

Season 5 | Episode 22

A Life Transformed – J.D. Kim’s Story of Living with Purpose (and Quadriplegia)

J.D. Kim

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Crystal Keating:

This is the Joni and Friends Ministry Podcast and I'm your host, Crystal Keating. Each week we're bringing you encouraging conversations about finding hope through hardship and practical ways that you can include people living with disability in your church and community. As you listen, visit joniandfriends.org/podcast to access the resources we mention or to send me a message with your thoughts.

Quadriplegic J.D. Kim is joining us on the podcast today to talk about hope restored after a snowboarding accident, shattered his dreams, identity, and confidence. Although his search for acceptance and healing through science and medicine ultimately failed him, his journey as a paralyzed man experienced the grace of God, which changed the course of his life.

So, with that, we welcome J.D. Kim. Thank you so much for joining me today.

J.D. Kim:

Hello. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity.

Crystal Keating:

Absolutely. And it's so nice to talk to you. I know you've been a friend of the ministry for many years, and you know, we were just talking this morning about Joni.

She was bringing you her greetings. I think she feels such a strong connection with you and other quadriplegics around the world. So, it's an honor to have you on the show today.

J.D. Kim:

Yes. Well, I'm honored to be part of this podcast and to do the interview with you because I truly admire the mission of Joni and Friends and the way in which it impacted my life as well.

Your support and prayers, they were very appreciated, and they were very helpful for me to put my trust in God. And I'm sure that is also being applied to many people who love and support Joni and Friends.



Crystal Keating:

Yes. Well, that is our hope. And so, J.D., I just can't wait to hear more about your story. The way that God did touch your life through this accident. So, maybe you could bring us back to the moment you were snowboarding, and that accident really redirected the path of your life in every way and brought you into a deep and honest relationship with God. What was that like for you in those moments?

J.D. Kim:

Right. So, I went to snowboarding to Aspen, Colorado with my friends. It was sunny, it was warm, and the snow was fresh. So, it was really the best condition to have fun with your friends. So, as I was snowboarding, I went over this mogul and I was on the air, and as soon as I landed, I heard the sound going and immediately I knew something was wrong. I kept telling myself, you know, it's gonna be okay. It's going to be okay. So, as usual, I try to, you know, get up and snowboard again, but something was different. My arms and my legs weren't moving, and I tried again, but nothing worked. And I called out to my friend, hey, I need some help.

I can't move. I can't move. And he thought that I was making a horrible joke and it took me some time to actually convince him to really understand the gravity of the situation. So, thankfully, he was able to go down and get the help from the ski patrol, and the patrol guys came up and transferred me to hospital in Aspen.

There after a few examinations, they flew me to hospital in Grand Junction, which is called St. Mary's Hospital. As soon as I got there, it was like watching a medical drama. All the medical teams, they were waiting for me, and they rushed me to the operation room, and it was my first time actually having a surgery.

So, when the doctor put me the mask for the anesthesia, I inhaled deeply hoping not to wake up during the surgery. So, there I had a spinal cord infusion surgery, and about eight days later they flew me down to Denver, Colorado to Craig Hospital, a spinal cord and traumatic brain injury rehab hospital.

So, when I got there, I had no idea of what was going on, and I somehow believed that I could walk out of the hospital within three months. About two months passed by, nothing was working. I mean, I was thinking, if I'm gonna walk out here, shouldn't I at least move a finger or two? So, I talked to the primary doctor, and he explained to me, so J.D., when the nerves in your arms or legs are damaged, they usually regenerate by themselves. However, when the nerves in your brain or in your spinal cord, they do not regenerate by themselves. Only stem cells can regenerate those broken nerves. So, I told him, alright doc, you know, I'm ready for the stem cell.

Gimme some stem cell research material. And he said, unfortunately, we do not have the technology for stem cell research yet, and for that reason, you're not going to walk for the rest of your life. And that was like a death sentence to me. So, the outcome of the spinal cord injury was cruel. I have a spinal cord injury at C four and C five, so I get to move my shoulders and my wrist, but then I cannot move my fingers. So, I use an electric wheelchair. So, I need, you know, someone's help to get out of bed in the morning, to take the shower, to use the toilet to eat, to



pretty much do any activities. And if I were home by myself, you know, I could easily starve to death or die by dehydration. And I just feel like it was not real.

I thought this type of thing only happens in movie and I actually thought I was having a terrible nightmare. And I felt like, you know, I failed, and I kept hearing, you know, you failed. Everything is over. Just give up.

Sure, you are at the hospital and there are people taking care of you. But what's gonna happen when you go home? Do you expect your parents to take care of you? I mean, you know, they already suffered for a long time, for all the troubles you made during your teenage years, and do you still want to give them hard time?

Surely if you make the choice. It could definitely break their hearts. However, they'll get over it.

Crystal Keating:

Like, make the choice to end your life.

J.D. Kim:

Exactly. And I did decide to end my life. But then I did not have any strength to pull the trigger. So, there was actually a staircase sign at Craig, and I thought if I just fall myself down on the stairs, that will do the job. And as I was about to do that, and I remembered the lessons that I learned from my Sunday school, the stories of Jesus healing people and doing these wonderful, great things.

And in that moment, I pray to God, Lord. You know, actually went to church since I was a child. I learned all the Bible studies, but I don't know if I really, truly believe everything that is recorded in them. However, if there is still something you can do about my life, if you can still hear me, please take my hand.

And at that moment, God took my hand and he never let it go. And it has been 18 years. There are many ups and downs, and God has been gracious to me. He has been with me, walking with me through the fire and the water, and even though there are times of suffering, I still found joy and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And even though I cannot walk again, I am still willing with Jesus. And I'm just so grateful that at that moment, God gave me the conviction that I was already held by his righteous right hand, and he led me to start a journey with him.

Crystal Keating:

Amen amen. Wow. I feel so touched by what you said. I know what it's like to feel desperate and to just reach out your hand and that's all you have, Lord, hold me.



And that you would call out to him, and he was already there holding you. And that began that journey. And I just think that's as simple as he said, call out to me and I will listen. I will hear you. I'll call out to me in your despair and that's our God. Amen.

Amen. So, you went from a despair to, okay, Lord, I may not believe all the Bible stories that I heard, but I'm desperate for you and I turn to you. So, what was it like in the months to come? You call out to the Lord, but there's still a road ahead of you. Like, what was that like? Prior to your accident, you had already experienced an identity crisis due to the differences between American and Korean cultures and non-Christian and Christian lifestyles.

And so maybe you can talk about what that was like for you as you're finishing your rehab in Craig and now, you're really trying to walk with the Lord. How did you kind of regain that? Okay, Lord, who am I now? What is my purpose in all this?

J.D. Kim:

Yes. Yeah, that is a great question. And I was born in South Korea and came to America when I was 13 years old. Immediately what I noticed was that I had Korean American peers who spoke English and understood the American culture, but they didn't speak Korean and had no, you know, experience of Korean culture, and immediately they began making fun of me. They called me FOB, means fresh off the boat. Right. I mean, there was even a TV program on that. But it was actually worse because I couldn't speak English, couldn't even defend myself, right? There was no communication. And then, of course, there were other people who only spoke Korean.

And they just wanted to live like a Korean in America. So, I'm there and I'm trying to figure out like myself and was a teenager. Right? I mean that is really the stage of finding and exploring your identity, right? But then, I'm just thinking like, who am I? Am I Korean, Korean? Who's supposed to, you know, keep my heritage or am I supposed to be a Korean American, you know, who kind of embraced the American culture?

Back then, there was a new mentor who could actually teach me that I could actually, you know, embrace both of the cultures and appreciate them and respect them and practice them. But even within the Korean community, church community, the disconnection between those Korean dominating culture and the Korean American culture there was a very deep divide and disconnection even within church and even church leaders who were disconnected from each other. So, there was no mentor who was able to tell me it's okay to embrace both of them. However, because of that, identity, the cultural crisis I didn't know my identity. I didn't know who I was supposed to be, how I was supposed to live in this country.

And I just got into trouble at school, was not interested in education. And in that process, I also began, you know, living more like a worldly lifestyle. Now I mentioned that I was born in a Christian family but then my faith and my lifestyle was not connected. Because I wasn't really sure if Jesus was my Lord and Savior back then. I just lived according to the worldly lifestyle. I got into fight. I began, you know, smoking cigarette, doing drug, going to parties since I was high school. And I was kind of, you know, Sunday Christian who went to church because my father was a pastor. So, there was a disconnection. I just couldn't understand Christian lifestyle. I



thought, like to live a happy life, you know, you have to drink some beer or doing some drug. But my parents they were very faithful believers, but they did none of them.

So, I always thought Christian life was boring. I'm sorry, but yeah.

Crystal Keating:

A lot of people believe that. I mean, that's not uncommon.

J.D. Kim:

Right? Right. So gradually I just fell in and began living according to the worldly pattern and having that identity crisis between Korean American and Korean, and also another identity crisis between being a Christian and non-Christian.

And that's when actually the snowboarding accident happened. After the accident, there was a time when I was in the elevator and I saw myself on a mirror and I saw a familiar stranger, meaning that, of course, it was me. But it was not supposed to be me. And I didn't like him. I just couldn't accept it as my identity. And so then once again there I was, man with disability being minority, Asian in this country, and was I to accept and embrace disability as my identity?

At the hospital sure. That's what they wanted me to do, so that I could actually, you know, move on to the next part of my life, you know? So just acknowledge that you have disability and move on to the next step. However, it was very difficult thing to do because of the negative terms related to disability. So, to accept disability meant that I have to also embrace that I am weak. I am imperfect. You know, throughout my journey with Jesus Christ, God taught me that I am not disability, Korean culture, or American culture. They're not my true identity.

Crystal Keating:

Yes. Amen.

J.D. Kim:

He told me that my true identity is a child of the most high God. So, once I put my faith and accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior, God is giving us the new identity. So that sure, this American culture, Korean culture, disability, they are very important parts of my life. But they're simply parts of my life, not my eternal identity. So, in that, I believed and embraced that identity that God has given to me as a child of the most high God who happens to have disability as part of my life. Who happens to have this Korean and American culture being part of me, so that in that identity, I was able to find my purpose, my value, my lifestyle.

So, from then on, it was very easy to live my life. Not easy to live with the life of disability, but at least that identity crisis was resolved. And consequently, I was able to begin this new journey with Jesus Christ with new perspective, knowing what to do, how to live, and why to live.

Crystal Keating:

Well said, I mean what we embrace as the foundation of our identity, like you said, dictates what choices we make, the direction we head, the people that we spend time with, the purpose of our



life, the vision we have. I love that you really accepted, okay, I do have a disability, but it's not primarily who I am.

I know what the Lord says about me, and that seemed to have given you so much strength and so much hope.

J.D. Kim:
Yes. Yes.

Crystal Keating:
Wow. Well, you know, when you said that you were in the elevator, looking in the mirror and you thought, this is not how things were supposed to be. And so, I wanna kind of talk about that because it seems common for those with life-changing injuries like you sustained to experience significant grief.

They say that part of the process of grief is acceptance. But it's so hard when the loss changes what the future should have been. I should have not gone through a divorce. I should have had a better career. My child should not have died. You know, all of the things that are right and good that we say life should not have been this way. It can often seem hopeless. So maybe you can tell us a little bit more about your journey of broken dreams. What did that process look like for you and how did you eventually find true hope and a renewed outlook on the future? Sounds like identity was a big part of that.

J.D. Kim:
Yes. So, it was not supposed to be me because I had wonderful dreams laid out for me. It was to make a lot of money and to have fun with my life, traveling around the world, going to restaurants and to drink and having fun with friends, playing golf all day, you know, all those kind of fun things to do. And for me, first step to make a lot of money was to become a sushi chef and get like a sponsorship from other investors and open up my own restaurant around the world.

So, I started working as a sushi chef since I was 17, and by the time of the accident, I was working at this very renowned and luxurious Japanese restaurant located in Aspen. So, I was getting approval from my head chef, and I felt like if I just worked a little bit more, you know, work as a head chef in some other place, then maybe within 10 years or so I could open up my restaurant and accomplish my dream. However, after the accident, that dream shattered 'cause I couldn't move, and I couldn't do anything with my, you know, hands or feet so that I couldn't fulfill the job duties related to the sushi chef or the businessman. So, I was really desperate, and I was really trapped into the cycle of doubt. What you just have mentioned, oh, if I just did this, then you know, if I didn't do that, if I didn't go to snowboarding that day, my life would be completely different.

And as I was really trapped into that cycle of mind, even though my dream was broken into, you know, thousands of pieces, I didn't know that those broken pieces were like sharp shards of glasses. The more I tried to collect those broken pieces and try to put them together, of course, it



didn't work, and it was actually hurting me inside of me 'cause I was just chasing after the dream. However, after I started my journey with Jesus, somehow, I had this poster of Bible verse Jeremiah 33:3 in King James version, "Call unto me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." So, I put that poster on the wall, and I recited it like every day.

However, you know, my plan, my future was dark. By then, I had no money, no saving, no work, no insurance, and I was not an American citizen. So, I couldn't receive any government support and my mom had a small business tailor shop, and my father was a pastor of a small church. But then all the member of the church left after my snowboarding accident, and that's very unfortunate, but we didn't have much financially. And besides, there are not many jobs offering great benefit and support to people with disabilities. And of course, not even having a legal status, I couldn't even work in this country. So, I recited those verses and tried to think about ways God might have plans for me.

I couldn't find any. However, even though I did not know God's great plans for me, I knew that what God wanted me to do each day, and that was to read the Bible and to meditate on it and pray to him and to consistently spend time with God. I didn't know what mighty plans that God had for me, but I chose to believe that I could, and I should believe in the mighty God.

So, I continuously trusted him, believing that he has plans for me. And sure, it's not like God showed up one day and he said, J.D., this is what I'm going to do for you. This is my plan. It never happened. However, you know, gradually as God continuously confirmed me that he has great plans for me, I truly believe that they're being fulfilled in my life.

I mean, there are many details of the things in my book, but I was able to receive my Ph.D. in systematic theology from the University of Aberdeen.

Crystal Keating:

Wow, the guy who wasn't a very good student is now a PhD at Aberdeen.

J.D. Kim:

Exactly. It's God's grace. It's God's grace. Yes. And then also work at Denver Seminary as Assistant Director of the Doctor of Program and Ph.D. college courses there.

And of course, you know, my ministry, encouraging and helping people with disabilities. Really, they're not my dreams. But they're God's dreams for me.

Crystal Keating:

Amen. Amen. And God is using your heart and your mind, and your voice for essentially those who are also suffering. Let's talk a little bit about that.

What have you learned in your studies and just walking with God about how he wants us to think about suffering? And how is that related to your involvement in the life of a church and



community with others who are also suffering? What have you learned and then what are you communicating to others about that?

J.D. Kim:

It's a very good question, requires detailed explanations. But I truly believe that you know, sin is the cause of all human suffering. And suffering is really the unfortunate consequence of our sin that all human beings suffer one way or the other.

Although the degree of suffering can be different, but if you kind of think about it, we are united, we are connected by suffering.

Crystal Keating:

That's not how I wanna be connected, but it's certainly true.

J.D. Kim:

Yes, that is the common experience of all human beings. So, the main issue is this, because the cause of human suffering is rooted in human sin. And that is why without Jesus Christ, without the intervention of God, human beings will suffer for the rest of our lives.

But the greatest news is that Jesus on the cross, through his suffering and resurrection, he has conquered the dominion of sin once and for all. So that even though we have suffering in this world, you know, we can still put our hope in God because our suffering will be temporal experience in this world.

And in Christ, we'll live forever without suffering or any distress with him for eternity. And now, having said that often when we experience suffering or any type of hardships, the problem is that we often are tempted to define ourselves according to our circumstance, especially hardships.

So, if you have a disability, if you have cancer or something, all of a sudden, you are defined as cancer, you're defined as disability, as if they're the only things that are big part of you so that you are defined by those conditions.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah. You know why? Cause it feels so consuming.

J.D. Kim:

Exactly. Exactly. Like you said, there's so many things related to the disability that is almost as if my life is evolving around disability, right? And then that's how we individuals who are suffering do that. But at the same time, the church members, other people do that too. Like when they see you, all they see you is your wheelchair.

All they see you is your problem or divorce. All they see is your cancer. So that we need to really separate our true identity and then also our condition as I mentioned earlier. But more than



that, we need to understand that the intrinsic value of human being is irrelevant to human experience or values because it has been determined by our creator, meaning our value has been already determined when he created us in his image. Of course, we talk about the image of God all the time. But it's not being well practiced in our life and in the lives of church, and even in our evangelism of others so that once we really take a time, breathe, think about others, and through the perspective of God, when we really think about the day we made it in God's image, you know, we can think about suffering. We will be able to separate seeing others, they are children of God, but suffering it is part of them. They're just kind of suffering with that.

In that sense, we get to treat them as person, consider they're suffering as secondary part. In that way, we can respect them as a person without trying or showing our condescension over them as if we are. If we as if we are helping you because we are in a higher position.

So, it really helps us to treat others as friends, our fellow human beings who are unfortunately, you know, having difficulties in their lives.

Crystal Keating:

That is so good friends treating each other as friends. And you said something really interesting that I think I, I'm pretty convicted about, you know, we're kind of a mirror to one another, and so do we mirror the truth that God has said to one another that we're children of God, or do we mirror to them what they feel their identity is? If it's wrapped up, you know, in the things that can easily consume us like a disability or cancer or the things that are hard, how do we reflect to one another, the truth of what God says? That's so good. That's food for thought. I have to think about that.

Well, so I love this quote on your website, and I think it's very true, "If we can share, we can bear." Can you unpack that a little bit?

J.D. Kim:

Yes. So that is the quote that one of my professor has taught me, but it is really, if we can share our brokenness, we can bear the pain together. If we can share our lives, we can bear the cross of Jesus together as his followers. So really fundamental principle is that we are commissioned to share our lives. And we talk about sharing life all the time in the book of Acts, early church did this and that.

But this sharing our life includes sharing our joy, shame, vulnerability, hope, suffering, and even gift and tears. And it is meant to bear our struggle with one another as different parts of the body of Christ and with Jesus Christ who suffered and was broken for our brokenness. So, it is truly in this hope and in this conscious, intentional practice of sharing and bearing, we are confessing our faith in Jesus Christ. We are confessing that Jesus who suffered, who has commanded us to follow him by bearing the cross. By living that type of lifestyle, we are also sharing the gospel in words and action with the world. We are actually glorifying God who has died for us on the cross and demonstrated to us how to be a Christian, how to be a follower of Christ.



Crystal Keating:

Amen. It just made me think of Galatians 6:2, which says, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." What you said is so true that it's a demonstration of our faith. It's the law of love being fulfilled as we, it's just link hands and say, I'm not gonna let go. Even in the joys and even in the suffering, we're in this all together.

J.D. Kim:

It's our journey, not just my journey, our journey together. And love the way you pointed out Galatians. And I would definitely use the quote to make my argument or to, you know, to teach others about this matter more. Thank you for that.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah. So good. Well, and I always feel better when I can share my burden with somebody who can bear it, you know? Healing comes, even if it's just for the day that I know someone else is walking with me through it. Well, J.D., you're very open about some of the questions posed about people living with life-changing disabilities. So, I thought I'd pose them because these were ones that I've heard my friends who use a wheelchair or who have struggled with their disability ask before, and I think they are so good to bring up.

So, I thought maybe you could field a few of these. Why do some people with disabilities feel the constant need to prove themselves? How do we extend compassion to those with whom we cannot identify, and how can we help people with disabilities and great needs while honoring their dignity and worth in the process? What would you say to some of the biggies?

J.D. Kim:

Oh, yes, they are big questions but to answer the first question, I cannot speak on behalf of other people with disabilities, who want to prove themselves. But for me, you know, as a person, as a human being, I love to be respected and appreciated and needed.

Crystal Keating:

Yes.

J.D. Kim:

As a person. And then one of the reasons why I say that is that it's because sometimes I feel like I am invisible to certain people, meaning that me being in this wheelchair, many times when I went to school or seminary, even big churches or so I'm somewhat being treated as invisible.

They don't come to me for any conversation. They don't approach me for any fellowship either. And I don't say this because I think people are bad. But I think they're just want to be respectful of my privacy, right? And I do think that way. And it's like doing a social distance, right? So, I mean, I haven't experienced that.

Crystal Keating:

That's unwanted social distance.



J.D. Kim:

Right, exactly. But then, you know, at first, when I had the accident, it was kind of very hurtful. Or I mean, I'm thinking like, oh, you call yourself a Christian and you know, you see a person with a disability, you don't even come to me and say hello or try to treat me, make me more comfortable.

And I used to think that way. But as I'm getting more used to living with disability and I'm just thinking, you know, maybe people just don't feel comfortable and they just don't want to approach me, not because they're a bad person, but because in order to respect my privacy. So, I think that is somewhat unfortunate that we have to experience this in our days. But you know, if you really think about it, to share the gospel, means and requires invasion of privacy in a certain sense, right?

Crystal Keating:

Yes.

J.D. Kim:

I mean, there are times when you have to do it. Yeah. I mean, otherwise, you ended up never speaking about the gospel. So, I think if we can kind of rethink about the concept, then we can definitely apply to that to evangelize other people, but also in order to reach out to people with disabilities.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah. Bridging that gap. And you know, one of the things you talked about too is friendship. That friendship always starts with hello. Right? Just like the basic look you in the eye, say hello, start the conversation and speak directly with that person, and go from there. You know, Jesus reached out person to person and it was very relational, and he did a lot of teaching. But how we communicate the gospel in the message, but also in the spirit of we're saying, we're building a relationship of love and it adorns the gospel with good works, so.

J.D. Kim:

Yeah. I mean, it's interesting like there are many special needs ministries, and their research to show that the number one reason why people with disabilities are hesitant to go to church is that they experienced very unwelcoming environment.

And I don't think it's because Christians are not nice. I think they're very welcoming people. But when it comes to this issue of, you know, interacting with people who look different right? Who come from different background. You know, we kind of are hesitant to reach out to them, and I think that's what we are really missing in our church environment.

For people with disabilities to go to church, it takes about, you know, two hours to get ready just to go to church. And all the preparation that you have to do. Sometimes you have to call the cab or wait for your ride. Sometimes you need your caregiver to help you out.



So, after spending two hours to get ready to go to church, and all of a sudden you are met with unwelcoming people, but then while the preacher is preaching the welcoming God, there is definitely disconnected experience. Then it's kind of a, you know, turn off for people with disabilities and they might think, the church is not doing better job than the world because in many of those special needs ministry or special needs events, when you go there, man, you get great welcome from them. Yeah. You get like two volunteers for each person with a person of disability and there's a very drastic difference between the way they are being treated in our community and the way they are being treated in church community. And I think we can do better than that.

Crystal Keating:

Yeah, I agree. Maybe we just don't know, or we're not as aware, we're not comfortable. And so, you know, part of Joni and Friend's mission or the underlying mission is really to equip the church to welcome and embrace people of all abilities.

And so, you have this welcoming God. Like you said, right? We're accepted in the beloved. All this language about being invited in and being one with the Lord and being part of his family. Now we're adopted and you know, it's like that's everybody. And so how do we live that out on a Sunday morning for someone who's invested a lot of time in just showing up?

You know? And so, to be mindful of that, 'cause it could be a very lonely experience to not feel that care or to know that, hey, I see you, I notice you. And I'm glad you're here. And you know, I hope that we can all get to know one another. I think, we all want that, you know?

J.D. Kim:

Yes.

Crystal Keating:

In a deep way. It's just the human longing of being part and belonging, and that is the open door of Jesus. So, I agree. So, you know, we have church training resources on our website, joniandfriends.org/church. So, if you want help and even just language on how do I talk about this? How do I bring this up to our leadership?

How do we get better to display the love of Christ, the love that we have in our heart? How do we do it in a way that's very practical for families and individuals with disabilities? So, wow. I wanna say this, if you wanna know more about J.D.'s story, he did write a book and, you know, we're just kind of hitting the tip of the iceberg.

He wrote the book, *From Walking to Wheeling*, and J.D., where can people buy your book?

J.D. Kim:

They can go to amazon.com and purchase the book there.

Crystal Keating:



Good. Okay. Amazon, we all know Amazon. You know, I wanna finish with this question as we were just talking about Christian communities and you mentioned it before that we need to take a closer look at the image of disability and like you said, in our society, disability isn't usually a friendly term that encourages open conversation. I think we've gotten better as a society. But it seems that in your experience, people are not really interested in always talking about or understanding life with a disability.

So, what are some of the ways you're working toward bringing a hopeful perspective on how disability is viewed?

J.D. Kim:

Okay. Yeah. Well, that's a great question. So, I'm working on actually on the interpretation of Leviticus chapter 21, especially is a message related to priest with disabilities because of message, disability has been interpreted as impurity, immorality, or an intrinsic value that prevents them from performing the honorable duties of priests. So, because of this negative interpretation, it has caused more negative view on disability and people with disabilities. And it is still being practiced and thought of this way, not only in America but around the world.

I just did my research in a church that has been the source of proclaiming that people with disabilities are inferior, inferior human beings. So, through my research, what I'm trying to argue is that people with disabilities were not banned from the duties of priest based on their inferior or intrinsic human value, but because of their physical limitations, were not enough to perform the duties of the priests. And then the word used in that passage is defect in NIV and other number of translation, but the defect should be more literally translated as physical blemish that talks about the external condition, not internal condition or immorality.

Crystal Keating:

That makes sense. And, you know, that's really rallying for the image of God in people and that exclusion from the priesthood was more about the inability to perform certain duties because of physical inability, not because of some intrinsic problem, which you're so right. All over the world, we encounter this when we do our Wheels for the World outreaches. We see children kept in back bedrooms in the dark, children with disabilities who are left out. All these things that God never intended.

And so, you're fighting for life, basically. You're fighting for value and worth. I love that. Well, J.D., it's been wonderful having you on the podcast today. What a blessing again. If you wanna learn more about his story, you can purchase his book, *From Walking to Wheeling*, and you can also check out his blog on his website, jdkimministries.org.

J.D., thank you again for joining us on the podcast today.

J.D. Kim:

Yes, thank you so much for the invitation, and enjoyed our time of conversation.

Crystal Keating:

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