

LOVE GOD. LOVE OTHERS.

A quarterly newsletter from Our Daily Bread Ministries.

WINTER 2024

DEPEND ON GOD FOR A FAITH THAT ENDURES

- ▶ *Finding New Life and Hope in God's Word*
- ▶ *For When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong*
- ▶ *It's Time to Give Up Perfection*
- ▶ *Finding Purpose in the Pain*



dear FRIEND



New beginnings! The start of a new year always gives me a fresh perspective, a psychological blank slate. Of course, it's a bit arbitrary. The challenges of last year haven't magically disappeared, and the consequences of past decisions are still present. But it's a new year and with it exciting prospects for 2024.

Here at the ministry, we continue to be faithful to our mission, despite the global challenges our teams face. Every week, there seems to be a new

hot spot in the news, whether it's war, economic turmoil, political unrest, or cultural developments that impact the church. I will be honest, when I focus on these issues, I can become overwhelmed and discouraged.

But we serve a sovereign God who isn't surprised by these things and actually takes them and uses them for His good. As followers of Jesus, our job is to look for ways to partner with God as He is about His work. Your faithful prayers and generous support help us to do this as we make the life-changing wisdom of the Bible understandable and accessible to all.

Boldly unhindered (Acts 28:31),

Matt Lucas, D.A.

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FINDING PURPOSE IN THE PAIN – Back cover

Multiply WHAT Matters

AGES 12-24

By God's gracious and guiding hand, we have seen the Word of God flourish across the globe. For more than 85 years, God has enabled us to provide resources that help strengthen people's faith in difficult times.

You can show God's love to others today! When you support Our Daily Bread Ministries, you join us in multiplying what matters as we share the Scriptures and fuel a lasting love for the Bible all around the world.

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NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Finding New Life and Hope in God's Word

“OUR LANGUAGE WAS DEAD BUT NOW IT IS ALIVE.”—MUBARAK AL MEDIR

Throughout Africa, Our Daily Bread Ministries has compiled language-adjusted *Our Daily Bread* devotions, Bible stories, and Our Daily Bread University courses to help children and adults learn English through the ministry's program called YOURS (Year-Long ODBM Unique Reading System). After hearing about this program, members of the Acheron people in South Sudan felt moved to translate these materials, hoping to teach those around them.

By opening the door to literacy, the people of South Sudan have been able to experience the Word of God like never before—in their own language. With these materials reaching more than 350 people among several churches and a refugee camp, many believers have experienced a renewal of their faith and are sharing the hope of Christ with their families and communities.

As the Word of God continues to spread across the world, please continue to pray for the hearts of those in South Sudan as they are hearing God's Word, experiencing Christ's love, and being renewed in their faith.



Youth learning God's Word in the Nuba Mountains, South Sudan, Africa.

When you give to Our Daily Bread Ministries, you help people all around the world receive access to biblical resources and help them experience the hope and love of Jesus Christ.

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Photos courtesy of Joni and Friends

FEATURE STORY

For When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong

LEARN FROM THE WISE WORDS AND TENDER HEART OF JONI EARECKSON TADA

Life is an unpredictable, inexplicable gift. It's easy to get discouraged when life doesn't go as planned or when we encounter what we believe to be roadblocks keeping us from going where we want to go. King Solomon wisely said, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21).

Joni Eareckson Tada, author, artist, founder of Joni and Friends, and devoted follower of Jesus Christ is not a stranger to life's barricades. At the young age of 17, she was injured in a diving accident that left her with quadriplegia—paralysis below the neck—and daily chronic pain. Yet to Joni, "This is not a detour, it's just my life."

When considering guests for *Unshakable Moxie* (an Our Daily Bread Ministries docuseries), Joni was an easy choice. Her resilient faith and inspiring outlook on life makes her a woman of moxie. Producer Julie Richardson was overjoyed when Joni agreed to join the team, and Joni said the excitement was mutual.

“

God permits what
He hates, to accomplish
what He loves.

—JONI EARECKSON TADA

“Acts 13 talks about the purpose we have to fulfill,” Joni shared, “and I would give anything to speak into the hearts of younger women who don’t know what to make of God’s claim to be good in a world full of horrible suffering and pain.”

The goal of *Unshakable Moxie* is to encourage and remind women that God’s goodness is not measured or determined by our circumstances. He is good *all* of the time. To reiterate this truth, Joni shared the ten words that she believes forever changed her perspective on life: “God permits what He hates, to accomplish what He loves.” After she was injured, Joni shared how she originally thought God was preparing her to get back on her feet, but once reality was made clear, she had to trust that God had a different story in mind; one that was better.



Photos courtesy of Joni and Friends

“God’s not using our circumstances for some grand purpose in the future, His purpose is always for right now!” Joni said. She stressed that our sovereign God doesn’t miss a beat. When you give your life to Christ,

He doesn’t waste one second of it. You have a purpose, your pain has a purpose, and God’s purpose for you is for right now. “God cares about how you respond to the right nows because the 1,959,000 ‘nows’ are what end up making a transformed character in which you become seasoned and wisened,” Joni shared.

Be still, my soul;
the Lord is on thy side;
bear patiently the cross
of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to
order and provide;
in every change
He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; thy best,
thy heav’nly Friend
through thorny ways
leads to a joyful end.

“BE STILL, MY SOUL”

For Joni, many of her “nows” are spent in physical pain due to her injury. Sometimes the pain is so intense that it wakes her up in the middle of the night. Instead of responding in pity or anger, Joni said her favorite way to cope is through hymns and Scripture. “I love hymns because sometimes my pain is so bad, it’s hard to put two sentences together in prayer,” she said. Repetition and memorization are what help her keep her mind fixed on Jesus rather than her pain. She shared one of her favorite go-to hymns and Scripture that are ministering to her now: “Be Still, My Soul” and Psalm 92. (cont. on page 5)



That's why I take pleasure
in my weaknesses, and
in the insults, hardships,
persecutions, and
troubles that I suffer for
Christ. For when I am
weak, then I am strong.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:10 NLT

"I praise God for my quadriplegia and this wheelchair," she said. "I've learned to sit still in many places, and God has used the physical form of stillness in my paralysis and wheelchair to develop a spiritual kind of stillness."

Not only that, Joni credits God and her injury for learning the secret Paul talks about in 2 Corinthians 12:9, that of knowing how to boast in affliction and weakness, and utilize the Lord's strength. "Some mornings, I think about how much I don't want to get out of bed," she said. "But then I remember that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Joni's strength is an encouragement to all, and her dedication to Jesus and to helping others feel loved, valuable, and capable is truly inspiring. In 1979, Joni founded the growing organization Joni and Friends. The ministry is committed to sharing the gospel and providing practical help to people living with a disability.

Joni and Friends accomplishes its mission through a variety of Christ-centered programs, including the delivery of wheelchairs and Bibles around the world, serving families through retreats and getaways, and providing training and resources to churches. Joni's heart goes out to those with disabilities, and she hopes that others will have a sensitivity to and heart for people like her, just like Jesus does. 🌱



You can join the work of Joni and Friends by checking out their website joniandfriends.org or Instagram: [joniandfriends](https://www.instagram.com/joniandfriends) or Facebook: [Joni and Friends](https://www.facebook.com/joniandfriends)

Find out more about *Unshakable Moxie* with hosts Toni Collier and Moriah Smallbone featuring Joni and other dynamic women at go.odb.org/unshakable



IT'S TIME TO GIVE UP PERFECTION

AN EXCERPT FROM *GIVING UP ON PERFECT* BY REGINA FRANKLIN

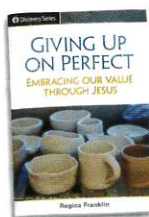
Human effort might seem to promise perfection, but on its own, it just can't deliver. The investments we make with our heart, time, and energy in trying to find satisfaction through our own efforts—even those that initially seem worthy—lead to disappointment. It's a race we can never win, a pursuit leaving us with less not more. When we find ourselves continually in search of that next job, relationship, or experience that will make us happy, or when we become consumed with trying to create perfect fulfillment in our lives, it's time to ask ourselves if what we really fear is lack and whether we've dotted the landscape of our lives with gods of our own making.

Responding to people worshipping many gods in Athens, Paul addressed this innate human hunger for satisfaction. He shared with those listening how only the God who had created every living thing and lacked for nothing could fill our every need: "He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need" (Acts 17:24–25 NLT).

Maturity in Christ begins when we recognize the veneer of human effort as insufficient to reflect the full beauty of excellence for which we were created. Only then can we learn to find a life well-lived in the perfection of Christ. Only then will we experience lasting satisfaction. Only then will we live unafraid.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

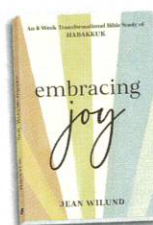
1. In what areas do you most often face the lie that anything less than perfect is unacceptable?
2. Given that it often feeds an outward appearance of perfection we see around us, how can we engage in social media in a way that keeps us grounded in reality?



Read the entire Discovery Series booklet, *Giving Up on Perfect*, at go.odb.org/giving-up-on-perfect

GROW A RESILIENT FAITH

Check out these resources to help you build a faith that endures.

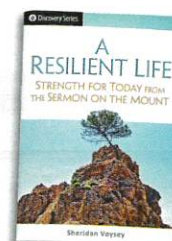


Learn the life-changing truths found in the powerful little Old Testament book of Habakkuk in *Embracing Joy*.

go.odb.org/embracing-joy

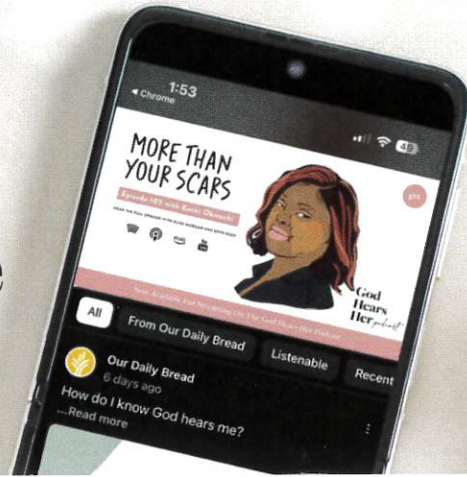
Find strength for today and build a foundation that withstands life's storms in this Discovery Series booklet, *A Resilient Life*.

go.odb.org/resilient-life



GROW deeper

Finding Purpose in the Pain



Kechi Okwuchi was living a normal life as a 16 year old in Nigeria, attending boarding school, hanging out with friends, and spending time with her many cousins. However, life changed in an instant when coming home for Christmas break, she was in a horrific plane crash that took the lives of 108 people, including many classmates, and was left as one of only two survivors. In her own words, her faith before the accident felt more like an obligation, not a relationship. Yet, as she laid in her hospital bed struggling to find sleep, God began to unfold the amazing purpose He had for Kechi.

Here are some highlights from Kechi's appearance on the *God Hears Her* podcast:

That was really the beginning of my personal interest in finding out more about God. So, I kind of just started to figure things out. When my mom read the Bible, it was less about relaxation and more about listening to words, asking questions, and really understanding about God and prayer.

So I was learning all those things, and I felt like I was making good headway. And then they hit me with the fact that everyone died in the accident.

I backpedaled so much after that. I never once felt like, "Why wasn't it me," but I did have so much anger and confusion about God. He was supposed to be this Being that could do everything and save anyone that He wanted. He would just let 60 children die? It made no sense to me; it was so different from what I had learned about Him so far. How could He do good stuff, but allow bad stuff to happen?

I just sunk into this dark place, very depressed and confused, missing my friends, and couldn't believe they were gone. That was the place I was in, and I stayed there for a while. My family would pray for me and try to comfort me, but then my mom had a conversation with me. I used to believe that if you believed in God, you were protected from bad things. I realized that being a Christian does not stop bad things from happening to you, but it gives you a place to go when bad things happen to you.

To hear more about Kechi Okwuchi's amazing story of embracing life after trauma (Episode 105), and other powerful stories about remaining steadfast amid life's storms, listen to the *God Hears Her* podcast at godhearsher.org.

Why does God allow trials and tests of our faith?

As we experience trials in the world and difficulties in our personal lives, our encounter with these "tests of faith" can become challenging. It's easy to ask: Why are we being tested? If God were good, would He have allowed this? Is God still in control? Unlock many of the biblical secrets to overcoming your trials when you take this Our Daily Bread University course, *The Testing of Your Faith*. go.odb.org/testing-of-your-faith

