

A Smile from Heaven



Joni Eareckson Tada is one of the most inspirational people in the world today.

As a teenager, she enjoyed a variety of outdoor sports, such as riding horses, hiking, tennis and swimming. But on the fateful day of July 30, 1967, she dived into Chesapeake Bay, mistakenly thinking the water was deep at that point, and suffered a fracture between the fourth and fifth cervical levels. The result: She is a quadriplegic, paralyzed from the shoulders down.

Overcoming periods of anger, depression, suicidal thoughts and religious doubts, Joni learned to paint with a brush between her teeth and began selling her artwork. She has written more than 40 books, recorded a number of musical albums, starred in a movie about her life and advocates for disabled persons.

Joni and her husband, Ken Tada, live in Calabasas, California. In 2010, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, but emerged successfully from cancer surgery.

In an article entitled *Joy Hard Won*, published in *Decision* magazine by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Joni writes about an interesting incident. She declared that “honesty is always the best policy when you are surrounded by women in a restroom during a break at a Christian women’s conference.”

One woman, putting on lipstick, said to her, “Oh, Joni, you always look so together, so happy in your wheelchair. I wish that I had your joy!” Several women around her nodded in agreement. “How do you do it?” the woman asked as she capped her lipstick.

“I don’t do it,” Joni said. “May I tell you honestly how I woke up this morning?” She continued:

“This is an average day. After my husband, Ken, leaves for work at 6 a.m., I’m alone until I hear the front door open at 7 a.m. That’s when a friend arrives to get me up. While she makes coffee, I pray, ‘Lord, my friend will soon give me a bath, get me dressed, sit me up in my chair, brush my hair and teeth, and send me out the door. I don’t have the strength to face this routine one more time. I have no resources. I don’t have a smile to take into the day. But you do. May I have yours? God, I need you desperately.’”

(more)

“So what happens when your friend comes into the bedroom?” one of them asked.

“I turn my head toward her and give her a smile sent straight from heaven. It’s not mine; it’s God’s.”

Pointing to her paralyzed legs, Joni said to the women in the restroom, “Whatever joy you see today was hard won this morning.”

Then she added: “I have learned that the weaker we are, the more we need to lean on God; and the more we lean on God, the stronger we find Him to be.”

As you go about your responsibilities in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home, through whatever struggle you may be experiencing today – and we all have them – lean on God.

And give the people you meet His smile.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter