

SHARING *Hope* THROUGH HARDSHIP**Milestones & *Miracles***

It was on July 30, 1967 that Joni Eareckson Tada took a fateful dive into the Chesapeake Bay – breaking her neck and ultimately advancing God's kingdom beyond measure. This month we celebrate God's grace in Joni's life as well as the miraculous ways Jesus works through Joni and Friends to bring countless souls into a saving relationship with him.



# from the heart

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

HEBREWS 11:1

One of my favorite stories about faith is in Mark chapter five. There we witness a desperate, hemorrhaging woman push her way through the crowd—arms outstretched—hoping to touch even the hem of Jesus’s robe.

I like to read that account thoughtfully. *Slowly*. Because I feel like that woman. My longing for Jesus—my hunger for his help, his Word, and his nearness—it’s just as desperate. Because I know he’s the answer to my every need.

The hemorrhaging woman provides a picture of faith. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for. And hope in the Bible always means confidence in God’s character and his promises.

Faith is the empty hand reaching out with hope-filled confidence in Christ, knowing that he is *always* good on his promise, and he’s the *only* one who can do something about our need. No wonder Jesus was moved so deeply by that precious woman! When he saw her faith in him, he called her “Daughter.” And then he said to her, “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

This woman’s faith was merely the vehicle through which she placed her confidence in Jesus. And, oh, does that please God! Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” You want to please God? Then earnestly come to Jesus—eagerly seek him, pushing through the crowd and believing that he is your answer. This is the soul’s response when it knows it needs Christ.

Faith is a pathway—a vehicle that connects you to the grace of God so that you can receive strength to trust and obey him. Like, on those hard and disappointing days when I have no energy to move forward into life. When I feel deflated or I start toying with doubt, I remember the hemorrhaging woman. And like her, I push through the crowd of my sad thoughts. I reach out my empty hand and, with all my heart, I grab hold of Christ. He sees my faith, and he is pleased.

He is so pleased, in fact, that he sends frequent troubles so that my faith will be strengthened. I mean, it doesn’t



This month marks my 58<sup>th</sup> year in this wheelchair. Every year, Jesus has proven himself to be faithful. *And that is something to celebrate!*

say much about my faith if I can only trust God when things are easy. But when I choose to trust Jesus while lying on a sickbed for weeks, it proves that my faith is genuine. If we can but hold fast to Jesus when trials test our faith, it shows all of heaven that we think—we know—Jesus Christ is worth it all. And we value him supremely above our pain and discomfort.

This is why we work—and pray—*hard* at Joni and Friends. We want other people with disabilities to place their faith in Jesus Christ. We pray earnestly that they will view their suffering as the vehicle through which Jesus receives applause and honor. We ask God to use their trials to build a robust faith in

Christ that remains unwavering; the kind that says alongside Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.”

So together, let’s be like the woman in Mark chapter five. Let’s hold onto the hem of Christ’s garment for every need. Finally, thank you for praying and financially helping us tell the salvation story—a story of faith and of holding fast to the Lord, no matter what the hardship!



# The Difference God Makes Through *Joni's House* & Through You!

Disability can happen in an instant... Angello was just four years old when he climbed a tree, laughing with his friends. And before his usual bright smile could fade, he was falling. Searing pain erupted in his leg upon impact as his right femur fractured.

Our Joni and Friends team met Angello and his family at our *Wheels for the World*™ outreach in Uganda the year after his fall. By that time, his untreated fracture site had developed a bone infection, leading to a dangerous septic wound.

Angello's parents, Edward and Mary—both of whom work as farmers and minister in their local church—have always sought to meet the needs of their four children. For Angello, who was born with spina bifida and clubfoot, proper care and treatment have often required significant travel and expense. Angello started a program to correct his clubfoot, but his parents could not afford the transport costs to attend necessary orthopedic reviews, resulting in the clubfoot relapsing.

It was not Angello's clubfoot, however, but the excruciating pain in his broken and infected leg that led Mary to our outreach, carrying her son in her arms. Mary shared that her family could not afford the care Angello so desperately needed, and our *Joni's House* team created a care plan, saving Angello's leg as well as his life.

With the help of our *Joni's House Uganda* team, Angello's family met with orthopedic surgeons who scheduled three consecutive corrective surgeries for him, which included wound debridement and the correction of clubfoot. After his surgeries, Angello's mobility improved significantly. And months later, he could stand and walk with only one crutch.



Angello is now back in school with his friends. Praise be to God for his miraculous recovery!

Since his successful surgeries, Angello has completed his age-appropriate level of education and participates fully in school. At every step of Angello's healing, Jesus has provided for his proper wound care and access to crutches and ankle-foot orthoses needed to improve his range of motion at the ankle, all through *Joni's House* and your faithful partnership in ministry. Angello's treatment team expects that, in time, he will regain complete balance and walk without any support!

"I want to express my deep gratitude to Joni and Friends for funding my son's surgeries, which have enabled him to walk again and return to school. Although he still uses crutches, he is in a better functional state than when he used to crawl on the ground,"

says Mary.

"I appreciate the psychosocial support and Gospel-sharing sessions we have received during my visits to *Joni's House*," Mary continues. "These encounters have strengthened my faith and inspired me to continue serving in our local church. When I look at the support from *Joni's House* and the miraculous provision for Angello's medical needs, it is a powerful reminder of God's love and mercy towards our family."



Mary's heartfelt words of gratitude aren't just for Joni and Friends—they're for you! Thank you for your steadfast prayers and generous support. You are making a life-changing difference for children and families struggling with disability worldwide!



# New Hands & *New Hope* for Aakash

In the remote hill districts of Asia, people with disabilities often go unseen, their needs go unmet, and their injuries remain untreated. For 37-year-old Aakash, poverty plagued him even before a work-related accident left him without hands.

With no one to support him, Aakash suffered through his days and nights feeling alone. He lacked food, clean water, and proper shelter. And he went without desperately needed medical care, wondering if anyone would ever care for him. Aakash had nowhere to turn for help or hope until he found *Joni's House*.

It's individuals like Aakash that make the work of our *Joni's House* team so urgent and powerful. Understanding the critical needs hidden away among the hills, our team has gone out seeking people whom the world has forgotten, meeting the needs of individuals and families living with disabilities.

In one district alone, we have evaluated the needs of all 420 special needs families, developing support plans for each—including Aakash. As our *Joni's House* team leader explains, for many people living in remote regions, seeking proper healthcare can seem impossible. With a healthcare system

centralized in the city, those who live far away have no means to travel to see capable providers.

*"Joni's House* finds patients who don't have access to healthcare," she says. "We help them through the barriers preventing them from getting proper treatment."

Beyond the cost of traveling to receive care, patients from rural areas often fear coming to the city, not knowing what to expect, let alone how to find lodging, provision, and support throughout their journey and stay.

As our team leader shares, in addition to finding people in their homes and arranging their transportation, "We take them to the hospital, provide food, accommodations, and education facilities while they stay here. We provide them rehab care and all the facilities they need so they don't feel like they're alone."

Through *Joni's House*, patients and their families also discover a welcoming community that treats each person with dignity. Often for the first time, disabled people and their caregivers learn the life-changing truth that every person deserves equal dignity, love, and care. This experience opens the door to the deep spiritual truth about God's love.

**"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.."**

DEUTERONOMY 31:8



*Joni's House* is changing the spiritual, social, and emotional landscape for people living with disabilities. For disabled children, our teams work to make school accessible. For families living in poverty, economic training and resources offer hope. And for Aakash, provision came in a new pair of prosthetic hands that allow him to hold a pen, eat and drink, do household chores, and work in farming and goat raising to earn money. Not only do Aakash's new hands transform his daily life – they also give him a renewed sense of dignity and remind him that he is not alone. "I feel proud and have dignity with these hands out in public places," says Aakash.



# I've hit *another* milestone...

**I**t was 58 years ago this month, back in 1967, when I took that awful dive, broke my neck, and embarked on a lifetime of total paralysis. And now, 58 years later? I look back and I am astounded at the grace of God that saw me through the worst of times.

I love thinking back to the first few years of my journey with quadriplegia—now being able to see what God was up to. God's grace was there when I was too weak and sick to even sit up in a wheelchair. And God's grace carried me through that painful season when all my friends either got married or went off to college.

Remembering is the way I like to celebrate the annual anniversary of breaking my neck. We benefit greatly by remembering the deeds of the Lord and all the grace he's given us in years past when we suffered through the hard seasons of life.

Psalms 77:11-12 says, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds." Now... God's mighty deeds and miracles include much more than the parting of the Red Sea, or crumbling the walls of Jericho, or making the sun stand still for Joshua. For you, God's mighty deeds might not be carrying you through quadriplegia, but it could include that long season of depression he brought you up out of, or saving you from a dangerous and destructive relationship, or bringing home your wayward prodigal child.

It is so invigorating to the soul and so helpful to our faith when we look back on the reservoir of grace that was miraculously given here, there, and everywhere in years past. So, as you help me celebrate so many victories this month—58 years in a wheelchair, 43 years of marriage with Ken Tada, and the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act—take some time to remember the victories in your life, too. *And celebrate the grace of God!*



"I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds." Psalms 77:11-12



# Hope, Dignity, and a Place in the Body of *Christ*

## From Georgia ▼

Before they met, Jennifer and Michael walked difficult roads. Jennifer was raising four children as a single mom. Her youngest son, Josiah, had epilepsy and autism. Her other three children are also on the autism spectrum.

For Michael, grief added to the challenges of single parenting a son with cerebral palsy and autism after losing his late wife to non-alcoholic cirrhosis of the liver. When he and Jennifer met, they developed a friendship rooted in shared experiences. Over time, their connection blossomed into love, and they decided to build a life together.

Just one week into their marriage, Josiah passed away unexpectedly at age 17. The devastating loss gutted

Michael and Jennifer and cast a shadow of deep grief over what should have been a joyful beginning for the newlyweds.

Seeking space to grieve and hoping to strengthen their marriage amid the pain, Michael and Jennifer attended our *Marriage Getaway*. “After we lost Josiah, we gradually stopped praying together due to the excessive exhaustion of grieving,” says Jennifer. “But at *Marriage Getaway*, Michael and I renewed our commitment to begin praying together again. And we no longer felt so alone. We realized there are many other couples facing the same trials. To feel understood gave us so much hope and strength.”



“The greatest impact of Joni and Friends to us is knowing there is an organization out there that understands what we’re going through and is committed to being there and helping us every step of the way in our journey with disability,” say Jennifer and Michael, here with their new *Marriage Getaway* community.

## From New Mexico ▼

When Tara adopted four siblings—Max (10), Matthew (9), and twins Hailie and Mikey (7)—it was a dream come true. Yet it wasn’t easy, and *Family Retreat* was a Godsend.

Born with fetal alcohol syndrome, Matthew struggles with difficult emotions, exhibits challenging behaviors, and often doesn’t recognize danger.

“At *Family Retreat* I was able to open up and be honest about what I was going through as an adoptive mom with a child struggling with a disability,” says Tara. “I knew my son and other children were safe and I was able to also focus on what God was doing in my life. It helped relieve my anxiety on how people saw me and my kids.”



“Having individual buddies for each child at *Family Retreat* gave them each the attention they needed,” says Tara. “And I’ve made a lot of friends! Having people to talk to that understand what we’re going through let us know we’re not alone.”

## From Nashville ▼

Avonlea was born with cerebral palsy. She is quadriplegic and nonverbal, and her care is a full-time, full-family job. Her parents, Ty and Rachel, and her siblings have learned to function as a coordinated unit. But the weight of constant advocacy, ongoing physical care, and occasional social misunderstandings can grow heavy. They needed *Family Retreat*!

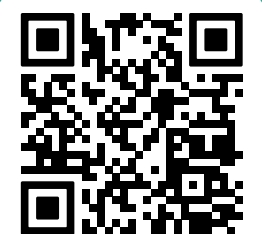
Ty, Rachel, Avonlea, Novelle, Clinton, and Halcyon found holy restoration for their whole family at *Family Retreat*. As 16-year-old Novelle shared, it was the first time she didn’t have to explain anything about their family. “No one asked us what was ‘wrong.’ We were just... us. And we belonged.”

Novelle captured the heartbeat of *Family Retreat*. Thank you for making a way for weary families to experience a life-changing encounter with Jesus!



## Bless your loved ones & share the love of Jesus!

Your gift given **in honor** or **in memory** of a loved one brings the hope of the Gospel to people living with disabilities worldwide! View your loved one's name on our online Tribute Wall at [joniandfriends.org/tribute](https://joniandfriends.org/tribute) or by using this QR code!





# A Paintbrush for Joni

Joni's Newest  
Book is Perfect  
for the Children  
in Your Life!



**A** Paintbrush for Joni explores how God has used Joni's disability to help others and spread the Gospel through her paintings, books, and ministry. Now Joni wants to pass her legacy on to the next generation, empowering all children with the hopeful message that God can use them to do incredible things, too!

"Join the celebration of my 58th year in a wheelchair, and pass on the joy to the boys and girls in your life with this new book. It's a great way to help children understand how to handle disappointments, how to trust God when things don't go their way, and how Jesus works everything together for their good," says Joni.

**Product Details:** Hardcover • 48 pages

**\$18.99**

*100% of proceeds go directly to  
advance ministry to children and families living with disability.*

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