

Season 2 | Episode 38

Disability and Belonging

Jay Fine

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I'm Crystal Keating and this is the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast. Each week, we're bringing you real conversations about disability and finding hope through hardship and sharing practical ways that you can welcome and include people living with disability in your community. Be sure to subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts, so you don't miss any of our encouraging conversations.

Crystal Keating

Today, I'm joined by my new friend, Jenny Hill, who is an author and speaker, holds a doctorate in education, and lives with cerebral palsy. I thought we'd start our conversation by defining cerebral palsy, or CP. What is it, and what are some of your limitations? And how has that changed from childhood to adulthood?

Jenny Hill

Those are good questions. Well, first of all, I think people struggle with how do we even say it? And I'm not an expert, but I think you can pronounce it cerebral palsy or cerebral palsy. At least that makes sense to me because we have the cerebellum and the cerebral cortex. Regardless, people usually call it CP for short.

Jenny Hill

And what it means is that when I was born, I was premature. I didn't have enough oxygen going to my brain. So, I suffered some brain damage, and some of my muscles essentially don't get the message to turn off. I have too much muscle tone in my body. So even that I think can be a challenging thing to understand because you might see somebody with movement difficulties, but it's not really so much the muscles as it is the brain.

Crystal Keating

How is that expressed in like the way you walk, or can you define muscle tone also?

Jenny Hill



I'm not sure if I can define muscle tone very clearly, but I think it's sort of the message that your brain is sending to your muscles through the nerves. So, I'm getting like too much muscle. So, for example, one time I was working with a physical therapist, and they asked me to move a specific muscle in my leg, and it felt almost like a busy signal.

Jenny Hill

It impacts people in a variety of ways, but for me, I walk with a slight limp. My lower extremities are what is mostly affected. My balance is off. My reaction time is slower, and I have what's called a startle reflex. So, if you poke me, I'm going to go flying.

Jenny Hill

And then the other big thing is fatigue. So, they've measured, and they found that people with cerebral palsy use the oxygen in their muscles about three to five times faster than the average person. So, I run out of energy faster than other people, and it takes me longer to recover. I think that's the hardest thing, just not having as much energy as I'd like.

Crystal Keating

Oh yeah. And I'm sure we can all look around and think like how do people do as much as they do? I certainly feel that way. So, with fatigue though, that hasn't stopped you. You have a doctorate in education. What was it like to do that kind of aggressive schooling with a disability? Did that slow you down at all?

Jenny Hill

I think so. Well, so I say that because it's different when you're born with a disability. That's the amount of energy I've always had my entire life. So, it's not like it was necessarily a change, but I think I was probably tired the entire time. I started to wear a brace at work to support me when I was standing because I think I was experiencing higher amounts of fatigue.

Jenny Hill

But the biggest thing I'll say, the biggest challenge and opportunity with fatigue is I can't do everything that everybody else does. In fact, I was in a conversation with somebody else this week, and I just found myself very envious of all the things they tend to get done within a day. I just think, "I wish I could do that," but I always say some people inspire me and some people make me tired.

Jenny Hill

But the opportunity there, Crystal, I think is when you have limited energy, then I think you have more of a focus because you can't do everything you want. You don't have time to do it all. So, you have to pick what's really important to you. So, I mean, I prioritized schooling. And then the other thing I did was, after the first year, I went half-time because I realized you don't get your 20s back and I wanted to spend time with family and friends in addition to progressing. So, I had to go a little slower, I guess.

Crystal Keating



Well, that's good. And I think it's so important that you are aware of how much energy you want to expend on certain things so that you have energy to do the other things like community. I know that's true for many students. I like what you said just about, when you have less energy, you're really focused. For someone who wants to make their life count for the Lord, how has that limited amount of energy and yet a greater amount of focus transformed your walk with the Lord?

Jenny Hill

I'm more focused about what I want to do, and I'm very purposeful in what I say yes to and no to because I just know that I don't have energy for all of it. But when you're asking about disability, I think, in my adulthood anyway, just because of my experiences, I've been more attentive to other people who have disabilities, the unborn, aging. I think about, really, what is my role to play? I think that's a good question. I think it says in the Bible that David served God in his generation, and that's a question for all of us to ask, what is the work for us to do in our generation?

Jenny Hill

And the hardest challenge, Crystal, is actually envy. I find myself comparing to other people what they're able to do, the opportunities they have, the energy they have. So, I've tried to, in those moments, just to acknowledge that I'm doing that in my mind and confess it to God and ask God to bless that person and the work that they're doing because we need more people out doing work for Christ than less, and then I think trying to explore like why did I have that reaction? Like what legitimate need or desire is in there that needs to be brought to God?

Crystal Keating

That's a real reflection on our own hearts, that when we feel that conviction, how can we turn that into a prayer and a blessing? I appreciate you sharing that. Well, you wrote a personal memoir titled *Walking with Tension*. I think that's such a great title. And it focuses on your relationship with God and cerebral palsy. So, what's the significance of the title and I'd love to hear about your journey to accept your disability. I mean, even as you're talking about envy and your limited energy, how did you come to a place of contentment with it?

Jenny Hill

So, *Walking with Tension* is a double entendre, a double meaning. So just physically walking with the tension of too much muscle tone, but also walking in that tension in my faith journey of believing that God, I really do believe God is a healer, it's revealed in the Bible pretty clearly, and yet here we are living with a lifetime disability that doesn't get resolved even when we ask. What do you do with that?

Jenny Hill



So, the book more asks that question than answers it, and I do it just by sharing my journey. I think a big part of that journey, though, to answer the other part of your question, was working with a counselor and just walking through the different stages of grief. When I first showed up in her office, I really was at that denial stage where I had a hard time just saying out loud that I have cerebral palsy. And we worked on that all the way to the acceptance stage, where I realize having a disability, it's not something to be ashamed of. I don't think it's something you have to hide or flaunt, but I guess I came to a point where I could just accept that it's part of who I am and going to be part of my lifetime experience.

Crystal Keating

Yeah, that's good. I think we can all have parts in our life where we're trying to look at God and say, "Why have you made me this way? What is my purpose? How do I accept the things that I don't think are the way that they should be, and how do I move forward in that?" And so, I think it's awesome that you were able to talk to a counselor about that. We often talk about the stages of grief, especially for families impacted by disability when we think about parents who have children and the children aren't hitting those milestones, maybe they're not progressing as their peers are. And so, I think we talk about parents going through those cycles of grief in many seasons of life. As an adult, do you still face some of those same challenges, like even the idea about grieving over milestones?

Jenny Hill

I do. Thanks for asking that question. I think in my life, I definitely had a defined time with that counselor where I walked through all the stages of grief, but that was over a decade ago. And I find that that process isn't exactly linear. So, I find sometimes that I do experience grief and I've had to come to realize that that doesn't mean that that negates all the work I've already done, it means that I'm grieving today. And I try to have compassion on myself because my disability is lifelong, so I think it makes sense that grief would be lifelong. Not that I walk around sad every day, but that they're just moments in life where I experienced grief.

Jenny Hill

And sometimes, honestly, Crystal, it's hard to recognize. Like the bargaining stage of grief, I think is sometimes hard to recognize. And if you want some examples, I think the hardest thing is when circumstances just happen in front of me that I'm not prepared for, and all of a sudden, I'm like, "Ah, I'm grieving," almost like when you prick your finger, except it's your heart that's been exposed. Like when people ask me why I don't have children, but they mean it in a nice way, but that can be painful, or this is maybe not true for all people, but I struggle if I go to church and somebody stands up and starts talking about how the Lord has healed them, or if the sermon is going to focus on healing and I didn't know that ahead of time. I really appreciate a heads up because those messages don't come without weight.

Jenny Hill



And it's challenging and confusing for me, even as an adult, because I realize we have this capacity to be ambivalent. When I hear about somebody being healed, there's a part of me that is glad for them. I don't want anyone to experience a minute more of suffering than they have to, of course not, and how great that they're spared. And even the Bible time and again has great examples of Jesus healing people. But the reality is that when that sermon is over or that testimony is over, I will go home to my life, and I will still have to deal with disability. And that's just sad. I experienced that as sadness, and it takes me a while to recover.

Jenny Hill

So that's a good moment for friends to come around and just reach out and say, "Hey, how are you doing?" and to have space for me to say, "That was really hard for these reasons." And I think it's also a time to understand that God is with us in our suffering, but that is really when I experienced longing, Crystal. And I had thought the word longing. It has the word long in it.

Crystal Keating

It does.

Jenny Hill

But it's giving emotion to that distance, right? And if I really ponder this, I think that what some of this reveals is just this deep desire for wholeness and the deep desire that we all have I think for where it says in Revelation that God will be with us and he will wipe every tear from our eyes and there will be no more sickness, crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

And I long for that day.

Crystal Keating

You bring up sometimes the grief of people asking you, "Why don't you have kids?" Or I don't know if they ask you also, "Oh, why aren't you married?" or, "Are you dating?" So, I thought we could spend a little bit of time actually talking about loneliness, especially because here in California, we're still on somewhat of a lockdown for COVID-19. There are some restrictions. It means we're not meeting for church in person. I'm not going into the office. I'm not seeing people.

Crystal Keating

And we've certainly heard from so many people who are experiencing a depth of loneliness, and it's not just reserved to single people for sure. I have even heard from people in difficult marriages where they express a sense of feeling alone in their relationship with their spouse because maybe they're not understood, or they don't feel like there's a partnership. And we've heard experts say that loneliness can affect your physical and emotional wellbeing.

Crystal Keating

So, for you, as a single woman who's not yet married, what's been your experience with loneliness and what are some of the ways you've mitigated some of those painful feelings?

Jenny Hill



Crystal, I'm glad we're talking about this today because I think it's a very painful topic, but it's one that's so prevalent in the disability community. And now, I think it's been exasperated because of COVID-19. And maybe on the good side, people have been building more empathy. That's possible.

Jenny Hill

But I've had a long experience with loneliness. And I know one summer I was just praying, and I said, "God, why am I such a loner?" Because I noticed the lack of people in my life. And I began to wonder if it had anything to do with my prematurity. I was born premature. And I did find one study that said those born premature who are now in their 30s do experience a higher level of loneliness. They tend to not to have romantic partners or cohabit. They don't tend to have children, or it tends to happen later in life. They tend to have lower self-esteem.

Jenny Hill

And I read some of these descriptors, and I thought, one, this is really sad because it's describing me, and secondly, this is really helpful because I'm not crazy.

Crystal Keating

Yes.

Jenny Hill

That this is really happening.

Jenny Hill

The other thing I watched was a Ted Talk, and it talked about how the average person has about 150 relationships in their life. And I was thinking about like the average wedding list is easily 200 people, right?

Crystal Keating

Oh yeah.

Jenny Hill

Easily. And that's probably with cutbacks. But for somebody with a disability, it can be as low as 25. So that again, as depressing as it was, was helpful for me to understand like no, this is real, what I'm experiencing is real.

Jenny Hill

So, one thing I did, which was hard, was I went to God in prayer. And I'm pretty sure I choked these words out, but I just said, "God, I can continue to do this, but you have to send people in my life to hug me, or I can't handle this." And I know you've had Gary Chapman on the podcast. He's talked about the different love languages. For me, it's definitely touch.

Jenny Hill



So, after that moment, what I did was I, well, I blogged about it, but I also reached out to family and close friends and just told them, "I need to be hugged. That's what I need." So, one thing with my small group of friends, there's about four of us and we meet once a week. We decided after that that everybody gets hugged when they come, and everybody gets hugged when they leave. And we've been doing that now for years. That's been helpful.

Jenny Hill

So, I have continued to work with a counselor off and on. I just find that sometimes it's helpful to have somebody come alongside you-

Crystal Keating

Oh yeah.

Jenny Hill

that's objective. And also, I think it takes strain off of some of your relationships because you're not showing up to them all the time with soul vomit, which sometimes that's okay, but sometimes [crosstalk 00:16:26]

Crystal Keating

Yes, there are a few friends who can handle that, for sure.

Jenny Hill

Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes it's nice to go to somebody else. So, I talk to this person about relationships. And I've been stared at in public. That's doesn't happen all the time, but I've definitely got the message. There hasn't exactly been a lineup of people in my life, and that's kind of demotivating to want to date. And she acknowledged that that's a reality, but I think she challenged me that maybe that's not the only reality, that maybe there might be someone out there who is willing to see you for who you are.

Jenny Hill

I had a previous counselor tell me in regard to that situation that she thought I had been given a fast pass and that I was lucky. And I thought, "I'm not feeling lucky."

Crystal Keating

What do you mean by that?

Jenny Hill

"I'm feeling cheated." And she said, "Well, every woman wants to be seen for who they are."

Crystal Keating

Yes.

Jenny Hill



"And you're in a situation where your relationship has to go deep fast, and it has to be about that." And I didn't have a lot of experience to connect that with, but I thought maybe she's right. This time around now, a decade later, I thought, you know what? Either I'm right, nobody wants to date me because I have a disability and that'll be that, or maybe I'll be pleasantly surprised.

Jenny Hill

So, I decided in June that I was going to try eHarmony, and I had a friend in college who said, "Jenny, you just need to meet people sitting down." And I thought, "Well, I'm not sure how that can be done, but that's good feedback. Thank you." But with COVID, that's kind of how it works. Like you have to either text somebody first or video chat with them first. So that allowed me to meet people sitting down. And I have been pleasantly surprised that there are in fact people out there who don't run the other direction when you tell them you have cerebral palsy. And in fact, their posture has been more, "Tell me more," and "You seem like an articulate person, let's keep talking."

Crystal Keating

So true.

Jenny Hill

And I [crosstalk 00:18:37] surprised.

Crystal Keating

You truly are. And I'm so glad that they're attracted to the things that shine brightly about you. What you're talking about reminds me of Vaneetha Reisner, who was on our podcast last year. And she had gone through a painful divorce and afterwards, she was thinking, I think she said to the Lord, "Who would want me?" She deals with post-polio. She has a particular gait in the way she walked. And I think it was her daughter who said, "You should try online dating." So, she went for it, and she said her disability gave her a way to weed out people who were focused superficially. And it gave her a depth of understanding to the men who showed interest. And eventually, she met her husband there, who loved her for her.

Crystal Keating

People have big opinions about online dating, that's for sure, but for people in our 30s and 40s like myself who are still single, I think it's a great, safe way to do it. We're not living necessarily in a community anymore where people are being set up-

Jenny Hill

Right.

Crystal Keating



Or families are suggesting, "Hey, there's a young man that I think would be a good match." So, it's an interesting thing. Do you ever get nervous when you're talking to somebody for the first time?

Jenny Hill

Yes, but I think this has almost been a help because I don't reveal that I have a disability on my profile, but I do let a person know before I meet them because I don't want to spend our first conversation talking about why I just parked in the handicapped spot and why I'm limping and, "Why didn't you tell me before?" and then it's all awkward and weird.

Crystal Keating

Yeah.

Jenny Hill

So, I'd rather disclose that information. They can take as much time as they want to process that. And either that's okay with them or it's not. And so, meeting somebody for the first time when that's been already addressed seems to be okay.

Crystal Keating

Yeah. Then you really get to just hear their voice and experience their personality. I think there's that sense where you embrace the person, you see them as a whole. We talked about community and community can really bring a sense of belonging to all of us. I think that was God's intention, one of his intentions for the church. So, I'm curious to know what role has the church played in helping you find a sense of belonging, especially as a single woman with a disability?

Jenny Hill

I think often when we think about disability ministry, we maybe by default think of kids ministry.

Crystal Keating

That's true.

Jenny Hill

And I think that's a huge need and probably a wide population in your church. I would believe that. But it's also true that with a lot of these lifetime disabilities, that people who are disabled are going to grow up and they are going to continue coming to church. And I think continuing to need ministry and community because the need is lifelong, and I think the need for community is also universal. So, we all need it.

Jenny Hill



One thing, Crystal, that's been really helpful is the church has allowed me to share my story. And I think that's so empowering because it sends the message that you have a voice and you're valued. But I also think that that can open up the conversation between a person and the rest of the congregation. Because maybe someone would like to talk to me about that but are not sure. Is that taboo? Don't know how to approach it. Don't even know what needs you have. So, I think when somebody is able to share their story, whether it's Sunday morning or a Sunday school class or maybe a podcast, I think that that opens up the conversation quite a bit.
Jenny Hill

Then I think the other thing is, I love that you say this around Joni and Friends, you say it's not disability ministry until those with disabilities are the ones ministering.
Crystal Keating

Yeah.
Jenny Hill

I think that's so great. So, I think then I'd love to see churches offer opportunities for people who are disabled to serve, but also do it with the understanding that you might need accommodations.
Jenny Hill

So, one thing that I like to do at my church is to be the scripture reader. So, when we're in person, we're online right now, but the person typically stands up at the front of the church and shares. And I enjoy that, but the truth is that I'm a better speaker when I'm seated because then I can focus all my energy on expression and reading and not have to deal with balance. And it took me a while, but I finally gathered up the gumption to say something, "I'd really like to do this seated. Can you bring me a chair?" And of course, that was no problem. I think people are ready to help if you just let them know what the need is. And so now, when they ask me to do that, they just say, "Okay, here's the scripture and we'll have a chair waiting for you," and I feel like that's what we all want.
Jenny Hill

And then finally, Crystal, I think we think about programming, but really, when I think about what adults with disabilities need is friendship. I had the opportunity to meet Victor Anderson, who's a Dallas theological seminarian, and he wrote a chapter in a book about disability ministry. And he said the biggest needs can be met through friendship. It's like a bomb applied and rubbed deep into the soul. And that it doesn't happen just with one interaction, but repeated interactions over time. It's not just the interactions that we have on Sunday, like, "Hello, how are you?" but it's interactions we have through the rest of the week and people that show up in our life.
Jenny Hill



And I think that's really what people need, are true friends. We can look at the Bible even. The New Testament of course has lots of great stories of Jesus healing people, but I often wonder, does the Bible have any stories of people who are not Jesus interacting with people with disabilities where they don't get healed, where they just walk with them throughout the duration of their struggle?

Jenny Hill

And I think the story of Mephibosheth is really helpful. Nancy Guthrie has been on the podcast, and she's mentioned this, but Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan. And on the day that Jonathan dies, Mephibosheth is dropped, and he's trampled. And the scripture says repeatedly that he's crippled in both feet. Well, David made a covenant with Jonathan, and later on, he says, "Is there anybody left in Jonathan's house that I can bless for his sake?" And they say, "Yeah, there's Mephibosheth, but he's crippled in both feet." And he says, "Bring him here." And then Mephibosheth named something that I think is similar to what Vaneetha was saying, and I love this scripture puts this ink on the page. He says, "Why would you notice a dead dog like me?"

Jenny Hill

And I think as brutal as that is, I'm so glad it got said because I think sometimes that emotion can be what it feels like. And then it goes on to say that he gave a spot for Mephibosheth at the King's table because he was a friend of Jonathan, and he was crippled in both feet. But what strikes me about that is he became friends with Mephibosheth not because he was crippled, but because of who he was. He's Jonathan's son, and whoever that was, that's who we wanted to honor. But also, I think he saw the whole person. And I think having a seat at the King's table, not only is it honoring, but I'm thinking in terms of accessibility today, like we're literally taking you off the farm and putting you at an accessible spot. We'll have somebody bring your food to you because that is what you need.

Jenny Hill

So, I love that story, and I think that that's a good picture of the kind of friendship and honor that we can give to people.

Crystal Keating

Perspective on that story because I think we identify Mephibosheth with his disability, but really, it was so much more about belonging. It was a love that David had for Jonathan and that extended to his household. And like Nancy Guthrie said, David is the picture of Jesus and how Jesus welcomes us in because he loves us. And he knows that we have weaknesses and disabilities, but his love goes way past that.

Crystal Keating



I think we need to emphasize that over and over again. What you were saying made me think of Henri Nouwen, author and priest who spent many years pastoring the L'Arche Daybreak community in Canada for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. And he spoke openly about his friendship with a young man named Adam. Well, Adam couldn't speak or even move without assistance, yet Nouwen wrote of his friend that, "He was no longer a stranger to me, he was becoming a friend and a trustworthy companion, explaining to me by his very presence what I should have known all along, that what I most desire in life, love, friendship, community, and a deep sense of belonging, I was finding with him."

Crystal Keating

Loneliness can often be mitigated simply by an invitation to your house for dinner or being included at church where all you need is a chair. I think those simple things open up some powerful relationships. And it's that regularity, it doesn't have to be a big program, but it is that regular contact where you're not trying to check off a box and say, "Okay, I made contact with this person," but there's purpose in it to where there's fellowship. You're praying for one another. You're thinking about them.

Crystal Keating

For those of us who are single and for those who feel marginalized and feel like their disability prevents them from having the relationships that they wish they had, I think the church can be a place for that as we change the culture.

Crystal Keating

You have participated with Joni and Friends. I love this. You have volunteered with our ministry. So, I'm curious to know about your experiences with Joni and Friends' family retreats. What's it been like for you?

Jenny Hill

You had another guest on your podcast say that it's the best worst week of their life. Yeah, that description resonated with me. I had a childhood friend reach out to me and say, "Do you want to volunteer at this retreat?" And I wasn't sure because I'm a person with a disability, so I didn't know if that was even a good setting, if that was feasible. But yeah, it is okay to be a volunteer if you have a disability.

Jenny Hill

And I thought, because I worked at an elementary school at the time, that they would surely pair me with an elementary student. That is not what happened. I got paired with a young adult who was ambulatory and communicative. So, it was a good match. It was physically something I was up to the task. And this person didn't come with her family. She came with her group home. So that was eye-opening to me.

Jenny Hill



But the other thing, Crystal, what was eye-opening to me was I was pursuing my doctorate at the time, and it just had not really occurred to me that there were adults who were not able to be independent, who don't have their driver's license, who didn't get their college degree, who are not in careers right now, but are maybe living in group homes or with their parents, that their day doesn't offer very much variety. And I was beside myself, honestly. I was just blown away. And I remember returning home to church and going to a 20-somethings group and being shocked that everybody had driven there independently, was able to speak with their mouth and eat solid food. I thought, "Oh. Huh."

Jenny Hill

But one thing that was beautiful, Crystal, is I live in Minnesota and there is a family retreat in Minnesota. So, a lot of the people who attend live in the state, and I was able to become friends with some of the people that I met at camp outside of that week. And that was very beautiful. I was friends with a gentleman who had been injured in a car accident and was non-verbal, and we were friends up until he died last year. But I learned a lot about what it is to be just present with somebody. When you're not sure what to offer, your very presence can be a gift.

Jenny Hill

And I would encourage anyone who is in higher education or academia or just loves thought, you would be so challenged, and I think grow in beautiful ways if you spent time around people with intellectual disabilities because I think you would hold your intellection in a different perspective. I know I took it for granted. And after being around camp, I thought, man, the ability to think and express oneself with a mouth is such a gift from God.

Crystal Keating

Wow. So, I love that you went to our family retreat not knowing if you would be comfortable and able to serve in the way that you would want, and here you are paired with a gal that you didn't expect the kind of connection that you had.

Crystal Keating

I remember one of my coworkers who, he has a bachelor's in business and a master's in counseling, and he uses a wheelchair. And he has said that we think about disability in some ways as all the same, but it's just not that way. It's more complex.

Jenny Hill

True.

Crystal Keating

And so, for him, who's incredibly educated, he's friendly, he's easy to talk to, if he was to enter into disability ministry for the intellectually disabled or those with learning disabilities, it would be a learning experience for him. It would be-

Jenny Hill



For sure.
Crystal Keating

There'd be a sense of, "This is intimidating. I want to be a learner too." And I think that's a great spirit to come with. Who are you? How do we communicate if you're not able to communicate verbally? Like what am I seeing? What am I learning about you? How are you experiencing God? When you hear worship music, how do you respond? And so, you can make all these connections that go past, like you said, the intellect and really deep into the soul. So, I love your charge for all the intellectuals and academia to participate.
Crystal Keating

And I think you bring up a good point just about the gap sometimes between disability ministry for children and then those who are exiting high school, the college-age, you get into your 30s and 40s. For those with disabilities, where is that participation in the church? What does ministry look like for adults who've been impacted by disability?
Jenny Hill

Well, back to your point that disability is a learning curve even for those who are disabled, I think I can only offer some thoughts on this because I've only lived my own life, but I wonder if there are people who don't have their driver's license and if actually getting to the church building is an issue, not just Sunday morning, but I wonder about other events that happen during the week. If there needs to be something where they can get to church or somehow the church comes to them, I'm not sure, but I think that that is a factor.
Jenny Hill

And then I think that people with disabilities experience higher rates of singleness, and I think they just have fewer social interactions than other people. So, I think remembering to include them is important because there may be not dating and starting a family after college. That's maybe not the trajectory that their life is taking. So, going back to but can we invite them over for a meal or can they be part of, I don't know, our family soccer game that we're going to on Saturday? And really, I think too, taking time to listen. If it is a learning curve, then I think we have a lot to learn.
Jenny Hill

So just showing people interest and letting them talk honestly about their life and their story and their struggles, and being okay, Crystal, if you can't fully relate to it. I think some of the challenges of disability are actually very hard to relate to, or you can't, but I don't know that you need to. I think you need to be loving and listening-
Crystal Keating

I agree.
Jenny Hill

And trust that God will bridge the gap when your shared experience can't.
Crystal Keating

I agree. I agree. That is a good word. Love and kindness go a long way.
Crystal Keating

Thank you for listening today. If you've been inspired by our conversation or have a comment about something you heard, please drop me a message at podcast@joniandfriends.org. I would love to hear from you.
Crystal Keating

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Crystal Keating

I'm Crystal Keating and thank you for listening to the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast.

Episode Link: <https://www.joniandfriends.org/disability-and-belonging/>