Season 2 | Episode 36

# A Voice for People with Dwarfism and Disability

## Angela Muir Van Etten

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Crystal Keating:

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.

Well, I'm excited to announce the Joni and Friends Global Access Conference, an online interactive conference taking place October 14th through the 17th, that will strengthen the body of Christ, mobilize the church to action and connect regional and global leaders in disability ministry. I can't wait to hear from incredible speakers like Joni Eareckson Tada, Nick Vujicic and Pastor Kempton Turner. Register today at joniandfriends.org/globalaccess to join me.

Today on the podcast, I'm talking with Angela Muir Van Etten, who at 3'4" is a powerful voice for people with dwarfism and disability guided by faith and justice.

Well Angela, it's so great to have you on the podcast today, and I want to start this conversation by going back to the beginning of your story. What was lifelike growing up as a child with dwarfism in New Zealand?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Well, I had a really good life, several advantages. I think one, because I lived in a small town and in the same house all the way from preschool through being an adult, and so that provided continuity for me. I also have a brother and one sister, and we get along really well. We were supportive of one another. The other advantage is that I was raised in a Christian family and in church that's been differently an advantage. And also, my mother understood the value of education. We grew up with not having TV until we were 10.

My mother put us to bed with books and education was encouraged. We had the advantage of not being a digital age in New Zealand, because it was in a smaller town, there was no temptation for anyone to put me in a separate school or a separate class because there was no separate school or a separate class. So, my education was included or inclusion as they call it today. And we had good doctors, good hospitals. So, I got good medical care.

Crystal Keating:

Well Angela, you and I have a lot in common. We're both firstborns and we both had parents who valued education and did not have a TV. I didn't have TV till I was junior high. I'm curious to know, are your siblings average height?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yes. Hard to call my brother average height since he's about six foot. I guess you could call that average height. But yes, as far as dwarfism goes, we do refer to people who don't have dwarfism as being of average height.

Crystal Keating:

Okay.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

In other words, they don't have a genetic condition that affects their size. So yeah. No, there's no little people in my family. It was a genetic mutation, occurred out of the blue. Nobody really knows why. It's just one of those things that happens. But once it does happen, potentially it could have been passed on. And I say potentially, because in my case, it's a rare kind of dwarfism. There's over like 300 different types. The more and more geneticists learn, the more they break it down into subgroups. But there is a debate as to whether the kind that I have is recessive or dominant. So, if it's recessive, I would have to marry somebody with the same gene. If it's dominant, well then that potentially could be passed along. But the medical people can't agree on which one it is or even which one I have.

Crystal Keating:

How tall are you?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

3'4".

Crystal Keating:

3"4". And as you were growing up, did your parents need to make any home accommodations so your house was more accessible to you?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

The thing that I needed the most was just a door in the kitchen, and we did lower the rod in the clothes closet. I shared a room with my sister. So, we only modified my side of the closet. I was pretty independent, unless it was walking any distance, things like that. But in the house, I really didn't need help.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah. Describe the way dwarfism has impacted your mobility. I think I read something that you're unable to bend one of your knees. Is that true?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yeah, that's correct. Basically, all of my joints are affected and I don't have a hip socket and my knees don't bend at all. My ankles have fused. Basically, all of my joints are fusing or fused. Yeah, it changes a lot of things. Your mobility is a big issue with stairs and ramps. And I really do need a ramp. As I've got older, it's got harder of course. I used to do things that I can't do anymore, as far as how far I can walk, things like that. So now I have a scooter that I use for distance. If I'm going shopping or anywhere further than the driveway, I do use the scooter.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah, that's good. Modern technology is so very helpful. Well, I want to go back to when you were in elementary and high school years. Did you face any unique challenges as a little person, and were there any opportunities you felt like you missed out on because of dwarfism?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

As a young child, I really enjoyed school. In fact, I used to wish there were no weekends so I could go every day.

Crystal Keating:

Wow.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

I was a good student. But there was system issues every start of the school year, there's new kids coming in. And so, I had kids teasing me, ridiculing calling me names, that pretty much passed. I got a bit tired of it after a while. And because like I said, I had not had to change schools, all the other kids from previous years, they knew me and probably even unbeknown to me, some of them put them in their place. And so, they didn't get a whole bunch of kids joining in with them. So that's the advantage of being known in a community. People get used to you.

Crystal Keating:

Definitely.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

By the time I got to high school and of course moving on from the different levels of schools, there were new students that didn't know me. So, there was adjustments. They had to adjust to me, I didn't need to adjust to them. You get used to, not that you ever like it, but you learn how to deal with people, making fun of you. My parents taught me how to deal with that. My friends taught me, were there, and they did their own thing. Sometimes I kind of had to hold them back. Like my girlfriend used to say, "Oh, take a picture, it lasts longer." And sometimes it actually became quite amusing. There was this one girl, although it's kind of a warped amusement, one girl I remember looking at me, staring at me and not paying attention when she was wheeling her bike and she wheeled right into the wall and fell down.

Crystal Keating:

Because she was staring at you?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yes.

Crystal Keating:

Oh dear.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

So preoccupied with me that she didn't notice where she was going.

Crystal Keating:

How does your parents and your friends tell you to defend yourself? How did your parents teach that and instill that in you?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Basically, you just kind of learn to ignore people. If they're strangers and they're just sort of going by, passing by, you can just block them out. Where it's difficult is if they're in a group, when you've got a gang of four or five or six kids, that's harder to deal with. And actually I, even to this day, not that I'm in that situation much anymore, but prefer not to be going into a school grounds when kids are getting out because I create a scene as they all stop and look and stare and laugh and do whatever they're going to do. Every now and then, a kid will try and mimic the way I walk. And usually, they don't get right. So, if I'm really ambitious, I'll actually take the kid aside and say, "Excuse me, but you're not doing that right. Let me show you how I walk. You're bending your legs."

Crystal Keating:

That's amazing.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

"You want to walk like me, you better keep your legs stiff." And now think about doing that, going up the stairs, how are you going to do that?

Crystal Keating:

I love that.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

And so that brings them to their senses.

Crystal Keating:

Angela, did you ever struggle with self-acceptance when you were younger?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yes. Yes. And that's where my parents helped out as well. My father was good at this because I remember we had sports. Sport was compulsory. When I was young and elementary school, primary school, they would have running races, everyone was in it. And so, they would start me halfway up the field and I would cross the finish line before everybody. And as I got older of course, see, you feel stupid. And it's like, no, we don't want to do this anymore. And then I was pulled to the side and explained the kids that actually did win the race are the ones that are going on to enter school competitions. But you won't be doing that. I figured these things out on my own. But other thing that was hard in high school of course was not dating. I had a lot of friends, but there was nobody asking me out on a date, and that was sad.

Crystal Keating:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Did you feel lonely during high school?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

No. No, I never felt lonely. But like I said, I had a lot of friends. We did a lot of things together. We had school trips and I never got left out of anything. There's more people. There's probably about 1200 people in my high school. It's a pretty big school. So, I had to either leave class early so that I didn't get crushed in the hallway or I would leave a little later. And then one of my friends would always sort of hang back and walk with me. That just sort of happened naturally. And I know at least when I was working, I was an advocate for people in school district with disabilities and the school would often have to appoint somebody to walk with the student with a disability. That never needed to happen formally for me, because I had friends that wanted to walk with me.

Crystal Keating:

What a blessing. What a blessing.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yeah. So, it was good.

Crystal Keating:

And later you became the president of the organization, Little People of New Zealand and later Little People of America. Tell us about that. What's the purpose of this association? How did that come about and what was your role as president?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Okay. Well of course there are two different organizations, but the same purpose, the common purpose, which is to provide support and information to people of short stature or people with dwarfism, or little people. There's three alternate terminologies there. But anyway, to provide support and information to the people with dwarfism and their families. It is an interesting organization in the sense that the people with the condition and their families are included. But in New Zealand, it's such a small country. I was the president for two years, just after I graduated law school. And there was only about 100 members. So, I was in national office for two years again, from 2004 to 2006, about 6,000 members. It's common for a little person not to want to belong to the organization.

Crystal Keating:

Why is that?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

They just don't want to be associated with other people because they draw attention to themselves? And then also they call it the mirror image syndrome, where if they see somebody on the street, a little person, they'll go the other way because they don't want to be reminded that's what they look like. Well, I don't look like that. And so, yes, it's a psychological effect and it's something that people, it really does hit you big when you first go to a meeting, and it takes a little adjustment. It's recommended that people start in a local group, not start off going to a national conference where there might be 3000 people there. And it's wall to wall, little people, and some people will come to a conference for the first time and they've hidden in their room the whole week because they're like, "Whoa, this is just too much."

Crystal Keating:

Overwhelming.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yes.

Crystal Keating:

Well, and it goes back to that concept of self-acceptance.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Right. My role when I was president, it was really an unusual time because now, today I'm told him and I'm happy to hear it, it doesn't take that many volunteer hours anymore. It's more like five to 10 hours a week. We have more paid staff. It was a time of transition. And there was also some really difficult people, shall we say, putting it nicely, that were on the board and there was a lot of hostility. And so, I pretty much came on. And when Robert, my husband, says to me, "Angela, you need to run for president," I didn't listen to him. I didn't want to be president. So, I ran for membership, vice president, but still ended up being president because there was so much dissension and problems on the board that I ended up becoming the president and did what, if I'd listened to Robert in the first place, work towards restoring civility and order on the national board and the board of directors, because there are representatives from every state. And within the state, there are chapters.

So, there's about, volunteer leaders in the organization, there's over a hundred volunteer leaders of the different levels of the organization. So, it's my job, as president, to communicate with everyone, keep them informed. We had a national conference. We would sometimes have the money to meet face to face during the year. But then we had phone conferences before we had the internet.

Crystal Keating:

Yes.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

And we also, LPA, Little People of America, has a wonderful service in that we have a medical advisory board.

Crystal Keating:

Interesting.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yeah. The doctors volunteer their time from all over the country, specialists in orthopedics and anesthesiology, genetics, you name it. But most common problems associated with dwarfism. There's a free clinic at the conference. And we have a lot of committees that are working on advocacy. Adoption is huge. We have an adoption coordinator that helps connect families that want to adopt children with dwarfism from all around the world. And a lot of the affinity groups, you're working on finances and media and interviews, strategic planning.

Crystal Keating:

Wow. I had no idea all that Little People of America and New Zealand did to improve the quality of life for people with dwarfism.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Right. Right.

Crystal Keating:

That's wonderful.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

And it's educational. There's a lot of workshops that are put on. The organization has a lot of professionals within the group. So, we run a lot of these workshops ourselves.

Crystal Keating:

Before you were president of the Little People of America, you said something about finishing law school. So, I know you qualified as a lawyer in New Zealand and in the United States.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Right.

Crystal Keating:

So, I'd love to hear about your experience as a student in both countries. What led you to begin studying law and what kind of law did you practice?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

It's hard to believe, but I chose law as a process of elimination. I knew I was going on to university, had been encouraged to do that and I wanted to do that. But I was no good at science, forget that. Accounting seemed boring. Teaching didn't really appeal to me. So basically, I just went through all the different career paths and an aunt said to me, "Have you thought about studying law?" And I thought, "Oh, well that's a good idea." I actually had thought that I would like to be a journalist, but I couldn't picture myself doing that because you start out in the trenches, running around after stories. And I thought I would just get pushed aside and not really get to the person, like newspaper type reporters where you can get the story.

So, I thought, "Well, maybe I could be a court reporter or something." I didn't know, I just thought law would be a good degree to have, and then maybe work towards that with writing. But as it turned out, I really did get a job practicing law. And I was in a legal aid type practice. When I came to the US, when I immigrated here because of marrying Robert, I had to go back to law school because in order to take a Bar Exam, you have to have an American law degree or a degree from an American law school. And I only could get credit for half of my New Zealand degree. And so, I had to decide, do I want to continue with the law or should I study something else? And I thought, no, the law, I really like the law. So, I continued and did my Juris Doctor degree here in the US.

Crystal Keating:

Amazing, amazing. And you did a lot of disability advocacy, right?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

I was helping with a lot of advocacy projects. One of the things that came up early was dwarf tossing.

Crystal Keating:

What is that?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yeah, the people in licensed establishments, in other words bars, they would take a little person and the contest was to see how far they could throw him.

Crystal Keating:

Awful.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

And it started in Australia, and it was going to be happening in Chicago. And he had some people that was stirred up and we were able to stop that through public relations efforts. And this all happened around the time that I was writing my first book, Dwarfs Don't Live in Doll Houses tours, and I dedicated a chapter to it, and kind of finished up in the end by saying, "Well, if the public or the bar doesn't respond to negative public opinion, there may need to be legislation." And somebody who read that book from Florida, and it was becoming an issue in Florida called me and said, "We need your help because there is a business that started and they're going from town to town to town and they cannot stop it through the local government because by the time they meet, they've moved on to the next town." And the way it was being advertised, it was very demeaning, degrading.

Crystal Keating:

Absolutely.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Frightening to people who were not involved because they feared being picked up and thrown themselves, the copycat syndrome. And so, a Little People of America got involved in Florida to state law passed to ban dwarf tossing as entertainment in licensed establishments. But then wouldn't you know it, the same people went up to New York State and they tried to get it going there. But now we had experience and I became the coordinator to stop dwarf tossing in New York. And we got the law passed in one session and I never once went to the state capital.

Crystal Keating:

Wow. So, you were a catalyst in having that. And I learned this too, October is Dwarfism Awareness Month, and I know you consider yourself a gentle yet firm, voice of justice and faith on behalf of those with disabilities. How does your passion for advocacy and awareness for people with dwarfism and disability grow?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

If you get mad enough about something, or may be indignant, the sense of injustice gets you fired up.

Crystal Keating:

Yes.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

That's like, "Whoa, this is just wrong. We have to do something about this." And so that's where the passion comes from when something is happening that should not be happening. And nobody's doing anything about it. And you look around and say, "Who's going to do something." Then when you realize, "Hey, well, God has given me the skills to be able to do this." I can write, because you do need to be able to write. I had to write a lot of papers to legislators and convince their staff that this was a real problem and it's not unconstitutional. So, the writing skills, the ability to speak, the ability to encourage others to get involved, so I guess the leadership.

But the other thing that got me going as an advocate, I used to do workshops, share the information that I knew about different laws, like social security and education, individuals with disabilities education, do these workshops. And this young lady, she was probably, I don't know, 18. I'm doing this workshop on advocacy and she says, "Well, what are we going to do about the ATMs?" And I looked at her and I thought, "Whoa." I didn't have an answer. But I knew she was right because we couldn't reach. And life was getting worse for little people\. not better, as the new technology was coming in. As these automated machines where there's no longer a person to ask, or no one's there to serve you. You have to be able to use the machine. Anyway, I let that one sort of percolate in my head for a while. And then eventually I was approached by the current president of LPA, this is back in the mid-nineties, because she was approached by somebody on a national standards organization that sets the height on public facilities and equipment.

And Little People of America was asked to join that committee, but they needed to have a representative who would be willing to go to all the meetings. First time I was asked, I said no. Second time, she said to me, "Well, Angela, if you don't do it, who will?" So, I discussed it with my husband and he was actually very skeptical and knew it was like going up against huge industries, the telephone industry.

Crystal Keating:

Yes.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Manufacturers, the banking industry, all the only ones that have paid lobbyists and they fight, tooth and nail, to the end against those kind of changes.

Crystal Keating:

I would be intimidated. My goodness.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yeah. So, I go in, this is really not my field at all, but I have a voice. I know what's right, and I know how to research. So, I knew how to educate myself. And it was a seven-year project. I made a commitment to God that He would get the credit for any changes that were made, because my husband said, "This, you're going to spend a lot of time and you might not get any results. They don't want to make the changes." And I said, "Well, I don't need to know the outcome. I just need to know that what I'm doing is the right thing."

Crystal Keating:

Conviction.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Right.

Crystal Keating:

So, I thought I do got to try. If you don't try, it doesn't change.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yeah. So that's when I gave the whole thing to God and said, "When I write reports to the board and to the membership and now newsletter, as we call it a magazine now, I will give God the credit." And I did, every time.

Crystal Keating:

You are one who is speaking up for sometimes those who can't or won't speak up for themselves for whatever reason, and God bless that. And we keep bringing up your husband, Robert, and we will talk about him in the next episode. You got to keep listening because what a great love story you have with him. He's also a little person and you've had 39 years of marriage, but we're going to talk about him next time. But I want to keep going with this. You said something really interesting that caught my attention regarding increasing awareness, which is such a value for you. You want to increase awareness of those in the disability community, you wrote, "Although media interviews help broadcast the message, inaccuracies and victim mentality often dominate the story." And the thing that caught my attention was the victim mentality. We know that how a person views their disability and their worth and value can dramatically impact their life. So how have you seen this worked out practically in the lives of little people and those with disabilities?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

As my parents raised me with the same expectations as they did my brother and sister, I had my chores, I got disciplined. If the relatives spoiled me, which they did, because I was cute, my mother took care of it on the way home. So, I had the sense of being equal. It never occurred to me that I wasn't, that I had the same value. Not everybody has that. So, when they get media or interview, they don't recognize that the reporter is stoking them for all the negative stuff, all the things they can't do. And I try and emphasize what we can do. So, I call it censoring by editing out the positive and emphasizing the negative. That has a negative effect on all of us because the point of view that the public gets and the public becomes the person interviewing you for a job or for an apartment or whatever it is that you're trying to do, they've got this perception that came to them through the media, that we are helpless and need all this support.

Well, we can't have her living here, she's going to create all kinds of problems. We don't need that. Or likewise, in the workplace, well, no, that's not going to be possible. So, it does a lot of harm generally to people, in New Zealand and leadership and Little People of New Zealand's president probably had some media interviews, print newspaper. And I didn't like the article. So actually, that's what motivated me to write this book. I thought, they're not telling the story right. I have to tell it myself.

Crystal Keating:

Good for you. You are a woman of action and courage. You conduct sensitivity trainings for students and poll workers, business leaders, and charitable organizations. Actually, sensitivity training is kind of an interesting topic right now because of what's happening in our world. What are some of the most important things you want them to know, as you teach?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

That little people have equal value or people with disabilities, their value, if they're voting or whatever, if they're in school, that they should be given the same opportunities as anybody else. Not to raise people up, which is another kind of media story that happens. This is like, it's because of this idea that you, just being disabled and being around that you're a hero. So, they put you up on a pedestal, which is not a good place to be because we're not heroes and we make mistakes like anybody else. Or they could put you down a victim that needs to be pitied. So, we don't want to be the hero, we don't want to be the victim. We want to be equal so that we can be given the same opportunities. And then the other thing that's really important is independence that you do not take away somebody's independence.

And that doesn't mean that the person has to be able to do everything by themselves. What it means is that they are in control of their own situation. So, if they need a caregiver, they decide what time they're getting up. They decide what they're going to wear. They decide how they want things done. If you don't need a caregiver, but you're out and the person decides they want to help you, they need to ask. It's very important that they ask, "Can I help you?" And then the person may say no. When I was advocating for a student, the therapist actually was trying to take away her independence using crutches and put her back in a wheelchair.

And so, I had to go and advocate for her because the therapist felt more comfortable. She said, "Well, she's not safe on the crutches." She goes too fast, and her crutch falls off the curb and she goes down." I said, "Well, she just needs to learn to slow down, but we're not going to," and her father was there advocating for her strongly as well saying, "No, we're not going to set her back. She's able to walk on crutches and that's what she's going to do." I had somebody, it was a realtor, I was going to look at a property for renting space for our office. And there was the curb cut was way around anyway. So, I thought, okay, well, let's go look strong and healthy, see if he could help me up the curb. And instead of waiting for directions, he pulled my arms straight up. And that was out of the socket. I went to therapy for weeks after that.

Crystal Keating:

Oh my gosh.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Yeah. He wouldn't wait for directions. We never rented that space. The other thing you teach people is they need to respect somebody, respect their space. You don't pat somebody on the head, you don't reach across them like they're not there at all. And that happens, believe it or not, that even has happened in church. I've been in a food line and somebody decided I was moving too slowly. And they reached across me to serve themselves some food. And as they brought back the spoon, it dripped onto my head. I just couldn't believe it. And then of course, this is something we've kind of mentioned the different words, but not really explain them.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah, that's good. We should talk about that.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

There are some questions that people ask, "What should I call you?" Terminology keeps changing and it's kind of frustrating for people because it's hard to keep up with it. And people say, "Oh, it's too politically correct." So, in the case of short stature, midget is a derogatory word. You just don't say it to describe anybody. The word dwarf, a lot of people don't like the word dwarf. And then there's little person, the two words, little people. Not everybody likes that either. A while ago, there was a move to change the name, Little People of America, somehow using the words short stature.

Every one of those terms has a limitation. The words dwarf and little person are associated with fiction, folklore, Irish folklore, or little people clothings, doors or kindergartens. And the word short-statured is not descriptive at all. It's almost like being short is the least of your problems. It's the reason why you're short. There's a lot of people have a lot of spinal problems and a lot of issues that come up relating to dwarfism. So, if you want to know, if somebody says, "What should I call you?" There's this cute YouTube that the mother got her daughter to record. It's called A is for Adelaide. And she said, "What do we call you?" You call me Adelaide.

Crystal Keating:

Call me by my name.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Call me by my name. So, if you don't want to get in trouble using the wrong terminology, call the person, ask the person for their name. That's what you call them. We don't want the labels.

Crystal Keating:

Good advice. And I love what you said about people's short stature, or someone's disability may be the least of their worries. It's the things that go along with medical issues and with health challenges that are largely unseen and unknown. And I think that's really good to remember. That's why getting to know each person is so important. And thanks for that sensitivity training right here. Well, you did mention being in the food line at church, and I know your faith in Christ is at the center of your heart and you faithfully serve at your church in Florida as a church clerk. You teach AWANA, you teach adult Sunday school, Vacation Bible School. What's been your experience?

Angela Muir Van Etten:

My experience has been very positive. We're fellow laborers serving Christ together. I am respected and appreciated for the spiritual gifts that I have. The ladies, we have a great relationship in my Sunday school class. We've moved a lot over the years and have been in more than one church. We still have lasting and close friendships with the people that we've become close to whatever churches. And I do accommodate, some things that I need, I take care of myself. I'm more comfortable, I bring my own chair basically. But there are things that were not taken care of right away, but have been taken care of.

Crystal Keating:

That's great. And that opens the door for not just you, but other people who are wheelchair users and people with other disabilities. That's great.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

And then during hard times, generally, whether it's been looking for work, new problems, surgeries, prayer support is huge. You just depend on that. And people are very good at that, providing the prayer support.

Crystal Keating:

It's truly a community as Christ intended.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Right. And I say that I have three families. I have my biological family, my LPA family, and my church family.

Crystal Keating:

What a tremendous life. Well Angela, can you share some words of encouragement for those who may be listening today, who are facing isolation or discouragement due to dwarfism or another disability? We'd love to hear what's on your heart as we close this wonderful conversation together.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

First thing I'd say is to stay active. Might sound a little weird. But it was advice that I got from my heart doctor after I had my aortic valve replaced. And it's like, okay, it's good advice for our spiritual hearts that we identify and use whatever gift God has given us. So, if you're lonely, don't wait for someone to call you. Make a call yourself, call somebody else. And if you're discouraged, then you can reach out. You need to reach out to a Christian friend to share your burden. Don't just be discouraged by yourself. And remember what God has done. This is pretty basic, but it's sometimes we forget the basics. So, we can be thankful. Remember what He's done in the past. Be thankful and trust Him. Trust Him for how He's going to help in the future. But I can't overemphasize the importance of studying God's word, reading and studying His word as an individual and in Bible study groups, because without His word, we have no compass. We have no anchor.

He is the word. And so, I actually have verses that come to my mind on a regular basis, Psalm 18 verse two, the Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. My God, my rock and whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. And then another thing to encourage, I remind myself to really encourage is Ephesians 3:20. That's been a powerful verse in my life many times. But now all glory to God who is able through His mighty power at work within us to accomplish, and I love this word, infinitely more, infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Crystal Keating:

Angela, thank you so much for your time today. I just love your story. I love what God's doing in your life. Really appreciate you being on the podcast with us.

Angela Muir Van Etten:

Thank you. I really appreciate the opportunity.

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. To get our next conversation automatically, please subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts. And if you enjoy today's episode, leave us a five-star review. This helps other people find our podcasts so that they can be encouraged too. I'm Crystal Keating and thank you for listening to the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast.

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