day while my mother was visiting a neighbour. Amusing myself at the tool bench in the basement, I whacked my finger with a hammer, the pain was terrible, but there seemed no point in crying because there was no one home to give sympathy.

I walked around the house sucking my throbbing finger, finally arriving at the stairway. The telephone! Quickly, I ran for the footstool in the parlour and dragged it to the landing. Climbing up, I unhooked the receiver in the parlour and held it to my ear. "Information, please" I said into the mouthpiece just above my head.

A click or two and a small clear voice spoke into my ear.

"Information."

"I hurt my finger..." I wailed into the phone, the tears came readily enough now that I had an audience.

"Isn't your mother home?" came the question.

"Nobody's home but me," I blubbered.

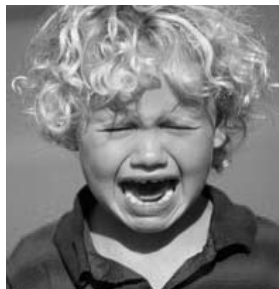
"Are you bleeding?" the voice asked.

"No," I replied. "I hit my finger with the hammer and it hurts."

"Can you open the icebox?" she asked.

I said I could.

"Then chip off a little bit of ice and hold it to your finger," said the voice.



After that, I called "Information Please" for everything. I asked her for help with my geography, and she told me where Philadelphia was. She helped me with my mathis. She told me my pet chipmunk, that I had caught in the park just the day before, would eat fruit and nuts.

Then, there was the time Petey, our pet canary, died. I called, "Information Please", and told her the sad story. She listened, and then said things grown-ups say to soothe a child. But I was not consoled. I asked her, "Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers on the bottom of a cage?"

She must have sensed my deep concern, for she said quietly, "Wayne, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in."

...Somehow I felt better.

Another day I was on the telephone, "Information Please."

"Information," said the now familiar voice. "How do I spell fix?" I asked. All this took place in a small town in the Pacific Northwest. When I was nine years old, we moved across the country to Boston. I missed my friend very much. "Information Please" belonged in that old wooden box back home and I somehow never thought of trying the shiny new phone that sat on the table in the hall. As I grew into my teens, the memories of those childhood conversations never really left me..

Often, in moments of doubt and perplexity I would recall the serene sense of security I had then. I appreciated now how patient, understanding and kind she was to have spent her time on a little boy.

A few years later, on my way west to college, my plane put down in Seattle. I had about a half-hour or so between planes. I spent 15 minutes or so on the phone with my sister, who lived there now. Then without thinking what I was doing, I dialed my hometown operator and said, "Information Please."

Miraculously, I heard the small, clear voice I knew so well.

"Information."

I hadn't planned this, but I heard myself saying, "Could you please tell me how to spell fix?"

There was a long pause. Then came the soft spoken answer, "I guess your finger must have healed by now." I laughed, "So it's really you," I said. "I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?"

I wonder," she said, "if you know how much your call meant to me.

I never had any children and I used to look forward to your calls."

I told her how often I had thought of her over the years and I asked if I could call her again when I came back to visit my sister.

"Please do", she said. "Just ask for Sally."

Three months later I was back in Seattle...

"Information" a different voice answered. I asked for Sally. "Are you a friend?" she said.

"Yes, a very old friend," I answered.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this," she said. "Sally had been working part-time the last few years because she was sick. She died five weeks ago."

Before I could hang up she said, "Wait a minute, did you say your name was Wayne?"

"Yes." I answered.

"Well, Sally left a message for you... She wrote it down in case you called.

Let me read it to you."

The note said, "Tell him there are other worlds to sing in. He'll know what I mean."

I thanked her and hung up. I knew what Sally meant.

Never underestimate the impression you may make on others.

Whose life have you touched today?

Why not pass this on? I just did..

Lifting you on eagle's wings... May you find the joy and peace you long for.

Life is a journey... NOT a guided tour.

FROM FAME TO FAITH

Mary Doremus grew up in Palm Beach, Florida, where her family lived between the Kennedys and the Guccis, right on the ocean. She lived a privileged life, and by the time she was twenty had her own television show and was interviewing "the best" and most prominent Americans.

Then her father suggested that they go Czechoslovakia to visit the land of their family's heritage, her father's ancestors had been the gamekeepers and courtiers to the king there.

Shortly after they arrived in Czechoslovakia, however, the Russians invaded. Mary and her family heard shots being fired all night and day and witnessed children being blown apart. One young boy they saw was proudly holding the Czech flag when he was shot. As the flag fell another young boy picked it up. Mary and the others were fortunate to get out of Czechoslovakia, and as they came across the border, after spending time lying on the floor with mattresses over their heads and tracer bullets ricocheting off the walls, these words came to Mary: *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer"* (Ps. 19:14).

Mary Nemeč's life was changed. Suddenly it was very important for her to live! No longer was she interested in a movie career. She wanted to make her life count. She wanted to do something for her country and her God. As soon as Mary stepped into the free world she was interviewed in the Huntley and Brinkley TV news program. Later she gave over 300 speeches around the United States. She encouraged young people to begin thinking about their country.

Ten years passed during which she met a young man named Ted Doremus, fell in love, and got married. She gave birth to two sons. Then Mary's parents urged her to join them on another trip. "Mary, China is just beginning to open up, "they said. We'd like to take you and the family to China to compensate for the traumatic visit to Czechoslovakia."

In China, Mary became ill with a virus. After, she suffered from irritability, a low grade fever, extreme weight loss, and intense pain all over her body for a year, doctors found a mysterious virus in her brain, her blood, her skin, and her cerebral spinal fluid. The result? Today, Mary relies heavily on the use of a wheelchair to conserve her energies and must take medication every twenty to thirty minutes during the day and several times at night for stabilization of her condition. Without it she becomes "limp", paralysed and totally dysfunctional.. Her reaction? "Rather than grovelling in my navel and demanding to know 'Why' from God, I've always tried to say, 'What do You want from me? Where am I supposed to be going?' I knew there was a purpose that would be revealed to me at the right time. When I gave up the need to know, that was the healthiest thing that ever happened to me."

When I visited with Mary I was so impressed with her beauty! She radiates genuine joy! She also told me, "I found that, from my bended knees in prayer comes the greatest standing that I've ever done. I found that I was able to say that Jesus is my Lord and Saviour is a very, very important thing for me to be able to say. This has been the basis for everything that I've done in life, including the National Challenge Committee on disability. Through this organization, we're changing the way that America perceives individuals with disabilities. We're not childlike and dependent, but we're strong. And what we look or sound like has nothing to do with what we are able to do.

"When I sit here, the last thing I want you to notice about me is my disability The first thing I want you to notice about me is my abilities. And I like to say that there's life after disability!"

Mary - what a wonderful example of someone who has discovered the beauty of living a life at the core. She has known what it is to be celebrated in society. She has known what it is to be a successful television personality. She has known what it is like to be super-wealthy. And yet, as she discovered in Czechoslovakia, all of this is nothing without love. Even health was not as important as being able to give of herself to her country and to other disabled persons.

*taken from "Be Happy, You are Loved" by Robert Schuller
www.hourofpower.org.nz*

GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE

Part Two of Shirley Jamieson's testimony

When I re-dedicated my life to Jesus, I was married and had a little son, Tony. But hidden deep inside, emotional pain still lurked in the cellars of my soul. It discoloured the view I had of myself, others, and God. I dreaded having to admit to people I had a vision-impairment - ashamed that I struggled to do things other people seemed to find easy. I was painfully shy. Depression lapped at the edges of my life, sometimes threatening to flood my day. I tried hard to fight it. A Christian wasn't supposed to feel depressed, I thought, and I didn't honestly have anything to be depressed about – not any more. I was no longer a child, rejected and teased at school.

These feelings snowballed the problem. I viewed it all as failure on my part, not realising God understood me and that it was His power and love that would change me if only I asked.

When I became pregnant the second time, I was thrilled; this time it was a wee girl. We named her Erina. Our family was living in a small town by then and I liked the quieter lifestyle. My parents were living in Hamilton, not too far away for regular visits. Things seemed settled.

God, however, had plans for my life - the kind of plans that turn your world into one big crazy roller coaster ride.

When Erina was three I became pregnant again. "I want a sister," she announced when I told the children.

"Well I want a brother," Tony said. One small sister was apparently enough in one family.

"When the baby arrives it won't be able to do much," I told them. "But as the months go by it will learn to roll over, and then crawl. When it's about a year old it will learn to walk. You wait and see."

But when Janelle was born in our small town maternity home on March 21 1985, the doctor was concerned. "She's small," he said. "I think you should transfer to Waikato." On arrival at the hospital she checked out fine, but it didn't stay that way. One night I woke to find several hospital staff standing in the blurred darkness round my bed. Somebody handed Janelle to me. "We found her lying in her cot, her face dark blue, not breathing," they explained. "We resuscitated her."

The following week was a whirl of doctors, beeping monitors, tests, questions and more tests in the neo-natal intensive care unit. No one said Janelle could have any permanent damage.



At home, Janelle cried and cried; the doctor could find nothing wrong. But as the months passed Janelle still was not able to hold up her head or learn to grasp toys, sit, or crawl.

We finally got an appointment with a visiting paediatrician. After examining Janelle, she told me the diagnosis: “Spastic quadriplegia.”

It slammed into me and I burst into tears. Coming over, she put her arm round me but nothing could comfort me. Janelle had severe cerebral palsy. She always would. Back when Janelle had cried so much as a baby, I’d prayed, “God, please give me patience; prevent me, despite my exhaustion, from being angry with her. Give me a special love for her.” The answer to that prayer would continue to bless and sustain me through the years. Janelle and I are very close.

My husband found work in Hamilton and our family shifted there when Janelle was four. Janelle would be able to attend a special unit at a school there. We were now close to Mum and Dad – so necessary for them because their health was failing. At home every night when I tucked Janelle into bed I’d say, “I love you a lot, Janelle.” From the age of seven she always answered, “Ah lo u a lo’.” It is the only recognisable sentence Janelle has ever said. On the rare occasion the word ‘Mum’ has come out. At church I was learning Jesus was still in the healing business of mending the broken places in your heart. At first I was afraid, wondering if opening up my Pandora’s Box of hurts would be too much too take. Little by little, though, I brought painful memories to God, praying He would take the hurt and replace it with His love and acceptance, and asking Him to help me forgive those who’d hurt me. It was a process God knew would continue through many years and He’s still working on me. Gradually He is replacing my whole outlook from inside out.

During the years there has been a mixture of times of upheaval, sadness, joy and contentment. During the 1990’s my parents moved into a rest home, I had major surgery, my father died, and my marriage disintegrated. My mother, the two girls and I shifted to Wellington to be near my sister’s family, my mother moving into a rest home there. She died in 2001.

Janelle and I joined the Wellington CFFD – we’d attended the Hamilton Branch, and I love the Fellowship. Here, it is acceptable to have a disability and God’s love is everywhere.

I always viewed Janelle as a person of value even though she still can’t hold up her head for more than a few seconds, can’t speak, can’t see well, can’t use her hands effectively, can’t attend to any of her needs, can’t sit without a specially designed wheelchair, can’t stand, and certainly can’t walk. But she can learn, can be friendly, can laugh, can love, can believe in Jesus. She has given her heart to Him and she knows He loves her - her glowing smile tells it all.

Now, I live in the Wairarapa and Janelle lives in a residential hospital here. God uses my disability and life experiences to help others. I’m not ashamed of it any more—it’s an avenue for God’s love.



(1) Well. I was part of the "Special Operations" group (shown above)
- a part of the "Army Manoeuvres" Sports program at camp

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MARK GRANTHAM AT NATIONAL CAMP



(2) but I had no idea that it would
start with this truck virtually tipping
over on this fearsome slope.



(3) And first up they tell me I'm to abseil
up this high wall.
I'm not too sure about that!



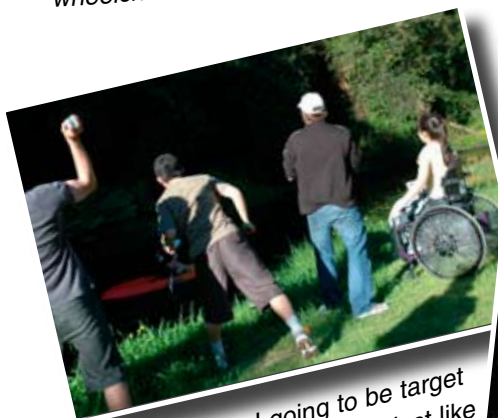
(4) Well that's strange. It's not too difficult.
I'll be up the top in no time.



(5) In fact I might as well do it a second time, but this time, why not try it in my wheelchair!



(6) What are they planning for me now?
Oh no – surely they don't want me to go kayaking in the river!



(7) No way am I going to be target practice for water-bombing just like that poor fellow out on the water.



(8) Well, that's enough for the day. I'll race back to the cabin.
OH NO. Wouldn't it! – a speeding ticket to finish the day !!!

A GENTLE GIANT

Just two years after Bill Templeton's birth, a virus which had caused convulsions at 10 months was insidiously causing great harm. By the time he was three he had stopped talking and relating to his parents, and was hyperactive with no awareness of danger. Sadly, in the early seventies, very little was known about autism.

When he was six he started at a VERY special school for intellectually handicapped children, and they gave excellent care and protection until he was twenty. Alas, the real world was a different story when he started living in the community. It was great when he was

allowed to catch buses and go to the library, but young people started harassing him and he developed severe anxieties which developed into paranoid schizophrenia. Eventually his parents discovered the Totara Farm Trust, and this was his home for the last 15 years of his life. It was a safe haven, with exceptional love, care and protection, which gave him a good quality of life while he was there.



His mother Gillian remembers the day when Bill, then 18, came home from a "Christian Ministries with Disabled" camp when he announced that he had given his life to Jesus, AND been baptized!!! His face was like a sunrise – aglow in the Spirit of God. A friend, Carol Bagrie, writes, "His trust in Jesus for his own needs was evident in his going up immediately at the end of every Sunday service for personal prayer from whoever had been the speaker – 'from whoever is in charge' as he would say. Even the last time I had lunch with him at the Centre, his eyes sparkled when I offered prayer for total healing of his whole person. In heaven he has it all now! I shall remember him as a gentle giant of a man, always deeply affectionate, extremely courteous, courtly of manner, with a genuine child-like faith and trust in Jesus (as Jesus Himself has instructed us all to have) through all the vulnerabilities of his life. What an amazing example to us all, of unfailing love and hope.

"For three years he attended a Home group that met in my home. Sometimes there were 27 of us, from babies to a 92 year old. It was a real churchy family, which included many foreigners, often with very limited English, some of whom were feeling very vulnerable and homesick. He was always quick to notice anything that needed prayer, especially if anyone was at all unwell. His genuine distress abated when we'd

given all these concerns to Jesus at the end of our Bible study time, Bill entering in fully to the praying, with his hands extended toward the person requiring prayer.

"At 10 pin bowling he was a whiz, and when I shared with him my own pathetic score, a loving long arm would steal round my shoulders and a firm squeeze of reassurance came from Bill. He was never one to gloat over other's inadequacy, and was very, very sensitive to other's needs – perfect character qualities for our group.

"You may know the expression that it takes two to have a child, but a whole village to raise a child. Bill has had a whole village of wonderful people contribute to his life, and especially his mother and father. In retrospect, all of this had a big impact on me growing up. I learned that ordinary people could make the world change for the better, with a vision and a lot of really hard work. I learned that we all benefit from living in a society that cares for vulnerable members and values human life. I learned that you may start off working in this field, thinking you will help someone less fortunate than yourself. You come away humbled, realizing that it is you that have benefited. Your view of humanity has been enlarged."

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The words say it all



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